



St. Thomas Malankara Orthodox Church Of Los Angeles

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Vicar's Desk:

STEP THREE- SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Step three is the central theme of all the steps. It is the point at which we make a decision to turn our will and our loves to the care of God. Step three is an important cornerstone for building an effective and peaceful life. In steps One and Two we established the basis for turning our lives over to the care of God. The commitment we show make in step Three must be repeated more than once. Actually, we are just beginning to turn things over to God. Repeated working of the first three steps helps to build a solid foundation for working the total program.

Many of us come to this program with strong negative perceptions about the world in which we live. Those perceptions may be based on hurtful childhood experiences, misguided academic training, or simply the accumulated lessons of our lives, because of past experienced extreme violence as children, we may find it hard to trust anyone or anything even God.. Whatever the source, our recovery is hindered if our beliefs make it difficult to let go of our fear and surrender our lives to God. In step three, we decide to take the leap of faith and put our lives in his hands.

Bible illustrates some examples of doing God's will when it didn't make any sense. Yet, the end result showed it was wise to follow God's guidance. Such acts of faith are exemplified be Moses as he led the nation of Israel in to the wilderness and by Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. The essence of these actions is summarized in Hebrews 11:6

---- Rev. Fr. Yohannan Panicker

Special Topic

Wandering Thoughts

Once people have started praying, the most common barrier to prayer is wandering thoughts, even amongst people who pray a great deal. In [a global survey of prayer](#) run by the Teal Trust in 1998, over 80% of respondents found this at least "sometimes a problem". Two thirds also found noise or other distractions a problem. A similar survey by the Evangelical Alliance found that "keeping concentration" was also an issue, with 40% of respondents mentioning this as a barrier to prayer.

Don't worry about your mind getting distracted, but gently bring it back to focus on God, and the area you were praying about. Just as when we are in conversation with others, our minds do have some apparently irrelevant thoughts, and need to be returned to the topic at hand.



St Francis of Sales said *"Even if you did nothing in your meditation but bring your heart back, and place it again in our Lord's presence, though it went away again every time you brought it back, your hour would be very well employed."*

Many Christians lead busy lives, with our minds working in overdrive to cover all of the things that we need to think about in our various roles. When we stop to pray, it takes time for our mind to change track and to focus in on God. Therefore it can be good to ease into prayer gently, perhaps by listening to a praise and worship CD, or by reading a psalm

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Parenting Discussion

Do we let our children "wag the family"? What things can we do to put their needs in better balance with the needs of the group?

- All of us agree that children can at least occasionally "wag the family".
- To counter this the following were mentioned, during our group discussion:
 1. Establish what is negotiable and what is not.
 2. Do not override
 3. Provide a sense of sphere of control or provide situations where they can exercise some control but define what the limits are
 4. Have the child adjust to family customs and church attendance
 5. If you can establish an atmosphere of love, it may allow the children to choose to avoid "wagging the family"
 6. It is good to establish what consequences will be for choosing the way of the family (or not) and then let them make their choice – this allows them to learn.

-- Young Adults Group Discussion



Administrative Topics:

Participant Roster – e-Mail and Phone

Meals: Host Provides Kanji and Payara

Calendar of Meetings

Second Saturday of Each Month.

5:30 p.m. – 8:00 PM unless otherwise noted.

Retreat is tentatively scheduled for October – 2006.

**--- Kirk Edwards
Young Adult Coordinator**

Tongues of Fire

The Jewish people were commanded by God to observe several feasts during the year. They celebrated the Feast of the Passover to remember the time in Egypt they had been "passed over" when the firstborn of the Egyptians had died in the plagues.

Fifty days after Passover, they celebrated the Feast of Pentecost (PEN te cost). It was also called the Feast of Weeks, which came on a Sunday and lasted one day. It came at the end of the wheat harvest.

The events in this story took place on the Pentecost following the death and resurrection of Jesus. Many devout Jews were in the city of Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. They had come from many districts and spoke many languages.

After the death of Judas, Matthias (muh THI us) had been chosen to be an apostle, and he was added to the eleven apostles. Suddenly a loud sound filled the house where they were meeting. It sounded like a great wind blowing.

