



The Stream

A monthly publication of the Diocese of South-West America

Christmas Edition
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"And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a Manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them."

The Holy Gospel According to
St. Luke 2:1-20



“അത്യുന്നതങ്ങളിൽ ദൈവത്തിന്നു മഹത്വം;
ഭൂമിയിൽ ദൈവപ്രസാദമുള്ള മനുഷ്യർക്കും സമാധാനം”



GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST
AND ON EARTH PEACE AND GOODWILL TOWARD MANKIND

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Do you have articles or news you would like to share in 'The Stream' newsletter? Would you like to share 'The Stream' with -your family and friends. Please e-mail us at thestreamdswa@gmail.com

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Metropolitan's Column

Metropolitan's Column

Dearly Beloved

The great feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has once again drawn near. We are called to celebrate this feast and to receive the Heavenly King by observing 25 days Nativity Lent through increased prayer and fasting from worldly pleasures. For many, this has become increasingly difficult as the month of December in our country is filled with numerous celebrations, gatherings, holiday parties, gift exchanges, food, and so on, but seldom do we realize the role of Christians in maintaining the spiritual disciplines of the Church.

When we consider what is happening around us in the world today, we see immense persecutions of Christians, terrorism, and the disregard for basic morals and values. This in turn has resulted in the secularization of major Christian feast days like the Feast of Nativity that has resulted in much gain for business and corporations but a huge loss for the Holy Church. We remind all our faithful that we must restore the reason for the season and use this as an opportunity to share the love, peace, and joy that came upon the world over 2000 years ago through the birth of our Savior. We have to intensify our commitment to the Church and its practices and prepare and equip ourselves for spiritual warfare that we encounter daily.

We urge all our faithful to whole-heartedly participate in the Nativity Fast and resist the temptations of the world. We must be shining examples of what it means to be a follower of Christ and model the spiritual disciplines that have been taught to us by Christ Himself.

We take this opportunity to extend our love, prayers and blessings for the upcoming Nativity fast and hope that everyone will have a blessed celebration of the birth of our Lord. Along with the angelic hosts, let us cry aloud and proclaim: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward all mankind!"

Your shepherd in Christ,
Alexios Mar Eusebius

Ecumenical Corner

***Metropolitans Visit Syro-Malabar Diocese of Chicago***

During H.G. Alexios Mar Eusebius visit to Chicago this past October, he was invited to visit the diocesan center of the Syro-Malabar Diocese of Chicago. He was welcomed by Senior Bishop, Mar Jacob Angadiath, along with the newly consecrated Auxiliary Bishop, Mar Joy Alappatt. Along with His Grace, was H.G. Gabriel Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan of Trivandrum, and the local Orthodox clergy. During this meeting relationships were strengthened between our two churches in America, and express our shared heritage as St. Thomas Christians of India.

Invited by the two Co-Chairmen, HE Metropolitan Emmanuel of France and HE Metropolitan Bishop of Damiette, of the Joint Theological Commission of the two families of the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and with the blessings and gracious hospitality of the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All Holiness Bartholomew, a working group of official delegates met in Athens, 24-25 November 2014, in order to lay down a road map for the future work of the Joint Commission. Rev. Fr. K.M. George Represented the Malankara Orthodox Church in these meetings

Joint Theological Commission meets in Athens***Oriental Orthodox Concelebration of the Feast of St. Gregorios of Parumala in Dallas Texas***

The Feast of St. Gregorios of Parumala was celebrated with a spirit of unity by the Oriental Orthodox Churches in Dallas at St Gregorios Orthodox Church in Garland under the leadership of Rev. Fr. C.G. Thomas. Priests, deacons, and faithful from St. Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church in Colleyville, St Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church in Euless, St Philopateer Coptic Orthodox Church in Richardson, and St Sarkis Armenian Orthodox Church in Carrollton all joined in the celebration of the feast of St Gregorios on November 1st, 2015. It was a taste of the Kingdom when all cultures will be gathered before the throne of God worshipping in unity of spirit and faith. The priests from the sister Orthodox Churches concelebrated the Holy Qurbana by leading many of the prayers and giving the sermon. Deacons from the Coptic and Armenian Church led songs during the time of the reception of Holy Communion and during the Procession around the church. It was a very visible and moving expression of the One, True, Apostolic faith within different cultures. The vicar, managing committee, and all the parishioners of St Gregorios Orthodox Church in Garland are to be congratulated for their hard work in organizing such a blessed event.



