



The Stream

A monthly publication of the Diocese of South-West America

Great Lent 2015

March 2015
Vol.4 Issue 1



UPCOMING DATES 2015

40th Friday
March 27

Lazarus Saturday
March 28

Palm Sunday
March 29

Holy Thursday
(PESAHA)
April 2

Good(Holy) Friday
April 3

Holy Saturday
April 4

Easter Sunday
(Resurrection)
April 5



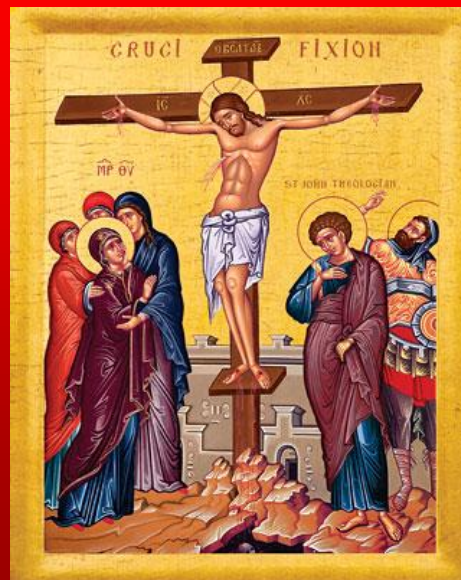
"And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the Good News of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the Good News." - Mark 1:12-15

"Fasting is wonderful, because it tramples our sins like a dirty weed, while it cultivates and raises truth like a flower."

St. John
Chrysostom



"O, Lord Jesus Christ Son Of God, Have Mercy on Me a Sinner"



HOLY WEEK 2015

What's News this Month

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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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**Catholicate Day
March 22, 2015**

Metropolitan's Column

Metropolitan's Column

Dearly Beloved,

We have once again come upon the period of the Great Lent. Jesus Christ begins his public ministry preceded by a fast that follows the fast of the great prophets Moses and Elijah who also fasted in the wilderness for forty days. Fasting is seen as a great weapon that defeats all evils. We are reminded of this daily during the Great Lent when we sing the Boovoso of St. Ephrem just before sleep:

**Both Moses and Elijah
fasted forty days and nights
as our Lord also fasted
and conquered the evil one**

In Exodus 34:28, we see Moses fasting 40 days and 40 nights prior to receiving and writing the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. We see that Moses used the spiritual discipline of fasting to properly hear the Lord and fulfill what God asked of him. In a similar way, when we fast, we cut out the distractions in our life to hear God and be obedient to His commandments.

The prophet Elijah also fasted 40 days and nights and retreated in a cave (1 Kings 19:8-9). Though Elijah won a great victory for God at Mt. Carmel by revealing to the people of Israel that there is only one true God who accepts proper sacrifices and praise, when he came to know that his life was in danger because of the evil king, Ahab, and his wife, Jezbel, he fasted. In a similar way, when we fast, we become mindful of our sin and realize the works of the enemy in us that lead us to spiritual death. We must seek after God to help us find the Life that He wills for us.

Finally, we see that the fast that Christ endured prepared him for his public ministry, passion, death, and resurrection. The fast prepared Christ for His victory over Satan, ultimately allowing Him to overcome the temptations of Satan and defeat death by His own death. When we fast during the Great Lent, we are journeying with Christ to overcome the shadows of death that are upon us because of our sin, and to be raised with Christ for eternal life.

It is clear that we live in a world today where satanic forces are increasingly dominating and the Christian life and its basic values are in great danger. The basic spiritual disciplines that Christ taught us such as silence, prayer, abstinence, meditation and fasting must be seriously considered and implemented in our lives in order to obtain control over our passions and victory over the evil one. If we accustom ourselves simply to advancement in technology and the pleasures of modern life, it will certainly be challenging to master ourselves from the sins of the world. Just like Eve, the mother of humanity, was tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit which she found to be good for food, delightful to the eyes and making one wise (Gen 3:6), we in our daily lives repeatedly commit the same sin and make ourselves unworthy of Paradise. It is our hope that the spiritual journey during this year's Great Lent will lead us on the path to Calvary, the Cross, and the empty tomb. May this spiritual journey through the Great Lent period lead us to a real transformation that is marked by a real confession and cleansing from our Lord.

