

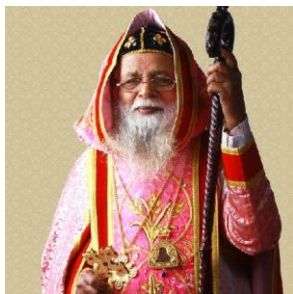


The Stream

A monthly publication of the Diocese of South-West America

February 2013

Vol. 2 Issue 2



Remembering Mar Osthathios the "Jewel of the Church"

The 1st memorial feast of "Sabharathnam" H.G. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Osthathios, former Metropolitan of the Niranam Diocese, was also celebrated in various parishes in our Diocese. Thirumeni was one of the greatest jewels God gave to our church. He cared deeply about the Mission of our church and spent much of his life on missionary activity, in uplifting the poor and downtrodden and wrote countless articles and books on the upliftment of the oppressed and other social justice issues. His great dream was to make Trinitarian love a reality on earth. Under his guidance, the St. Paul's Mission Training Center in Mavelikara has grown to be a uniquely important coordinating center for missionary activity in our church.



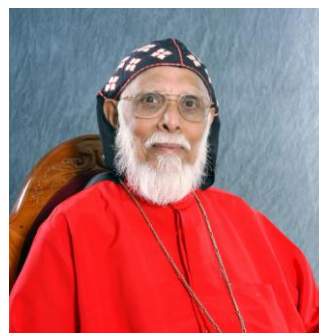
St. Dionysius of Vattasseril
"Enlightener of the Church"



Feast Day: February 23

Remembering the First Met. of The American Diocese

The 5th memorial feast of the former Metropolitan of the American Diocese, H.G. Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios was celebrated in various parishes across the Diocese of South-West America. Thirumeni was instrumental in the setting up of and growth of churches in America. His Grace had a unique ability to explain the inner meaning of biblical truths to ordinary people in simple terms. H.H. The Catholicos celebrated the memorial Holy Qurbana at Devalokam Aramana Chapel.



"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly"

What's News this Month

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Episcopal visits during Holy Week 2013



The following Metropolitans will be conducting Holy Week services in various parishes in our Diocese: Diocesan Metropolitan: St. Thomas Cathedral, Houston; HG Dr Mathews Mar Severios: various parishes in Florida; HG Zachariah Mar Theophilos: Edmonton St. Gregorios; HG Dr Gabriel Mar Gregorios: San Francisco St. Gregorios.

St. Matthew 6:16-18

Ecumenical Corner

Election of New Patriarch for the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

His Holiness Abuna Mathias was enthroned as the 6th Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on Sunday, March 3, 2013. The enthronement ceremony held at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa, was attended by many bishops and church leaders from around the world.

Abuna Mathias was elected as the new Patriarch the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church on Thursday February 28, 2013, succeeding Patriarch Paulos who passed away on August 16, 2012. He was serving as the Archbishop of the Ethiopian Church in Jerusalem before his election as Patriarch.

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church was represented by His Holiness Baselios Mar Thoma Paulose II, the Catholicos of the East. Bavathirumeni led a delegation that included Metropolitans Dr. Gabriel Mar Gregorios, Dr. Yuhanon Mar Dioscoros, Rev. Fr. Dr. Johns Abraham Priest Trustee of Malankara Orthodox Church, Rev. Fr. Jossie Jacob, Rev. Fr. Abraham Thomas, Rev. Dn. Jiss Johnson and Managing Committee Member Jacob Mathew (Jojo).

The night before the Enthronement Service, Bava thirumeni hosted a dinner to honor the newly elected Patriarch, and the dinner was attended by bishops and church leaders who came to attend the enthronement service. Bava Thirumeni felicitated H.H. Abuna Mathias and stressed the unity that our two churches share.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tawehdo Church is an ancient church that dates back to the times of the time of the apostles when the Ethiopian Royal official was baptized by St. Philip as recorded in Acts 8: 26-27. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church belongs to the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches.