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.

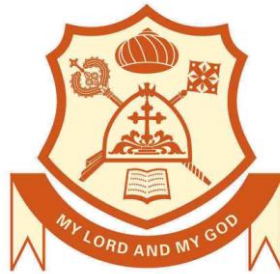
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Apostolic Visit of His Holiness

Scenes from the Apostolic Visit of His Holiness Moran Mor Baselios Mar Thoma Paulose II to Houston



Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church Diocese of South - West America
Diocesan Family and Youth Conference 2015

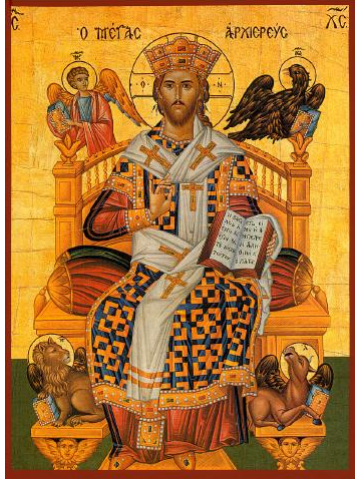
July 8 - July 11, 2015

Dallas, Texas

SAVE THE DATE!!!



Faith Study

Thoughts on Death & Life - Rev. Fr. James Cheriyan, Vicar, St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Cleveland

When God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden of Eden, death was not a part of the original plan of God's blueprint for humanity. Disobedience to the will and command of God brought in the phenomena called death. Very often, old age, death, sickness, tragedy and all the negatives of life carry no good message in them - such an attitude arises when we fail to look at them as good and austere teachers. Good and austere teachers produce good, reputable students. Such teachers are seldom loved by people. Death according to the Fathers of the Church is a good and austere teacher that helps us remember that we need to number our days, so that we may become wise in all that we say and do (cf. Psalm 90:12.)

*Death is not the end; it is the beginning of the true life that awaits us beyond the grave, if indeed we have begun to live it here. Christ, "the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11,25), came, was crucified, resurrected, ascended to heaven and waits for us there, as He assured us: "I go (to heaven) to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14,2). Therefore, death does not reveal our finiteness; it reveals our infiniteness, our eternity. This is why the Christian meditates and ponders upon the mystery of death in a way that is productive, positive and dynamic. For this present life is an arena in which the great battle is waged for the sake of immortality and eternity.—(Nikolaos P. Vassiliadis, *The Mystery of Death*, p. 54.)* A human being is born into time and transcends into eternity. This is the reason why we call the life in the Kingdom of God / Heaven, as eternal life (cf. St. John 3:16; 1 John 5:13-14; Romans 6:23; Galatians 6:7-8). This is also the reason why we also dread the experience of eternal separation from God (cf. St. Mathew 25:46 Revelation 21:8) which in other words is called as hell - an experience after the second coming of Christ. Isn't it pretty amazing to understand that we are immortal beings. Physical death is just a brief stop in the journey, there is no end to our existence. This is precisely why we pray for our departed ones. We pray for the departed souls because they have not ceased to exist, prayers are offered for those who exist, not for those who do not exist. The departed ones have not lost their personhood and prayer is the greatest expression of our love for those dear to us. If we pay close attention to the prayers for the departed we will realize that, the plea is for mercy and forgiveness and nothing less than being in the presence of Christ and His saints. I wonder how people can ever say why prayers for the departed are not necessary and un-biblical!!!

Our life on earth is the sum total of our answer to God's call. Life on earth is a response to God's love. We have not kept him as the goal of our lives, he respects that decision and allows us to be away from him, which is the experience of hell. On the contrary, if we respond to His love, through our lives, reflecting Him through our words, deeds and thoughts, then He grants us the highest honor of being in Him and with Him. So if you are serious about eternity, you cannot take life on earth casually and hence you cannot take life in the Holy Church as an option of convenience, unless you think heaven in an option. Life in the Church is practice for an external life of pure worship. Its time we re-think our attitude to long liturgies. If worship is something you are not a fan off, then heaven may not be a good option!