Your shepherd in Christ,
Alexios Mar Eusebius

Ecumenical Corner

Metropolitan visit to Belgium



On January 25, 2015, H.G. Alexios Mar Eusebius attended the feast day celebrations of the conversion of St. Paul at the Pro-Cathedral of the Holy Trinity (Anglican) in Brussels, Belgium. Thirumeni was invited to the celebration by Rev. John Wilkinson, who welcomed thirumeni along with the rest of the church community. Thirumeni was able to participate in the prayer for unity for all Christians, especially those suffering because of civil war and religious fanaticism. Thirumeni was able to provide insight on the history of the Malankara Church in India, as well as the growing Malankara Orthodox communities in Europe and in North America.



Memory Eternal - Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko (1939 - 2015)

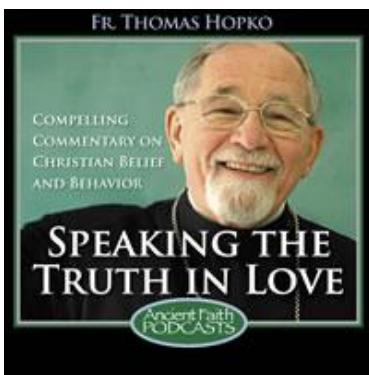
Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko, 76, dean emeritus of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Crestwood, New York, and noted Orthodox Christian priest, theologian, preacher, and speaker, fell asleep in the Lord at Good Samaritan Hospice of Concordia, Wexford, PA, on March 18, 2015.

Father Thomas was the beloved husband of Matushka Anne [Schmemmann] Hopko. They were married on June 9, 1963. Together, Fr. Thomas and Anne are the parents of five children, sixteen grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. The Very Reverend Dr. John Behr, current Dean of St. Vladimir's, noted the influence that Fr. Thomas has had on his own life, saying, "Fr. Tom quite literally changed my life, bringing me to St. Vladimir's Seminary, and thereafter inspiring me with a love of Scripture and the Gospel. "His reach and touch has been immeasurable for so many, and not least upon the seminary," he continued. "He will be sorely missed, but his touch and influence remain. May he rest in peace and rise in glory!"

Ordained to the Holy Priesthood in August 1963, Fr. Thomas served several parishes as pastor and was honored with the clerical rank of Archpriest in 1970 and the rank of Protopresbyter in 1995. Beginning in 1968, Fr. Thomas began his long service to St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. Over the years, Fr. Thomas played many roles and inspired his students. Many priests and bishops of the Malankara Orthodox Church studied at the Seminary and were mentored by Fr. Thomas. During his tenure at St. Vladimir's Seminary, the relationship of the Malankara Church and with the seminary grew and we now can be proud of the integral role the seminary continues to play in the training of our new Priests in America .



During his years of priestly ministry, Fr. Thomas authored numerous books and articles. Most well known of these publications is *The Orthodox Faith: An Elementary Handbook on the Orthodox Church*. A prolific speaker and preacher, he spoke at conferences, retreats, public lectures, and Church gatherings of all kinds, many of which were recorded. Upon retirement, Fr. Thomas and Anne moved to Ellwood City, PA, where they lived near the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration, and Fr. Thomas began a new ministry: internet-based Orthodox Christian radio talks. Since 2008, Fr. Thomas has produced well over 400 podcasts for Ancient Faith Radio. Father Thomas exercised untiring and loving pastoral care on behalf many who sought him out for spiritual guidance. His greatest desire was that every person would respond to these words of Jesus Christ: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)





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#



Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

Diocese of South - West America

FAMILY AND YOUTH CONFERENCE

Dallas - 2015



- ✦ Chief Guest His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Paulose II
- ✦ Presided by His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius
- ✦ Keynote Speaker Rev. Fr. Dr. Varghese Varghese



The Home: A Church

"Today, Salvation has come to this house" St. Luke 19:9



Date : July 8-11 (Wed - Sat)

Venue : Hotel Inter Continental - Dallas

15201 Dallas Parkway, Addison, TX 75001

Website : www.FYC2015.com

Malayalam Sessions:
Keynote Addresses by
renowned speaker:
Rev. Fr. Dr.Varghese Varghese

English Sessions:
Engaging selection of
Workshops led by Clergy
and Lay Leaders of the DS-WA

MGOC SM Sessions: (13-18)
Activity Driven Curriculum
both fun and educational

Children (3-12)
Stories, Lessons, Crafts,
Games, and more!

