



BY THE GRACE OF GOD

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Apostolic benediction to our beloved Metropolitan: His Eminence Mor Theethose Yeldho - our Patriarchal Vicar and to our beloved spiritual children: the Reverend Clergy and faithful of our Malankara Archdiocese of the Syriac Orthodox Church in North America.

We are glad to send you this message in connection with the Silver Jubilee Convention of the Archdiocese which is being celebrated from 22nd to 25th of this month. The theme you have chosen for the convention is : *"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor. 15:57).

We are the children of God and His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). He created us and allows us to live in this world. So for our being and for everything in our life we are indebted to our creator and thus have to be always thankful to him. We are aware that it is His mercy that protects us and bestows us with innumerable blessings in our day to day life. But often we forget about our merciful God and about his loving care and guidance for each one of us. In Ephesians Chapter two the blessed Apostle Paul reminds us that, *God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.... But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off, have been brought near, by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:4-13).*

All the powers and abilities in us are the benevolent gifts of our creator and we have received them so as to trade in them faithfully. But it should be founded upon our Lord Jesus. Because, it is he who gives us the true victory. Through our deeds and actions we are expected to make profit for ourselves and for others. As we read in the 'parable of talents' in Matthew 25:14-29, God expects from us that, we be his faithful servants abounding in virtues and be diligent and sincere labourers without being lazy in life. In Luke 19:13 we read that: *"Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten pounds, and said to them, trade with these till I come"*. This is the case of each one of us. Hence we are to be always vigilant about our duties in life and watchful about the coming of the Lord, the time of which is not known to us. Nevertheless, for a diligent

servant of the Master, he needs not to worry about the hour of the coming of the Lord. Because, he will be always resourceful and attentive to his assignments. Of course there are varieties and differences in measures of the talents with each one. That is also a divine plan and design. We have to recognize that fact and perceive that, it is actually the varieties and diversities of this world, which make it colourful and vibrant. But as is clear from the parable, irrespective of the quantity or type of the graces bestowed with each one, we have to be sincere and industrious. When we become more faithful to the Master, His blessings will follow us and we become more cheerful and successful in life. Then praises will rise up from our hearts towards that loving Master who protects us in each moment of our life. Then we will sing with the Psalmist: *"O give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures for ever. With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm he brought us from (our enemies); to him who divided the Red Sea in sunder and made the People of God (Israel) pass through the midst of it, for his steadfast love endures for ever. It is he who remembered us in our low estate, and rescued us from our adversaries, for his steadfast love endures for ever"* (Psalm 136). The psalmist again praises God that: *"How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand"* (Psalm 139:17,18).

We should be always aware that our God sees us and knows all our deeds and thoughts. The prophet and king David sings: *O God, Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether* (Psalm 139). Dear spiritual children, when we have this awareness, we will be always trustful and sincere to God and also to ourselves. For each one, a day will come when he will be taken from this earth and will have to give accounts to our Master. So, be always watchful and vigilant. Be grateful to God for each day he gives us to live and regard those days in our life as for our preparation for a coming eternal life with Him. That consciousness will motivate us to live our life with God. Our strong faith in our creator and our awareness about our calling and responsibilities, will keep us from following the shams and shadows of this transient world. So as the blessed Apostle St. Peter reminds us, be serious (in life) and watchful in prayers (I Peter 4:7). Also the blessed Apostle St. Paul advices us that: *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance.* (Ephesians 6:13-18). Beloved in our Lord, may this year's thoughts enable each one of you to be the faithful servants of our Heavenly Master, who loved us to the extent of sending his only begotten Son and willed sacrificing Him for our salvation and victory over sin.

We advice you to always stay firm in the true faith of our church. Uphold your undwindling allegiance to the Holy Petrine Throne of Antioch and All he East. We wish all success for the Convention and extend our Apostolic Blessings to you. May the grace of God be with you all. *أوصيكم بالصبر واليقين*