DSWA MGOCSM Looks Ahead To 2015

The MGOCSM of the Diocese of South-West America announces the newly appointed Council Members for 2015:

Atlanta — Mr. Jiboey Abraham

California and Arizona — Mr. Jason Abraham

Chicago — Mr. Matt Poozhikunnel

Dallas and Oklahoma — Mr. Austin Cherian

Detroit — Mr. Jerry Idicula

Edmonton and Seattle — Ms. Ashley Varghese

Florida — Mr. Nithin Varghese

Houston, San Antonio, and Austin — Ms. Steffi Abraham

God willing, on January 16-18, 2015, the MGOCSM Council will be meeting with His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius, Metropolitan and President of the DS-WA MGOCSM, at Urshlem Diocesan Center in Beasley, Texas. During this meeting, the Council will discuss various Ministry Projects and initiatives that can be implemented in order to spiritually edify the students and young adults within our diocese. These projects include: Urshlem Summer Camp, Domestic Service, Campus Ministry, and Leadership Camps.

We humbly request the prayers of all the faithful so that these young leaders may be guided and inspired by God to serve His Holy Church. May all our work be selflessly directed to the glory of His Kingdom!

UPCOMING MGOCSM AREA EVENTS

Houston

New Year's Conference: January 1-4

Main Speaker: Rev. Dn. Abey George

Theme: "Crossroads" (Jeremiah 6:16)

Dallas

Mini Leadership Camp: January 10

Led by Rev. Fr. Mat Alexander

Area Service Event: North Texas Food Bank - December 30

Chicago

Winter Conference

Guest Speakers: Rev. Fr. Aju Mathews, Rev. Fr. Teji Abraham

Rev. Dn. Arun Varghese, Lijin Raju,

Detroit

New Year's Retreat : December 29-30

Main Speaker: Rev. Fr. Teji Abraham

Theme: "Covenant: A Promise Not Forgotten"



Orthodox Youth Summer Camp Planned for Summer 2015

In recent years, it has become apparent that the youth of our Church need to be provided with more opportunities through which they may find a living experience of the Orthodox Faith. Many of our youth are gradually distancing themselves from the Church as they progress through their lives and can find themselves facing difficult decisions without a firm foundation in the Faith to guide their paths. It is our vision to inaugurate a Youth Summer Camp at Urshlem Diocesan Center in August of 2015. This will be a ten to fifteen-day camp open to high school and college students of our Diocese. A camp of this capacity has the ability to serve many functions in nurturing the spiritual growth of our youth through Biblical studies, liturgical workshops, exposure to the weekly Orthodox prayer cycle, spiritual meditation, High School/College orientation, and recreational activities. For its inaugural year, the camp will be specifically created for young men; however, with the growth of the Diocesan Center along with

increased experience in coordinating this event, our hope is to expand the Summer Camp to both young men and women in the near future. By creating a comprehensive Youth Camp, our students can not only learn more about the Faith, but how to embrace it as a part of their everyday lives. The purpose of this camp is to edify our youth to encounter God across all arenas of their lives by providing them with the spiritual tools to grow in love of Him. Please support this project through prayer and by encouraging the young men of our Church to take advantage of this unique opportunity to grow in Orthodoxy.



Around the Diocese

MGOCSM National Leadership Camp 2014 - Juhi Philip, St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Oklahoma

With God's Blessings and all of your prayers, the 14th annual MGOCSM Leadership Camp was held in California from July 23-26, 2014. There were about 120 MGOCSM students from across the United States and Canada who joined together at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona for this event presided by His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovos, Metropolitan of the Northeast American Diocese and His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius, Metropolitan of the Diocese of South-