- Activities & Recreation in the Afternoon - Dazzling Entertainment in the Evening

Great Lent

GREAT L-E-N-T- Rev. Fr. James Cheriyan

The Great Lent is a period of time that can transform and mould us for a lifetime. This sort of an inner transformation happens when we let our souls and our bodies be submerged in an experience of prayer and being in the very life of Christ and thus, bear much fruit.

***Learning***

What should I learn from this period? In lenten period is a school of spirituality in itself. This is a good time for us to take a break from our normal routine of life. Not just from hamburgers and chicken but also a break from gossip, pride, envy and all those other passions within us that hinders the experience of true joy and peace in our lives. This is a good time to find a solid chunk of time that can be dedicated to the reading of scriptures and the lives and teaching of the Holy Fathers and Mothers of the Church. Learning drives out the darkness of ignorance from our souls.

Entering into the Divine Presence

Lent calls us to leave the world aside and to enter into the Presence of the Living God. Moses had to climb up from the foot of Mount Sinai to its top. A break from the world is almost unimaginable for us living in this world and this present age. If prayer has not been a habit in us then lent is a good to cultivate it. Lent calls for an alienation from the world and an entrance into the presence of God. Try it to know what a great difference it makes within us.

Negating Myself

Negation of the self should not be taken as a negative approach to life. Living in a consumeristic culture and a consumeristic society We always want to have everything our way. We want our will to be executed at our time. Negation of the self means substituting the 'I' with 'GOD'; substituting the 'I' with 'MY FELLOW BEINGS'. Negation of ourselves prepares us to consider God's will and to have it His way and according to His time. Negation of the self breaks the bonds of the 'I, ME MYSELF' syndrome. Look at the Cross of our Lord. It is a 'I' broken from the center for the life and salvation of the world.

Transformation

This is the crux of the Orthodox faith and practice - a complete transformation of the body, mind and soul. There should be an ontological change that has to happen within us and this process is called as Theosis or Deification. Through fasting, prostrations, the veneration of the Cross, through the control of my tongue, my mind and my senses and above all the inner prayer that arises from my heart seeking the mercy of the Holy Trinity, does not allow us to remain in the same state of sin and despair. Thus Lent moulds and transforms the one who keeps it well.

Thus L-E-N-T is wonderful process of LEARNING, ENTERING, NEGATING AND TRANSFORMING. Do not miss out on such a great experience, the coming days gives us another opportunity leading us to the love of the Cross and the joyful experience of an inner light radiating from the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the Holy Spirit teach us, enter into us, help us negate our darkness and thus transform us. All glory and honor, worship and adoration be to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, One True God, now and forever unto ages of ages AMEN+

MGOC SM DEVOTIONALS

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

MGOC SM 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

Around the Diocese

Atlanta's New Year's Retreat

This year's Atlanta Area MGOCSM New Year's Retreat was located at St. Mary's Orthodox Church in Atlanta, Georgia. The event began on Friday, January 30th, with Evening Prayer and Acolyte training, followed by an evening of fun and games. The following day, Saturday the 31st, began with Morning Prayer and an introduction by Rev. Fr. Mat Alexander to topics such as "Where do your roots come from?", "What are your influences?", "Who are you trying to please?", and "Are we doing God's will?". We were blessed with the presence of Achen from Dallas, Texas, for both days. He spoke about the aforementioned topics, as well as "waiting" and not "burning out." The



theme of the retreat was Isaiah 40:31 – "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint". During the retreat, there were breakout sessions in which different age groups gathered to discuss the difficulties they faced in daily life and solutions to those problems. All in all, it was a blessed weekend, filled with spiritual rejuvenation. Let us continue to keep the MGOCSM ministry and the well-being and growth of all the faithful in the Atlanta Area in prayer.

Chicago Winter One-Day Retreat

The annual Chicago Winter One-Day Retreat took place on Saturday, January 11th, at the St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Elmhurst. The conference leaders taught about sanctification of time and space, abiding in Christ through suffering, the importance of having Christ in your life, and life after death. The speakers for this year's retreat were: Rev. Fr. Aju Mathews, Rev. Fr. Teji Abraham, Rev. Dn. Arun Varghese, and Lijin Raju. During the retreat, a service activity was conducted in which the youth wrote letters to the Iraqi Christians who are facing persecution from ISIS. Let us continue to keep the MGOCSM ministry and spiritual well-being of all those in the Chicago Area in prayer.



