



# St. Thomas Malankara Orthodox Church Of Los Angeles

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## Vicar's Desk:

### STEP FIVE- SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Step four laid the foundation for identifying many of our shadowy deeds and thoughts. It also provided an opportunity for recording our strengths. Completing our step four inventory made us aware of many truths about ourselves. This realization may have caused us pain. The natural reaction is to feel sadness or guilt or both. We faced ourselves and our history honestly. We courageously identified some behaviors we want to eliminate. For those of us who have been honest and thorough, step four has provided the foundation upon which we will build our recovery. It identified the unresolved feelings, unhealed memories and personal defects that produced resentment, depression, and loss of self-worth. God's help and light (John 1:5-9) helped commit our lives to walking in the light of his truth. The acknowledgment of our wrongs and the mending of our self-worth have begun to lift a great burden from our hearts and minds

Now that we have identified our character traits, it is possible to revive ourselves of the burden of guilt and shame associated with our wrong doings.

Step five requires that we engage in honest confrontations with ourselves and others by admitting our faults to God, to ourselves and to another person. By doing so, we begin the important phase of setting aside our pride so that we can see ourselves in true perspective

Admitting the exact nature of our wrongs to God is the first phase of step -5. Here we confess to God all that we have worked so hard to conceal. It is no longer necessary to blame God or others for what has happened to us. We begin to accept our history for exactly what it is. This process of acceptance brings us closer to God, and we start to realize that he is always there for us. Our confession helps us receive God's love and accept ourselves unconditionally.

--- Rev. Fr. Yohannan Panicker

## What is the Creed?

The word creed comes from the Latin credo, which means "I believe." In the Orthodox Church the Creed is usually called the Symbol of Faith, which means the "expression" or "confession" of the faith.

A person without faith is like a blind man. Faith gives man spiritual vision by which he can see and understand the essence of all that surrounds him: how and why everything was created, what is the goal of life, what is right and what is not, and ultimately what one must strive towards.

From earliest times, the Apostolic-period Christians have used the Creed to remind themselves of the principles of the Orthodox Faith. In the ancient church there existed various short creeds. But in the 4th century there appeared false teachings about the Son of God and the Holy Spirit. Thus it became necessary to complete these short creeds and more accurately define the Church's teaching.

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## Special Topic

### How Should I Pray?

#### A.C.T.S.

One structure for prayer is given by the acronym "ACTS", representing adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication (or intercession.) This is one order, where we start off focusing on who God is, and praising him for that. Others find a CATS pattern helpful, beginning by clearing out of the way the things that sadden God in our lives, before we can go onto praise him. Let's look briefly at each in turn:

**Adoration** is to adore God, to worship him and to fulfill the commandment to love him with all of our heart, mind and soul. As we spend time in adoration, we praise God for who He is - our Creator, our Sustainer and our Redeemer. (More about [praise and adoration.](#))

**Confession** allows us to clear away the things in the relationship between you and God which are displeasing to Him. All of us have sinned. St John writes in his epistle "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.



If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn 1:8,9) (more about confession.)

**Thanksgiving.** From childhood we are brought up to say "Thank You" when someone does something for us, or gives us a gift. Each moment God is blessing us, every minute we can recall the wonderful things that God has done for us, and the gifts that we have been given. And so, we need to be constantly thanking God for his blessings. In writing to Timothy, Paul makes it clear that we also need to be giving thanks for everyday, worldly things " I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." 1 Tim 2:1. (more about thanksgiving.)

**Supplication or Intercession.** Finally we come to ask God for our needs and the needs of others. There are many demands on our prayer time - many topics and issues that we could pray for, so we need to choose, and to be specific. (more about topics to pray for)

Pray for others. In the epistles of St Paul, we read of him praying for those he has led to faith, and asking them also to pray for him. So, you too can pray for other Christians, and encourage them to pray for you. Pray for your family members, and for neighbors and friends. It's also good to pray for those who don't know Jesus to come to faith - many Christians have come to believe in Christ through the prayers of others.

Pray for world issues : for peace in difficult situations, for leaders and those in influential positions, for global issues such as care of God's environment, justice for the poor, relief of suffering in less developed countries, and other issues that come to you.

Pray for your own needs too. It's easy to neglect this, but Jesus encourages us to do so in the Lord's Prayer - the model for prayer that He gave us.

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# Children's Corner

## Peter's Escape From Prison

King Herod was a wicked ruler. He was persecuting the Christians and even had the apostle James, John's brother, put to death. When he saw that the Jews were pleased about it, he had Peter arrested and put in prison.

He wanted to make sure Peter didn't escape, so he put guards in the prison to guard him. There were four rotating shifts of four guards each. It would seem there would be no way for Peter to leave the prison. Surely he would be put on trial the next day.

The church during this time was praying that God would take care of Peter. They wanted him to be back with them again.