Then something that looked like tongues of fire appeared, then separated and sat on each of them.

They began speaking in other languages. The Holy Spirit was causing them to talk to the others in languages which they had never learned! Can you imagine being able to carry on a conversation with a foreigner in his own native tongue, even though you had never spoken that language?

The wind sound was so loud that people ran to see what was happening, and when they heard the men speaking in their own languages, they were amazed. "Aren't these men all Galileans (gal uh LEE unz), or men from Galilee? How is it that each of us hears in our own native language?"

Some thought the men were drunk, but that was unlikely because it was only 9:00 in the morning. Most people who get drunk, don't get drunk that early in the day.

Peter stood up with the eleven apostles and began to preach to the crowd. He said that the prophet Joel had spoken of these events many years before.

He told them how that Jesus of Nazareth had come, and how that God had shown his approval of Jesus by the signs and miracles that he had performed while he was on earth.

Peter accused the crowd of handing Jesus over to wicked men to be crucified. We remember that Pilate wanted to free Jesus, but the Jews had cried out, "Crucify him!". The Romans nailed him to the cross and killed him, but God raised him from the dead, and he was seen alive by many people.

When the people in the crowd realized what they had done, they were so sorry, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter told them to repent; to be truly sorry for what they had done, and for every one of them to be baptized in the name of Jesus so that their sins might be forgiven. He said if they would do that, they would receive God's gift to them, the Holy Spirit, to live within them.

Those who heard his words and accepted them, were baptized, and about 3,000 people did just that.

This wonderful day was the beginning of the Church.

What does this story mean to me?

In this story we see Peter as he overcame his past failures. You will remember that at one time he even denied Jesus, saying he didn't even know him. But on this Pentecost day Peter becomes a powerful speaker for God.



Humor!!

Q. Why didn't Noah go fishing?
A. He only had two worms!

Q. What do you call a charismatic at an auction?
A. Broke.

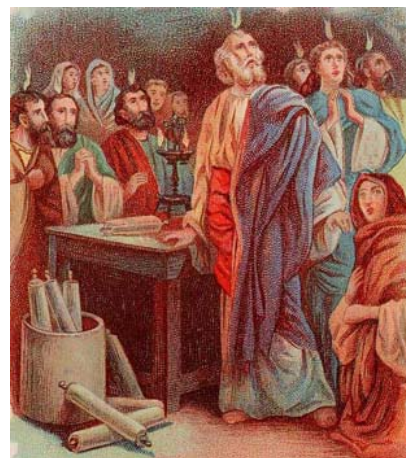
Q. Why did God create man before woman?
A. He didn't want any advice.

Q. Why did God create man before woman?
A. Because you're always supposed to have a rough draft before creating your masterpiece.

Q. What do you get if you cross a Jehovah's Witness and a Unitarian?
A. Someone who goes around knocking on doors for no apparent reason.

You may have made some mistakes in the past, but don't talk to yourself about those failures saying, "I'm no good", or "I can't do that". Leave those things behind and start telling yourself, "Yes, I *can* do this!". Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Ask God to help you overcome your past mistakes. Peter did and he became a powerful Christian.



Church Column



MGOCSM History Rev. Dn. Binu Mathews - St. Thomas, Houston

The MGOCSM (Mar Gregorios Orthodox Christian Student Movement) is an organization formed by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in order to deepen the spiritual life of College and High School students as well as to create in youth a livelier sense of fellowship. The Church, along with many of its leaders, realized that the youth was the future of the church and needed to keep the youngsters connected to their church. This movement came especially in light of the fact that many young students were leaving the home state of Kerala and moving to different parts of India for education and as a result moving away from the Church.

In 1907, a group of Church leaders and Students started the initial framework for the MGOCSM by holding meetings as the Syrian Student Conference. The following year, under the patronage of Metropolitan Mar Dionysius (Pulikottil), the first meeting was held in the Balikamadam English Girls High School, Thiruvalla. And on January 1, 1908, The Syrian Student Conference assumed the name Mar Gregorios Orthodox Christian Student Movement with the motto of Worship, Study, and Service. Saint Gregorios of Parumala, being one of the youngest bishops of the Church, was ideally selected as the patron saint for the youth organization.