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.
 Please send prayer requests to: sooboro@ds-wa.org
 Phone #: (218) 632-0187
 Access code: 3703#

Metropolitan's Column

Metropolitan's Column

We are nearing the middle of the Great Lent when the Golgotha is placed in the center of the church, and the Holy Cross is ceremoniously placed on top with special prayers and the offering of incense. Golgotha is another name for Calvary. In St. Mathew 27:33 we read, "...They had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull." In Hebrew, gulgōleth, is skull. It is symbolic that Jesus was crucified on Golgotha because a skull is a symbol of death. Christ crucified on this skull and the shedding of his blood gave life to all those who were considered dead. The Cross placed on the Golgotha, thus, is the life-giving cross. Placing the Cross on the Golgotha is our declaration that we are placing the cross at the center of our lives with all hope in it.

In the book of Numbers (21:8), we read the LORD telling Moses to "Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to a pole. All who are bitten will live if they simply look at it." When Israel sinned and was punished to death by the bite of the poisonous serpent, they were saved by the image which was placed in the center of their camp. Similarly, the Holy Cross which was placed on Golgotha in the center of the world over 2000 years ago was for life, that is, the forgiveness of our sins and salvation in Christ. During Holy Week, we take this cross from the center of the church and place it in the front of the church. It reminds us that the Cross is the center for meditation and all of the prayers and hymns are centered on the Cross during Holy Week. We also do not offer prayers of intercession to the Saints during Holy Week in order to center our attention to the passion of our Lord.

The Great Lent is an occasion to evaluate and to do a comprehensive audit of our life. Let us bring all our sins, shortcomings and weaknesses to the cross and be cleansed and renewed in Christ. Let us make that journey to the upper room where Christ served the Passover meal to his disciples, let us journey along with the women and the disciples to endure the passion with our Lord, and let us prepare ourselves in every way to receive the peace that comes through our Resurrected Savior..

*Your Shepherd in Christ,
Alexios Mar Eusebius*

Ecumenical Corner - cont'd



Pope Benedict XVII Retires

This month marks a historic event in the life in the Catholic Church, because for the first time in 600 plus years, the Pope of Rome is stepping down and retiring. It has been the tradition of the Roman Church that the Pope maintains his authority over the church until his death, upon which time the Cardinals of the Church elect a new Pope.

This month Pope Benedict announced that due to his old age and failing health, he cannot fulfill his obligation to fully lead the church as is needed now, and has chosen to take the step to retire. In his farewell message, he said that he is not leaving the church, but will continue to pray for the church in retirement.

Let us pray for Pope Benedict in his retirement and for the Roman Catholic Church as she prepares to elect a new Pope to shepherd the flock of the Roman Catholic Church.

*****Papal Conclave: How the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church is elected*****

A papal conclave is a meeting of the College of Cardinals convened to elect a new Bishop of Rome, Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. The conclave has been the procedure for choosing the pope for more than half of the time the church has been in existence, and is the oldest ongoing method for choosing the leader of an institution. Since the Apostolic Age, the Pope of Rome was chosen by the consensus of the clergy and laity of the diocese. In 1059 the electors for the Pope was limited to the College of Cardinals.

On the day the conclave begins, the cardinals will celebrate Mass in St. Peter's Basilica and then head to the Sistine Chapel, where they'll take an oath of secrecy and pledge to avoid interference by outside groups. Only Cardinals below the age of 80 are allowed to go to vote. Cardinals over this age do not participate in the voting process in the Sistine Chapel. The cardinals can begin voting that day. If no one receives the necessary two-thirds vote to become pope, they meet again the following day for another round of balloting. After counting the ballots are then burned, and chemicals are added to make the smoke white -- if a pope is selected -- or black if no one gets the two-thirds vote. The process continues with two votes in the morning and two in the afternoon until a new pope is chosen. If after the third day, no one is selected, the voting is suspended for at least a day for prayer and discussion among the cardinal electors. When someone receives the required two-thirds vote the newly elected person is asked if he wants to be pope and what he would like his name to be. The name is then announced to those gathered in St. Peter's Square, and the pope may speak to the crowd.



Regional Family and Youth Conference (RF&YC)



Update on Regional Family and Youth Conferences (RF&YC)

For 2013, the Family and Youth Conferences will be held at the regional level. The main theme is the same for all regions: One Body, Though Many Parts (1 Cor 12:12).

The **South** region will hold its RF&YC at the University of Texas, San Antonio, from July 3-6, 2013. Rev. Fr. Raju Daniel is the Conference Convener. The Conference leaders are expected to be H.G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Demetrius, Metropolitan of Delhi Diocese, and Rev. Fr. Dr. Reji Mathew, Dean of Studies, Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam, with Rev. Fr. James Cheriyan, Mrs. Liz Pike and Mrs. Achamma Philip as workshop leaders.