West America. The theme this year was to "Integrate Christ", which was taken from St. Matthew 20:26-28, "...whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave just as the son of man came not to be served but to serve..." This theme was expressed through the spiritual and inspirational messages of the key speaker, Very Rev. Fr. Josiah Trenham of St. Andrew Orthodox Church (Riverside, CA), along with workshops led by our own priests, deacons and seminarians. Each message and workshop helped participants understand how to "Integrate Christ" in their daily lives and use that knowledge to grow as strong leaders of the Orthodox faith. Each day consisted of keynote speeches, workshops, fellowship, prayers at the hours, and personal reflection which especially helped participants prepare for Holy Confession. We hope and pray that those who attended this camp and everyone who is a part of this student ministry and Holy Church continues to Integrate Christ in their daily lives. May God bless us all.



MGOCSM Southeast Fall Retreat- Ajoey K. Abraham

First and foremost, I want to thank God for allowing us all to come together to worship and learn more about Him, as He convened in our midst. I thank God yet again for providing his servants who came out and ministered to us and He certainly spoke to us through them. On August 8th the MGOCSM SE Region held our annual fall retreat at Camp Kulaqua in High Springs, FL where all of those gathered were blessed by the priests, deacons and fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, especially our event speakers Gheevarghese John Achen and

Anoop Thomas chemachen. Gheevarghese Achen spoke to us about dealing with death, as many of us dealt personally and through others who knew those men who died this year, especially Jobin Kuriakose, Dammie Yesudas, Ankeet Patel, Imtiyaz Ilias, and Pravin Varghese. He also talked about current issues and how it relates in conjunction with the bible. Achen also mentioned that there is only one lent, but several fasts, one of which we were partaking that weekend. I want to thank the panel of Joy Pyngolil Achen, Cyril Davy Achen, Jacob Mathew Achen, Gheevarghese John Achen, Anoop Chemachen, and Arun Chemachen for answering our many questions dealing with a variety of topics in relation to the church, especially why people are leaving our churches and how to help solve that. Anoop chemachen gave us his personal testimony and of how he was delaying the inevitable, God's purpose to help in leading His church. The one thing always constant was Church in his life. He also talked about our nous and spiritual connection with God. Arun chemachen talked to us about spiritual death and about counseling and confession. I know all of us learned a bit to apply to our lives, especially not to be just hearers of the Word, but also doers, as Gheevarghese Achen said (James 1:22). As we have young new leaders in place, I pray we have an even better encounter with God and among ourselves next year. I ask that everyone please keep us in prayer so that we mature into God's divine plan.

Around the Diocese

MGOCSM Houston/San Antonio/Austin Summer Fellowship - Elizabeth Paul

The MGOCSM members of the Houston/San Antonio/Austin area have taken a proactive step this past summer to demonstrate the motto of MGOCSM: study, service, and worship. A series of bible studies, service events, and socials were planned throughout the span of the summer to not only bring fellowship among each other but to also learn about the church and to give back to the community that has given us many opportunities to live, learn, and express our faith. The summer fellowship began with a bible study led by Rev. Fr. Joel Mathew at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Houston on June 26th. We were given the opportunity to talk and learn more about Rahab from the Bible. Moving on, Soccer, board games, and fellowship all came underway during game night on July 7th at St. Thomas Orthodox Cathedral. In



honor of the 2014 FIFA World Cup, Soccer matches were held outside while other social activities were held inside. One of the main purposes of MGOCSM is service and on August 2nd, fellow MGOCSM members gathered together at the Houston Food Bank to help pack and sort food boxes for those in need of assistance. Many of those who receive such packages are those who don't qualify for food stamps or are in some sort of financial crises where buying food is not on the top of the list as a financial priority. Such is the case seen today, not only in Houston, but around the country. As the day came to an end, the participants from our MGOCSM as well as groups from other organizations packed over 20,000 lbs of food for those in such circumstances. To close the summer off, St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Houston hosted its annual Back to School Orientation camp which was led by fellow St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminarian, Mrs. Ceena Varghese on August 16th, 2014. The day consisted of morning prayer, large group sessions over spirituality on campus, how to be a better orthodox Christian student, and Houston area MGOCSM's first ever career fair. The career fair consisted of highly trained and well qualified individuals from all of the work force. From law, to representatives from the medical field to engineering, and IT, almost all popular career options were represented and gave students a small introduction into what could be a potential career option for one's future. The overall success of the summer fellowship brought not only unity to a very large group of individuals but memories and concepts we can all carry over as the new academic school year begins.