The MGOCSM is now one of the oldest

Christian organizations for the Orthodox Church in India. The strength of the MGOCSM in India especially has grown into many wings even. These include: High School, University, University Professor, Medical Auxiliary, Technical Auxiliary, Missionary, and a Publication wing.

The MGOCSM in America is lead by the Metropolitan of the American Diocese: His Grace Mathews Mar Barnabas and the leadership of this group has been appointed by the Metropolitan. And in 2003, an official MGOCSM Constitution of American Diocese was approved and passed at the 3rd Annual Leadership Camp held in Detroit, Michigan.

From the very beginning, the MGOCSM has taken different forms with the guidance of bishops and priests, but most importantly with the leadership of young lay men. Without strong youth leaders, the organization may not have successfully progressed to its present state in just a matter of a few years of existence.

From the initial spark of interest, flames of the MGOCSM have spread throughout the world and especially here in the United States. In the future, with God's blessings, the MGOCSM of the American Diocese is planning to create wings that will branch out to encompass all the youth and youngsters of the Diocese. With growth in the future, the MGOCSM will hopefully continue to bringing the Love of Jesus Christ to its members while keeping the traditions of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

Orthodox Center

Zende "Sleeves"



During holy Qurbana Priest, arms himself with the **Zende 'Sleeves'** which symbolize the priest's readiness to keep God's Law and do works of righteousness. He signs the cross twice over the left sleeve and recites Psalm 18:34 while wearing it: *He trains my hands to war; and he strengthens my arms like a bow of brass.*

He then signs the cross once over the right sleeve and recites Psalm 18:35 while wearing it: *Let Thy right hand help me up, and let Thy loving discipline raise me.*



Wandering Thoughts

Continued from Page 1.....

or another passage from the Bible, or simply by reflecting on what we have to be thankful for. Then we can enter into a conversation with God with our minds properly prepared.

Pointers for Prayer:

We can pray at all times and in all places, and it is good to develop the confidence in prayer to do this. However, it is also good to be able to find somewhere where your thoughts are less easily distracted for deeper times of prayer and mediation. In your "prayer corner" you might find it helpful to have other items around you, eg a bible, a cross or perhaps a candle.

From Prayer Guide

prayerguide.org.uk/alone.htm

Prayer for Peace:



The world prayer for peace comes from the Vancouver Assembly of the World Council of Churches :

For peace in your country
For the victims of violence everywhere
For those struggling for peace and justice
For churches in conflict situations
For a world without war and violence
Lead me from death to life,
from falsehood to truth,
Lead me from despair to hope,
from fear to trust.
Lead me from hate to love,
from war to peace,
Let peace fill our beings,
our world and our universe. Amen.

In the logo, the hands represent a heart, above a broken yellow earth.

Sunday Service:

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

Sunday School:

Every Sunday after the Holy Qurbana
June 11th 2006: Sunday School Final Exam – Summer Begins
July 1st 2006: Summer Fun Event – Movie Day

Church Events:

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

June 4th : Pentecost Sunday, [Service @ 8:30 AM]
Potluck after Qurbana (**Zone I**).
June 16th: Apostles' Lent Starts

Reminder:

Please ensure that you have fully paid the Semi-Annual Church dues by June 30th



Prayer Corner

Church Activities:

Young adults meeting will be held at the residence of Mrs. Susan and Dr. Sajen Mathews at La Habra on Saturday June 10th @ 6.00 PM.

Matha Mariam Samajam Meeting will be held at church on Sunday June 11th after the Holy Qurbana.

Meanings of Words Often Used in Church

Adamo do seno	:	Until I come
Ahai	:	My Brethren
Aloho	:	God
Aman Amen	:	So be it, with us
Amen	:	So be it
Anido	:	Departed Soul(dead)



Have any Questions? OR

Your Comments may be directed to
Editorial and Communication Board

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