Peter was asleep in the prison. There were chains on each of his wrists, and there was a guard on each side of him and more guards at the doorway. However, nothing is too hard for God. Suddenly there was a bright light inside the prison, and an angel appeared. The angel struck Peter on the side to wake him and his chains fell off.

"Quick, get up!" he said. Peter followed the angel's instructions when he told him to put on his clothes and sandals. Then he told him to wrap his coat around him and follow him.

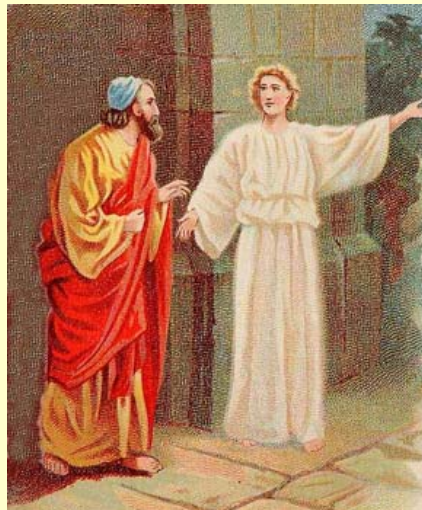
Peter obeyed though he didn't think it was really happening. He thought it was just a vision. They passed by the first guard, then the second guard, and the guards didn't even see them. Were they asleep, or were they just blind to what was happening?

There was still one more barrier to his freedom. The iron gate that led to the city was in front of them, and then without anyone pushing on it, the gate swung open by itself.

They walked through the gate and went the length of one street. Then as suddenly as he had appeared, the angel left him.

Peter stood in the quiet stillness of the dark street. It dawned on him what had just happened. It wasn't a vision. It had really happened! God had delivered him from Herod and the terrible fate that the king had planned for him.

He must hurry to find his friends. He went to the home of Mary, John Mark's mother, where the church was gathered praying for him. He knocked at the outer entrance.



A servant girl named Rhoda went to answer the door. Peter spoke and Rhoda recognized his voice. She was so excited she didn't even open the door. She ran back to the others and said, "Peter is at the door!"

They thought she was out of her mind. How could it be Peter? Peter was in prison. "It must be his angel," they said.

The Jews believed that everyone had a guardian angel, and this angel must be speaking with Peter's voice.

Peter kept on knocking. Finally they opened the door and they were so surprised to see Peter standing there. Did they not believe that God could answer their prayers for Peter's release? Everyone started talking at one time. Peter held up his hand for them to be quiet, then he told them how God had sent an angel to deliver him.

He instructed them to tell James and the others about his release. This was probably James, the brother of Jesus since James, the apostle had already been killed by Herod. Peter left to go to another place.

What happened at the prison the next morning? They looked and looked for Peter and couldn't find him. The guards had been responsible for keeping him in prison, and if they failed in their duty, the penalty was death. Herod ordered that the four guards be executed.

As for Herod, not many days later Herod appeared on his throne and gave a speech. The people said, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Herod accepted their praise and did not give praise to God. Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

## Memory Verse

*When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

**Matthew 6:6 (NIV)**

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# Church Column

## What is the Creed?

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### **A Historical Survey**

The Nicean Creed was composed by the Fathers of the 1st and 2nd Ecumenical Councils. The first seven articles of the Creed were drawn up at the 1st Ecumenical Council, and the last five were drawn up at the 2nd Ecumenical Council. The 1st Council met in Nicea in 325 A.D. to confirm the true teachings about the Son of God and to oppose the false teachings of Arius. Arius believed that the Son of God was created by God the Father.



Nicean Council 1

The 2nd Council met in Constantinople in 381 A.D. to confirm the true teaching on the Holy Spirit and to oppose the false teachings of Macedonius. He rejected the divine origin of the Holy Spirit. The Creed is named the "Nicean Constantinopolitan" after the two cities in which the Fathers gathered for the 1st and 2nd Ecumenical Councils. The Creed consists of twelve articles. In the 1st article we speak of God the Father; from the 2nd through 7th articles we speak of God the Son; in the 8th article about God the Holy Spirit; in the 9th about the Church; in the 10th about Baptism; and in the 11th and 12th about the resurrection of the dead and eternal life.



**Q: How many Calvinists does it take to change a light bulb?**

**A: None. God has predestined when the lights will be on.**

**Q: How many liberals does it take to change a light bulb?**

**A: 10, as they need to hold a debate into whether or not the light bulb exists. Even if they can agree upon the existence of the light bulb they may not go ahead and change it for fear of alienating those who use fluorescent tubes.**

**Q: How many Catholics does it take to change a light bulb?**

**A1: None. They always use candles instead.(UWCU)**

**A2: Two, one to do it and a priest to hear him confess and give the old bulb last rites. (Johannessen)**

**From : [The Christian Humor Hotline!](#)**

## Learn about a Church Organisations

### Choir Association:

The central organization of all the music groups of the Malankara Orthodox Church is known as "Malankara Orthodox Choir Association". (MOCA). It was started on 13 October 1994. The main objectives are to bring about uniformity in worship, to make piety soothing and musical and to impart awareness regarding worship through music.