The **Midwest** region will hold its RF&YC at the Shishewana Conference and Event Center, Shishewana, Indiana, from July 10-13, 2013. Rev. Fr. Daniel George is the Conference Director; Rev. Fr. Abraham (Abi) Chacko is the Conference Convener while Mrs. Sibyl Chacko is the Conference Coordinator. The Conference leaders are expected to be H.G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Demetrius, Metropolitan, and H.G. Dr. Abraham Mar Seraphim, Metropolitan of Bangalore Diocese.

The **West** region will hold its RF&YC at the Double Tree Hilton Resort at Tempe, Arizona, from July 18-21, 2013. Rev. Fr. Slomo Isac George is the Conference Convener. The Conference Coordinator is Mr. Rajan K. John. The Youth Convener is Dn. Saju Varghese and the Youth Coordinator is Rohit John Mathew. The Conference leaders are expected to be H.G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Demetrius, Metropolitan, and Rev. Fr. Dr. Reji Mathew.

The **Northwest** region will hold its RF&YC at the Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, Spokane, WA, from July 28-30, 2013. Very Rev. Fr. Michael Hatcher Cor-Episcopos is the Conference Convener. The Youth Conveners are Sunita Victor and Meklet Yigezu. The Conference is expected to be led by H.G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Demetrius, Metropolitan, and other leaders.

MGOC SM DEVOTIONALS

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

Beginning Wednesday January 30th, 2013, MGOC SM North America will be releasing weekly devotionals based on the Gospel readings for each week. These devotionals will be written by the leaders of the Church - both clergy and lay leaders. This will be 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!

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.

Slootho prayer, Devotional message,
Intercessory prayer for the needy & the sick.

Please send prayer requests to: slootho@ds-wa.org

Phone # (218) 632-0187

Access code: 3703#

From Around the Diocese

"Jesus Loves Me" Valentine's Day Event!!



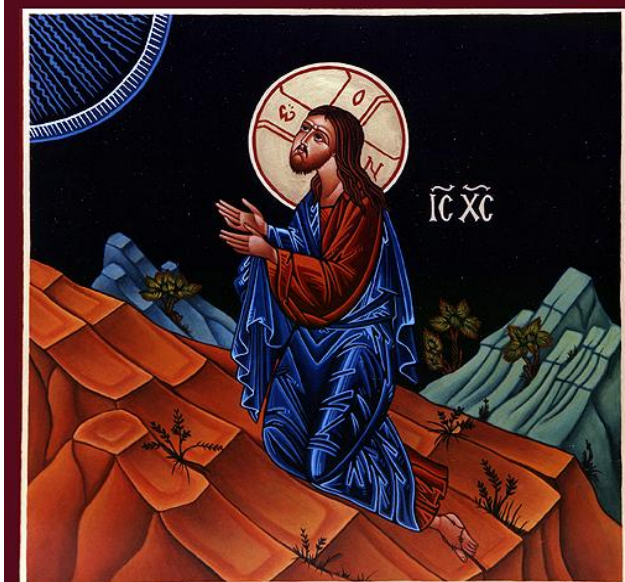
MGOCSM Valentine's Day at St. Gregorios, Houston

The MGOCSM of St Gregorios Orthodox Church hosted a babysitting event on Saturday, February 9th 2013, with the theme of "Jesus Loves Me". The goal of the event was to help young parents to have some time of their own before Valentine's Day.

Members arrived early to set up for the event. Parents started to arrive around 4:00pm to drop off the children. Family pictures were taken at arrival. The children were engaged in activities including word games, coloring pictures, art projects and other board games. Snacks and drinks were available. Rev. Dn. Daniel Mathai talked to the children about Saint Valentine. Next, Jobin and Betsy Mammen taught an action song. The children continued with their art projects until dinner was served. Dinner was pizza, followed by the screening of the movie, Madagascar 3.

Around 8pm, parents started to return. The children were happy and parents thought this was a well-planned event. The volunteers too had fun interacting with the little ones.

Though the event was free, MGOCSM did receive a total of three hundred dollars in donations which will be used for the Lenten Retreat.