MGOCSM Dallas/OK Team Christ 2014

By the grace of God, the Dallas/OK MGOCSM hosted their 11th annual Team Christ camp on Labor Day Weekend, from August 29th-31st, at Mount Lebanon, located in Cedar Hill, TX. The theme was "Game On" with the verse taken from 1 Corinthians 9:25, "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." Participants from Dallas, Houston, and New York, were in attendance. Rev. Fr. Christopher Mathew (Vicar, St. James Orthodox Mission Church) was the main speaker. Achen's

messages, and the various activities related to the theme were well enjoyed by the participants. Rev. Fr. Mat Alexander (Dallas/OK Area Youth Minister), the co-conveners Sanel Thomas and Ashley Roy, as well as the rest of the Team Christ committee deserve special appreciation for making this year's Team Christ camp a blessed success! Glory to God!

Around the Diocese

MGOCSM Northwest Regional Conference

By the grace of God, the Northwest Region's Third Annual Regional Conference went amazingly. The conference took place in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada from August 15th – 17th. The theme for this year's conference was taken from Isaiah 60:1, "Shine for your light has come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you." Participants for the conference came from St. Gregorios Church, Vancouver, St. Mary's Church, Calgary, St. Gregorios Church, Spokane, as well as participants from Fort McMurray. We were so blessed to have had Rev. Fr Joel Mathew, as well as Shini Kochamma from Houston joining us. Through Joel Achen's



wise words we became enlightened on the topics of 'Shine in This World of Living Darkness', 'Youth and the Future of our Church', and the 'Holy Qurbana'. His words were very applicable to our lives, especially having grown up in North America. We also had the privilege of having Rev. Dn Pradeep Hatcher, and Rev. Dn. Gabriel Pike join us as well. Pradeep Shemassen is well versed in our liturgical hymns. It was an absolute blessing to use the Sh'himo prayers books, and learn the different tones we use in church through him. Gabriel Pike Shemmasen is an individual who has had a vast amount of life experience, and by hearing his stories we were able to relate to the challenges we may face in this society. The Edmonton parish vicar, Rev. Fr Shabu Varghese and Shiny Kochamma were a constant support for all us youth, and with their guidance and support we were able to host a truly blessed conference.



Dearly Beloved,



As you are aware of the crisis in Syria and many other countries throughout the Middle East, there is a great number of people suffering and in moments of severe distress. Especially for the nation of Syria, people are fleeing their own country and praying for survival, and the level of persecution they are facing, especially Christians, is unimaginable. It is moments like these, we need to share in the burden and struggle of our brothers and sisters, and turn a helping hand. Our Diocese will be collecting funds to help support the relief efforts in Syria by initiating a charitable project. Please announce this in your respective parishes, and let us work together to make this a considerable collection during this season of giving. The Diocesan Secretary Rev Fr. Dr. Joy Pyngolil will communicate the details of the organization it will be distributed through along with the information of where and how it shall be sent.

Your Shepherd in Christ,
Alexios Mar Eusebius Metropolitan

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

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God Bless You

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**Mar Barnabas Memorial
Scholarship Reipients**

Would you like to include your parish in the KNOW OUR PARISH column of our Diocesan Newsletter 'The Stream' ?

With the approval of the vicar please send 2 or 3 pictures and a short write up mentioning the history and spiritual activities of the parish to thestreamdswa@gmail.com

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Angalie Ann Koshy St. Thomas, Dallas, TX 2

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MGOCSM DEVOTIONALS

<http://www.mgocsmamerica.com/devotionals>

MGOCSM North America releases weekly devotionals based on the Gospel readings for each week. These devotionals are written by leaders of the Church- both clergy and lay leaders. This is a great way to revamp your week with self-reflection and in the word. Please subscribe and spread the word in your areas as well

MERRY
& CHRISTMAS
HAPPY
NEW YEAR 2015