**Chief Office Bearers** H.E. Geevarghese Mar Ivanios (President), Fr. Mathew Varghese (General Secretary); Sruthi (School of Liturgical Music), which is located in the campus of the Orthodox Seminary. 226 choir groups of the Church have registered in this school. **Address:** Sruthi, Orthodox Seminary, Kottayam.

## Orthodox Center

### **Why Do We Use Incense at the Qurbana?**

The association of incense with prayer and offering has its roots deep in Biblical religion. The use of incense has accompanied the worship of the God of Israel and of Christianity from time immemorial. In the first Gospel lesson of the Church Year Zechariah receives from the angel the promise of the birth of John the Baptist while making the evening offering of incense (Lk. 1:10-20), and during Ascension tide, we read the lesson of Isaiah's call to be a prophet while he was in the Holy of Holies in the Temple (Isaiah 6). God himself appeared to him in a cloud of incense while the seraphim offered thrice-holy worship.

The use of incense in the offering of our oblations (and of ourselves) during the Qurbana is a continual testimony to our belief in the triumph of Christ and the sufficiency of his offering of himself for us. In the prophet Malachi, where he is chastising the priests of Judah for their sloppy ritual offerings, he speaks prophetically of the coming Messianic age when the perfection of sacrifice (Christ's) is memorialized among the nations: "For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and pure offerings (Qurbana) are made: for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 1:11) Whenever we recall sacramental the one sufficient sacrifice of Christ, we testify to our faith that in him the Messianic age is already realized, and we enter into it through union with him. Our use of incense testifies to, and reminds us of, the Messianic promise.



## What to Pray for?

Continued from Page 1.....

**Pointers for Prayer :** The ACTS pattern - Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication - has been a helpful structure for many Christians. You can either use this pattern in an unstructured prayer time, or you could use a [daily pattern for prayer](#) that combines a structure with the freedom to pray by yourself...

One of the biggest encouragements to pray is answered prayer. Do keep a prayer journal and jot down some of the things that you pray for, and after a few weeks or even days you can expect to see some signs of answered prayer. Take time to thank God for these. This prayer journal is a record which helps us see that answers to prayer depend not upon the words we use, but solely on the grace of God, and to be thankful for the way that He answers our prayers.

from Prayer Guide

[prayerguide.org.uk/alone.htm](http://prayerguide.org.uk/alone.htm)

## Peter's Escape From Prison

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### What does this story mean to me?

It would seem that Peter was in a situation where escape would be impossible. He was in chains, and guards were everywhere. But with God all things are possible.

You may be in a situation where escape seems impossible. Pray to God about it. Ask him to give you wisdom and show you the way of escape.

Find an adult that you can trust and seek counsel from that person. It may be someone very close to you in your family. It may be a teacher, a minister, a school nurse, or a counselor.



## Sunday Service:

Namaskaram : 9.00 am – 9.45 am  
Holy Qurbana : 9.45 am onwards  
English : 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday  
Malayalam : 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday

## Sunday School:

Sunday School Summer Break till Sep 10th.

August 27<sup>th</sup> : Visit the sick

September 10th : Sunday School New Year Starts, 2006-07

## Church Events:

Stay tuned for church events every Sunday during the announcements after the Holy Qurbana.

**Sept 1<sup>st</sup> to Sept 8<sup>th</sup>: Eight Day Lent for Mother Mary.**  
**Coming up in September Annual retreat. Details to follow.**



## Prayer Corner

### Church Activities:

The Young Adults meeting will be held at the residence of Mrs Anita and Mr. Soomodh Abraham in Fontana on Saturday September 9<sup>th</sup> @ 6.00 PM.

The Martha Mariam Samajam meeting will be held at Church on Sunday September 10<sup>th</sup> after the Holy Qurbana.

## Meanings of Words Often Used in Church

<b>Ekbo</b>	<b>: Foot or Stanza</b>
<b>Emo</b>	<b>: Mother</b>
<b>Eniyono</b>	<b>: Meditative Song</b>
<b>Ethro</b>	<b>: Prayer with Incense</b>
<b>Episcopos</b>	<b>: Bishop</b>
<b>Evangelion</b>	<b>: Gospel</b>
<b>Habibai</b>	<b>: My Beloved one</b>
<b>Haleluyya</b>	<b>: Praise the Lord</b>
<b>Hoosoyo</b>	<b>: A prayer of propitiation</b>



### Have any Questions? OR

**Your comments may be directed to the  
Editorial and Communication Board**

Rev. Fr. Yohannan Panicker  
Dr. Sheba George, Mr. Thomas Phillip,  
Mr. John P. Varghese, Mr. Mathew Varughese,  
Mr. Jijo Koshy and Mr. Gigi Kurian