"And though every day a man lives may rightly be a day of repentance, yet is it in these days more becoming, more appropriate, to confess our sins, to fast, and to give alms to the poor; since in these days you may wash clean the sins of the whole year." - **St. John Chrysostom**

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thestreamdswa@gmail.com

From Around the Diocese

MGOCSM North America looks towards the Future

The MGOCSM of North America is blessed to have leaders who are dedicated to serving the church and its youth. We extend our thanks to former General Secretary, Rev. Fr. Vijay Thomas, former General Treasurer, Rev. Dn. Teji Abraham and all the past National Council Members. The national organization welcomes and anticipates great things from its newly appointed leaders. MGOCSM of North America's new leadership consists of Rev. Dn. Daniel Mathai as General Secretary and Mr. Georgie George as General Treasurer. The following are the newly elected National Council Members in each area of the South-West Diocese:

- Ms. Jo-Ann Thomas, Atlanta
- Mr. Stephen Mathew, California
- Ms. Susan Zacharia, Chicago
- Mr. Jithin Zachariah, Dallas/Oklahoma
- Mr. Shannon Mathew, Detroit
- Ms. Rachel Pyngolil, Florida
- Mr. Bibin Mammen, Houston/San Antonio/Austin
- Mr. Bennie Parayil, Seattle/Edmonton



On January 4-6, the former and the new leaders and Council Members from across the nation met together in Philadelphia, PA. The meeting was presided by His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovos, President of the MGOCSM of North America. Leaders made the decision to adopt the 2013 Leadership Camp theme, "Ignite the Fire," as the current vision for MGOCSM. This vision aims to improve ministry in parishes and areas which do not currently have functioning MGOCSMs by arranging parish visits and providing practical leadership training to students. There is also an undeniable need in the organization to extend focus on those youth who have left the church. The National Council strives to cater to this need by redefining the Student Movement's existing ministry to proactively address the contemporary needs and struggles which are specific to this generation.

Several new ministry objectives were discussed among Council Members, these projects will serve as resources for improving the spiritual health of youth across North America.

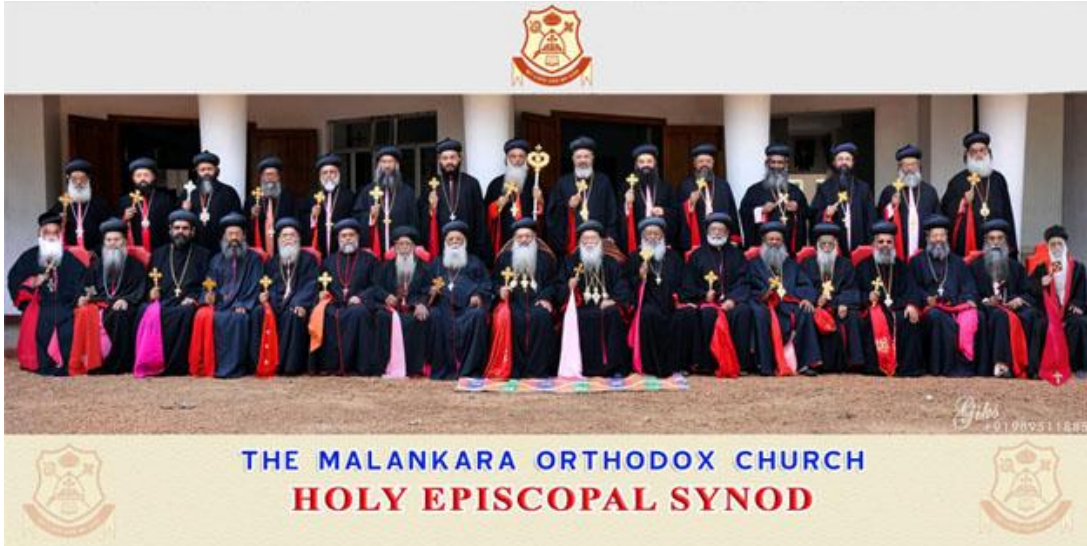
- A training and education program will be developed to function as online catechism training and will provide students with a summary of the basic principles of the church.
- Existing video documentary resources, composed by clergy and seminarians, will be expanded to include even more guidance for students to study the tenets of our faith.
- Devotionals written by clergy as well as FOCUS-aged leaders across both American Dioceses, will be posted on the MGOCSM of North America website every Wednesday and are available via e-mail subscription (www.mgocsmamerica.com/devotionals).
- Campus Ministry launched its Alumni Network, which seeks to create a directory of all past leaders of the MGOCSM who may be contacted to function as mentors, advisors, or prayerful support for the Student Movement (www.tiny.cc/mgocsmalumni).