Around the Diocese

California Nativity Retreat

By the Grace of God, the California region had a Nativity Retreat from December 21st to December 24th. The Nativity Retreat was held at the Holy Cross Monastery in Castro Valley, California (Northern California). Rev. Dn. Saju Varghese & Rev. Dn. Arun Varghese provided leadership and support for the retreat. The 3.5 days revolved around silence, the liturgical prayers, and work. We learned and used the liturgical prayers of the Nativity Feast at the indicated hours of the day (7 PM, 10 PM, 3 AM, 6 AM, 9 AM, 12 PM, 3 PM). There were no messages, keynote addresses, or seminars. Instead, many discussions stemmed from learning and using the liturgical prayers as well as from the hours of silence, which allowed the students to meditate, reflect on themselves, or even read through spiritual books (i.e. God and Man by Metropolitan Anthony Bloom). Lastly, the students spent some time with the monks that lived at the monastery and assisted them with their day to day activities and manual labor such as making walkways and cleaning the forestry.



Dallas/OK Area MGOCSM Service Project

The Dallas/OK Area MGOCSM February Service Even, hosted by St. James Missions Church, took place on Saturday, January 31st, 2015. Most of the Dallas/OK Area churches had volunteers representing their churches. This Area Service Event actually consisted of two projects instead of one main project. One of the projects was held at an interactive food pantry for the homeless and the needy called, "Metrocrest". The other project was held at a child day care/child education center, named "Vogel Alcove", that focused on catering to the needs of children of homeless



families and/or children of families in domestic violence situations. At Vogel Alcove, some of the volunteers helped organized items that would later be given to families in situations of homelessness or domestic violence, such as clothes, shoes etc. At Metrocrest, the volunteers helped stock food items and assisted those in need of food by personally helping them search for what they needed. This service project was a great success and a huge blessing for those who were able to go and serve. The Dallas/OK Area MGOCSM wanted to serve the community in a way that would ensure those who went to volunteer would have an impact directly of some sort. The Dallas/OK Area MGOCSM was able to improve the lives of the less fortunate in the Dallas Area, indirectly and personally. God willing, the Dallas Area/OK MGOCSM will be able to do more similar projects in the future and make a difference in our community.

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

Phone # (218) 632-0187

Access code: 3703#



Around The Diocese

Houston New Year's Conference 2015



St. Thomas MGOCSM had their annual New Year's Conference this year from January 1st to 4th at St. Thomas Cathedral. This year's theme was Crossroads: "What Would You Do?". The main speaker for this event was our very own Dn. Abey George. Semassen's talks were inspirational and thought provoking. He spoke about the paths that are laid before us, but before we look at the paths, we need to figure out where we are now & then where we want to be. There may be many paths, but the path we should be concerned about is the one that will take us to be communion with Christ. In addition, NYC'15 incorporated Outstanding workshops led by Dn. Abey George on Anger and Stress Management, Joby Abraham & Jobby Jacob on Serving the Church, and Lijin Raju on Life after Death, as well as Bijoy Thomas on an amazing and eye-opening Icon Workshop. The conference was a success thanks to many of our volunteers and speakers. It was a Blessing to have fellowship and come together in communion with Christ! All glory to God for a blessed conference!

