

By the Grace of God and by the approval of Holy See, Thomas Mar Eusebius, Bishop of the Apostolic Exarchate of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in USA extend cordial greetings to all the priests, religious and faithful of the Exarchate.

Prot. No. EPL 2/2013

Praise be to the Most Holy Trinity

Dear Reverend Fathers, Sisters and Lay faithful,

For the past six weeks we have been on a spiritual journey, the journey of the Great Lent. We started the journey reflecting on the Gospel narrative of the wedding at Cana, indicative of the radicality of the inner change that we are to attain through the Lenten pilgrimage. The Lent requires of us a '*metanoia*' a true change of heart. On every following Sunday of the Lent, during the Holy Eucharist, we reflected on a particular miracle of Jesus, essentially the curing of a sick person. This reminds us of the fact that the Lenten season must aim at purging us of our inner ailments and impurities. Like the leper whom we encounter on the second Sunday of the Lent, we need to be deeply aware that we are unclean and we need to come back to Jesus so that he may cleanse us.

Soon we enter the most important stage of our Lenten pilgrimage, namely the Holy Week. Our thoughts are replete with the most crucial salvific acts of Jesus Christ, his triumphant entry into Jerusalem in order to embrace his destiny fashioned by his beloved Father, his betrayal by his disciples, his passion, his last supper, his death and resurrection. If the Lenten season is the most fruitful period in the life of a Christian for attaining spiritual growth, the Holy Week provides us the most intense experience of the salvific content of our Christian faith. The Syro-Malankara Catholic liturgy of the Holy Week is a rich and powerful enactment and reliving of this aspect of our faith. May all of us attain a very deep and enriching personal encounter with the Paschal Mystery of our Lord through the meaningful and active participation and celebration of the Holy Week in all our parishes.

The culmination of the Lenten journey and of the Holy Week is the Resurrection of our Lord. Easter is our final destiny; Easter is our ultimate hope. The resurrection of Jesus was the vindication of the life of Jesus from the part of his Father. The resurrection of Jesus gives us the guarantee that any life that tries seriously to appropriate the integrity and the intensity that characterized the life of Jesus cannot be subjected to the rule of suffering and death for ever. That life will be rewarded with the gift of resurrection by God. That life will rise in new life, endowed with peace and joy that endure for ever. I wish all of you the peace and joy of the Risen Lord!

During this whole season, our special focus is on prayer, penance and charity. Prayer enables us to improve our relation with God; penance facilitates our reconciliation with ourselves; charity helps us to improve our relation with our brethren, because all these relations are affected seriously when we commit sin. With regard to our Lenten acts of charity, the Universal Church

wishes that we direct our attention to a very specific area, namely to our Christian brothers and sisters who are subject to various forms of suffering and persecution in the very land where the salvific acts of our Lord were enacted, namely in the Holy Land. Consequently, the collection that we make in our parishes during the Good Friday service is to be used exclusively for supporting our brothers and sisters in Holy Land.

As we know, the Universal Catholic Church is going through a very crucial phase in its history, not only in terms of the gravity of the challenges she has to face, but also in terms of the present change of leadership. At this juncture we bow our heads in deep respect and indebtedness to the Pope Emeritus His Holiness Benedict XVI. We owe a great deal to his deeply spiritual Petrine Ministry and his special love for the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. We recall with gratitude that the establishment of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Exarchate in USA and the nomination of the Head and Father of our Church to the College of Cardinals were but some of the conspicuous gestures of his generosity and love to the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. We thank God for the most sublime Christian witness that his life continues to provide us. We also thank God for gift of the new Holy Father Pope Francis who is known for his doctrinal fidelity, social commitment, radical simplicity and intellectual caliber. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may strengthen His Holiness Pope Francis to provide the Church a grace-filled and relevant leadership as per the demands of our faith and time.

The Head and Father of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis, Major Archbishop-Catholicos has kindly consented to visit the Exarchate in the month of May, 2013, responding to our invitation. This is his first visit after being made a Cardinal of the Church on November 24, 2012. It is our duty and privilege to receive His Beatitude with the affection, love and respect that are due from us. His Beatitude shall be given a cordial reception in the context of the celebration of a Holy Mass presided over by His Beatitude on May 12, 2013 in New York. All our priests, sisters and faithful are kindly requested to make this celebration a meaningful experience through your valuable participation.

Wishing God's abundant blessings on each of you, your families and our communities and invoking the powerful intercession of Mother Mary and all the Saints,
Yours lovingly in our Lord,

+ Thomas Mar Eusebius

March 16, 2013
Mar Ivanios Bishop's House,
950 Hillside Ave., New Hyde Park, NY 11040

This circular is to be read in all our churches on Sunday, March 17, 2013