Along with these new projects, the organization is continuing its work towards annual summer events such as Leadership Camp and Missions Trip.

- National Leadership Camp, will be held on July 24-27, 2013 in Philadelphia, PA with the theme, "Ignite the Fire" from St. Matthew 5:15-16 (www.mgocsmamerica.com/leadership-camp/plc2013).
- Missions of North America launched its annual Missions Calendar fundraiser at the end of January. This year's calendar theme features the churches of India and contains high-quality pictures and brief descriptions of twelve churches and seminaries. Multiple one-week domestic trips and a one-month international trip to India will be arranged between June and August.

The new MGOCSM leaders are ardently driven to work for the spiritual wellness of all its youth, especially those who have become distant from the church. We ask for the continued prayers and support for the strength and ministry of this Student Movement and its leaders.

Holy Synod



Holy Synod plans for Future of the Church

The Holy Episcopal Synod met at Catholicate palace, Devalokam, Kerala, from February 18-22, 2013. His Holiness Didymus I Valiya Bava was present at the Inaugural Session. His Holiness Paulose II Catholica Bava presided over the Holy Synod.

His Holiness exhorted that one must lead a life of dedication to face today's unique challenges and that one must work for the growth of church and society. The report of the previous Holy Synod meeting was presented by the Secretary of the Holy Synod, HG Dr Mathews Mar Severios, Metropolitan. The Holy Synod expressed its condolence over the demise of Barnabas Thirumeni. It was decided that a group led by His Holiness the Catholicos will be present at the installation ceremony of the new Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. HG Dr Mathews Mar Severios was appointed coordinator of "Study Circles" that were formed in the following areas: Liturgy, Canon Law, Family Renewal, Theology, Youth, Women's Issues, Ecology, Education, Duties of Clergy, Spiritual Life and Diaspora Matters. It was decided to honor Kayamkulam Philipose Ramban, the first to translate the Holy Bible in Malayalam, with the title "Vedarathnam".



CHRIST THE GREAT HEALER

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! - Psalms 107: 19-21

Know our Parish

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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.ds-wa.org

St. Stephen's Orthodox Church, Houston, TX

(www.houstonststephens.org)

St. Stephen's Orthodox Church was consecrated on October 15, 1994 by HG Mathews Mar Barnabas, the Metropolitan of the then American Diocese. Rev. Fr. C.O. Vargis has served as the Vicar of the parish since its inception, and we have been blessed with the spiritual care of Rev. Fr. M.T. Philip over the years. In May 2012, our Diocesan Metropolitan, HG Alexios Mar Eusebius, appointed Rev. Fr. Jake Kurian to serve as the Assistant Vicar of the parish.

St. Stephen's Houston strives to harbor in its members, a relationship with Christ and a love for His Church. The unique feature of St. Stephen's Houston is that we have fostered a feeling of true family. We believe that fellowship among believers is important in developing the spiritual life of a worshipping community. This fellowship is nurtured through worship, spiritual retreats, house prayers, social events, camps, talent programs, service projects, and faith studies.

The focus for our church has always been, and continues to remain, on the next generation faithful. Vargis Achen has worked tirelessly to compile prayer books and service books to be used by the adults and kids outside of Kerala. We have services completely in English twice a month, and much of our other liturgies and feast days are conducted in English to



engage the understanding, participation, and devotion of our young adults and children in this country.

St. Stephen's looks to engage our young generation to lead the parish, as many of them are serving in the Managing Committee, Sunday School, and other ministries in the parish. Many of the elders are founding members of the Indian Orthodox worshipping community in Houston, and they provide continual guidance, support, and encouragement. All of this is conducive for our parish to try and meet the spiritual needs of our 2nd and 3rd generation faithful. If ever in the Houston area, please do make time to visit our parish and join us for worship.

Through the prayers of St. Stephen, the Protomartyr, O Christ our God have mercy upon us and help us.