DS-WA MGOCSM Council Weekend - Urshlem Diocesan Center

The MGOCSM Council of the South-West American Diocese met this past weekend from January 16th to January 18th to continue the ministry of MGOCSM. The meeting was presided by His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius (Metropolitan and President of MGOCSM of the Diocese of South-West America). Additionally, Rev. Fr. Joel Mathew (Diocese MGOCSM General Secretary) and Ms. Sangeetha Thomas (Diocesan MGOCSM Joint-Secretary) were also present at the meeting. As the meeting began, His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius reminded the Council the importance of using the ministry of MGOCSM to reach all potential members throughout the parishes of our diocese, big or small. Often times smaller units are overlooked and, in turn, the Body of Christ suffers. Joel Achen added to the opening remarks in stressing the importance of the position to which the new Council Members were appointed. The Council was reminded to take initiative in all tasks to further the growth of this ministry. After the English Sh'himo Prayer initiative started, the Malankara Orthodox Church in America was introduced to a beautiful and ancient tradition. All around the Diocese we can see MGOCSM participants participating in sh'himo prayers at retreats, conference, and even their own homes. As this initiative continues onto its next phase, a budget was approved to release a second edition of the prayers. This edition will include prayers for every hour, every day of the week, which will be beneficial to engage our youth into a more regular prayer life. Our Council Members presented and discussed various ministry projects for the upcoming 2015 year. Amongst the topics discussed were the Urshlem Summer Camp, Domestic Service, Leadership Camp 2016, Campus Ministry, Public Relations and International Missions. It was decided that the 2016 Leadership Camp would be hosted by the Dallas/Oklahoma Area. Members also discussed the effectiveness of Leadership Camp in recent years and explored new ideas to engage participants so that camps can continue producing the dynamic effect that it has always had on its participants. After Leadership Camps, most participants leave with a spiritual fire that burns hot and high, but that fire dies down as many settle back into school, work, and busy secular lives. To make sure our leaders in the area return to implement what they have taken from Leadership Camps, the Council discussed having continued meetings with these leaders throughout the year. The Council has recognized a need to focus on domestic services and missions. Although doing something on a national level might be tough, neighboring MGOCSM areas were encouraged to host service events to further the fellowship and charity between the coupled areas. In order to enhance participation in our MGOCSM missions events, Council Members were encouraged to embark on at least one mission trip in their new two-year term. Plans to participate in a diocesan effort to offer relief to our brothers and sisters who are undergoing persecution in the Middle East were also discussed. The Council hopes that all MGOCSM units in the diocese will continue to support all initiatives taken by this ministry. Please keep these newly appointed Council Members and all current and future endeavors of this organization in your daily thoughts and prayers. Without your support and divine guidance from God, this ministry would not be possible. Let us all do our parts to keep the MGOCSM one of the most progressive and powerful organizations in our church!



Holy Synod

HOLY EPISCOPAL SYNOD OF THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX CHURCH



The Holy Episcopal Synod of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church met in February to discuss the administration, growth, and ministeries of the Holy Church. Let us all pray for our Spiritual fathers, so that the Lord May Keep them and guide them as Good Shepherds of His Flock. Glory be to God!

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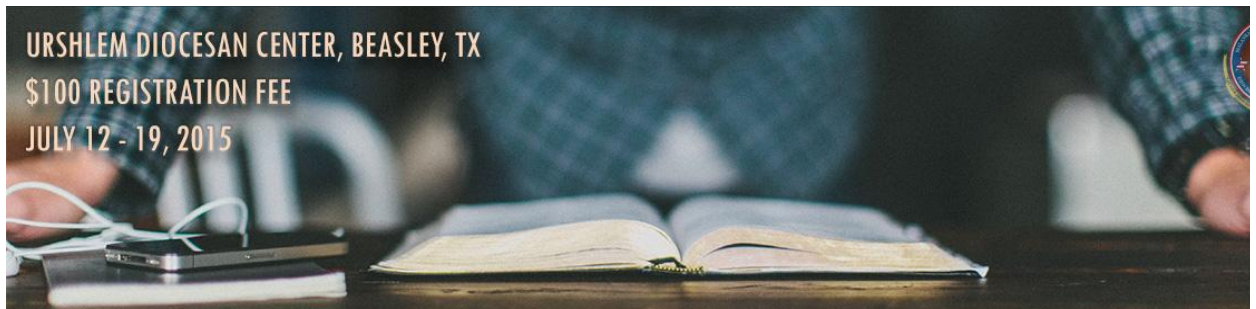
Visit us at:

www.ds-wa.org

URSHLEM DIOCESAN CENTER, BEASLEY, TX

\$100 REGISTRATION FEE

JULY 12 - 19, 2015



URSHLEM YOUTH SUMMER CAMP

"MEN OF THE KINGDOM" - GENESIS 1: 26

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN, HUSBAND, FATHER, SON, BROTHER, FRIEND, AND A LEADER

Our First Youth Summer Camp will be taking place at the Urshlem Diocesan Center in Houston from Sunday, July 12 to Sunday, July 19. The theme for this year's camp is "Men of the Kingdom" which is taken from Genesis 1:26. This camp is for young men who are entering into 11th grade all the way to their senior year in college. Please forward this form to those who are eligible to participate. Also, remember that the registration deadline is Sunday, June 1. We ask for your prayer and support.