

**MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH**  
**DIOCESE OF NORTH-EAST AMERICA**

**ORTHODOX VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2010**

May 15, 2010

Dear Friends,

**T**he Orthodox Vacation Bible School (OVBS) program has been a longstanding educational outreach program of the Malankara Orthodox Church. It provides our younger generation with an opportunity to learn more about the basic tenets of the Orthodox faith through participation in a fun and interactive program that can take place over a series of days. Your participation in the planning and execution of this year's OVBS is not only a great service to the Church, but a wonderful way to enhance your own faith and knowledge of Christ and Church.

The approved theme for the 2010 OVBS is:

***"The Teacher is here and is calling for you." (St. John 11:28)***

The words of Martha to her own sister Mary is a profound statement to each one of us even today. While Mary was weeping in the house over the death of Lazarus, she was soon to be comforted by the presence of Jesus Christ, the Teacher who gives us hope and shows us the way to eternal life. In the midst of despair, like Mary and Martha, we must follow the teachings of Christ and remain faithful to the One who has called us. Christ the Teacher is calling each one of us in a unique way. Whatever it may be, we must heed attentively to the Teacher (Christ) so that we may become more like Him.

**F**irst and foremost, we appreciate the efforts of our Diocesan Metropolitan, His Grace Mathews Mar Barnabas, for providing valuable encouragement, recommendations and words of wisdom as well as reviewing and approving all teaching materials for the 2010 OVBS. Also, we are immensely grateful to His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius, Metropolitan of the South-West Diocese of America, for his guidance and support.

In addition, special thanks go to our Sunday School Director, Rev. Fr. Dr. Raju Varghese, who continues to remain active, providing strong leadership and guidance. Our Sunday School Secretary, Mr. Benny Varghese, Treasurer, Mr. Punnoose Punnen and all the Regional & Area Coordinators are appreciated for their whole-hearted support and help in various ways.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Rev. Dn. Joshua (Binoy) George, OVBS Director of the South-West Diocese of America, for being able to work together towards a common vision. His expertise in the OVBS ministry was truly helpful in all levels of this program.

A special thanks to Ms. Binu Pappen (New York) & Ms. Amy Punchamannil (Texas) for their time, hard work and creativity in editing/compiling together many of this year's materials in a timely manner.

Finally, let me express my appreciation to all the Area Coordinators, Principals, Teachers, and all churches and its members and everyone who supports the OVBS in various capacities.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

This year, the study lessons were developed based on the theme by many of our gifted deacons, seminarians and Sunday School teachers from the dioceses of America. We appreciate their great effort and dedication in prayerfully developing all the lessons for each division. The textbooks have lessons related to the theme and Bible related stories to help children learn about the theme through stories. There are activities related to each of the lessons that will make the lessons interesting to learn. This year, we have divided the sections of classes by grade NOT age:

- Beginner – Nursery/KG
- Primary – Grades 1, 2 & 3
- Junior – Grades 4, 5 & 6
- Intermediate – Grades 7, 8 & 9
- Senior – Grades 10, 11 & 12

## **QUIZZES**

This year, along with the Bible Quiz, we have decided to have a quiz on the Holy Sacraments of our Church. We want our young people who attend the OVBS to gain more understanding of the Holy Sacraments which our Church practices. These quizzes were prepared by two of our deacons, Dn. Jacob Kurien (Texas) & Dn. Abraham George (New York).

## **PRAYERS**

Common Morning, Noon and Evening Prayers of MOSC are provided so that all may do the canonical prayers during this year's OVBS. It is very important for our OVBS units to emphasize on the significance of our prayers and hymns, and thus a great opportunity to conduct these prayers with all the participants.

## **ARTS, CRAFTS & ACTIVITIES**

This year's Arts, Crafts & Activities Guide were prepared by Ms. Elizabeth Varghese (Illinois) from Chicago, Illinois. The addition of such activities to our OVBS Program allows the children to showcase their artistic and creative abilities and makes the OVBS Program interesting and fun. We are fortunate to provide a number of theme-related activities this year.

## **SONG CD**

This year's music CD was compiled from songs that were submitted by various churches from the Dioceses of America. These songs represent a young, energetic, and talented group of youngsters from the various churches in the South-West and North-East American Dioceses. Two additional songs were selected from the STOTS, Nagpur OVBS CD. In the event you are unable to teach all the songs, we encourage you to teach the remaining songs during the Sunday School year. We greatly appreciate the valuable time and efforts of each church and its Sunday School children, who participated in providing OVBS and every Orthodox Sunday School with songs for this year's OVBS.

## **DRAWINGS**

This year's pictures were drawn by the young artists of our diocese. Two pictures were awarded a prize of 1st and 2nd. 1st prize goes to Joshua Samuel, St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Montclair, NJ and 2nd prize goes to Alex Johnson, St Thomas Orthodox Church, Silver Spring, MD. Congratulations to the winners! These 1st and 2nd pictures were used for the front and the back of the textbooks. All of the pictures will be showcased on the Diocesan and Sunday School websites. We hope that this will be an added encouragement for our youngsters to be active participants in our church activities.

### **T-SHIRT DESIGN**

Our T-shirt was designed by Mr. Tony Mathew (Texas). We appreciate his creativity and dedication in designing this year's OVBS t-shirt.

### **CERTIFICATE**

We have provided a certificate signed by our Diocesan Metropolitan and OVBS Director by special order only. A blank certificate is also provided for use locally. We appreciate the student's time and enthusiasm in attending this summer church program.

We hope and pray that all materials that have been developed for this year's OVBS will be fruitful and enjoyable for all the participants. Please pray for the OVBS Program and that Almighty God will continue to bless our Church, Diocese, parishes, and families. May all of us continue to answer genuinely and faithfully to the Teacher's call.

With prayers,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory Varghese". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G'.

**Dn. Gregory Varghese**  
OVBS Director, North-East Diocese of America