



St. Thomas Malankara Orthodox Church Of Los Angeles

124 North 5th Street Montebello, CA 90640 (323) 838 0353; <http://stthomasla.com> ; mailto: news@stthomasla.com

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Vicar's Desk:

STEP SIX- SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Our growing relationship with God gave us the courage to examine ourselves, accept who we are, and reveal our true selves. Step six helps us acknowledge and discard our old survival skills and move toward a new and healthier life. Being through and honest in completing our inventory will place us in a position to move forward. And the forward motion in step six takes the form of confessing. We will share all we have learned about ourselves.

There are three distinct parts. We will confess our faults to God, to ourselves and to another human being. As we do it. We will cleanse ourselves of the excess baggage we have been carrying. As we open our hearts and reveal ourselves, we will achieve a deeper level of spirituality. "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded James 4: 7-8"

Admitting our defects to God can be very frightening. We may choose to believe that because God is in charge of the universe. All events are his will. In that way blaming God can be a method for us to deny our part in the problem. It is important to understand that God has given us free will. He wants what is best for us, but he allows us to make choices free of his manipulations. As we admit our wrongs to him, we must hold fast to his unconditional and everlasting love for us. He will strengthen and guide us, as we pursue his desire for us to lead a healthy and peaceful life.

--- Rev. Fr. Yohannan Panicker

Christian Service

Some call it a discipline, a repeated set of thoughtful and God-guided actions that are refined and improved as one continues to pursue them. It is motivated by a longing for God in our lives. Authority and being a servant are different things Christian Service Transcends the common pecking orders of today.

Self Righteous Service versus True Service

- Looks for the big Score or Big Event
- Requires external rewards
- Praise and appreciation
- Becomes bitter when results do not meet expectations
- Subject to moods and whims (when I feel up to it)

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Special Topic

Prayer and Bible

As Christians we know we should pray and that we should read our Bibles. What is less well understood is that the two go together - hand in hand. We should come to expect that we may need our Bible during our prayer time, and can pray as we read!

Meditation: Jeremiah speaks of eating God's words ("When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty." Jer 15:16), and meditation gives us the chance to slowly chew over portions of scripture. Unlike other forms of meditation where we seek to empty our minds, Christians seek to fill our mind and heart with the presence and Word of God.



Unlike academic study, meditation seeks to repeat words and phrases, to go over the same words and thoughts. The word "meditate" means to "murmur persistently". The psalmist writes "I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways." (Ps 119:15); and in v48 "I lift up my hands to your commands which I love, and I meditate on your decrees." In meditation, we ponder on key scriptures, and as we do so, we allow the living Word of God to penetrate our hearts as well as our minds.

Pointers for Prayer: Read and re-read a passage slowly, perhaps repeating a verse several times, expecting God to make it come

alive with relevance for your situation. Spend time reflecting on their meaning - what does God want to say to you through these verses?

Place yourself in the verses you are reading, especially those passages with promises. Personalize it. Change "he" to "she" if appropriate e.g. Psalms 1 or 91.

Do write in your Bible! As a child, you may have been told that writing in books is wrong, but it can be very helpful to mark particular verses and passages that have been given to us in prayer. As we re-read these later, we are reminded of the situation and how God spoke to us at that time.

Why not write out verses that are significant to you, and put them in a prominent place e.g. on a notice board, the fridge or inside the cover of your Bible. Every time you see them, your thoughts will flicker onto those verses. Find out more about praying through the psalms, the prayer book of the bible.

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Children's Corner

Lydia

Paul and Silas took a young preacher named Timothy with them on their travels. Timothy's mother was a Jewish woman who was a believer in Jesus, and his father was a Greek.

As they traveled, the Holy Spirit would guide them and tell them where to go next. One night while they were at Troas (TRO az), Paul had a vision. A man from Macedonia (mass uh DOAN ee uh) was begging him to come over to Macedonia to help them. The Spirit was guiding them again.

Immediately they got ready and left. It was a long trip by ship from Troas to Macedonia. They arrived at Philippi (FILL uh pie), which was a Roman colony and one of the largest cities in Macedonia.

They stayed several days. Then they heard that a group of people met by the river to worship on the Sabbath day, so they went outside the city gate to the meeting place.

They sat down and began to speak to the women who were gathered there to pray. One of them was a woman named Lydia who was from the city of Thyatira (thigh uh TIRE uh), which was in a district east of Macedonia. She was a dealer who sold purple cloth.

Purple cloth was very expensive. The reason it was so costly was that it was difficult to make. The dye for the cloth came from a shellfish. The juice was white while it was in the veins of the fish, but when it was exposed to the sun, the liquid changed into bright purple and red colors. It took a lot of work to catch enough shellfish to dye even one garment.

The beautiful cloth was mainly used by members of the royal families and Roman senators who were required to have a purple band around the edge of their togas, or robes.

As Paul preached, the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to receive the message about Jesus. She believed his words and responded to the teaching. She and the members of her household were baptized.

We don't know if she was married, or single, or a widow. She probably had people working for her in her business since she was a merchant. She told the men if they considered her a believer in the Lord, she would like for them to come and stay at her house.



Evidently she had plenty of room to accommodate the four of them; Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke was with them also. She continued to urge them and they accepted her invitation and stayed at her house.

Lydia's heart was like the good soil in the parable of the sower. When she heard the word of God, she received it with joy and obeyed the words of the apostle.



What does this story mean to me?

Lydia is an inspiration to girls and young women even today. She was a "go-getter", a business woman able to manage money and a business.

In addition, she was a religious person, intent on worshiping God. She had a good heart which she opened to the truth.

What about you? Are you lazy, or are you a hard worker? Are you willing to put forth the effort to study and become successful? If you are this kind of person, you will have a happy life, and also you will be a blessing to others.

Memory Verse

Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:13



To trace Paul's journey, start at #9, Troas and go to #12,

Church Column

Christian Service

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True Service

- Does not distinguish between small and large acts of service
- Free of the need to calculate results (trusting in God's Wisdom)
- Serves enemies as freely as friends
- Insensitive: It insists on meeting the need even if it would be destructive
- Jesus on the cross is the ultimate example.

Service is not a list of things we do, but in it we discover things to do because service is a way of life.

Service and Humility

Humility can be seen a paradoxical. The more you pursue it, the more elusive it can be come. This book states that humility can come from acts of True Service.

True service better connects to God and allows us to distance ourselves of earthly desires and the cares of this world. (Describe) and in so doing, we gain humility.

Why practice this discipline of Service?

Practicing service as a spiritual discipline allows us to grow spiritually as individuals. True service builds community. It quietly and unpretentiously goes about caring for the needs of others. It draws, binds, heals and builds a Celebration of Discipline, p. 129-130.

How to practice this discipline of Service?

- Servant-hood: What are our connotations of servant?
- Choosing to serve and choosing to be a servant.

- To serve is to stay in charge
- Servant hood is to place God in charge.
- Acting the mechanics of service and experiencing the discipline
- Openness to God's will and wisdom and gaining joy through serving according to His plan.
- Acting like a servant and being a servant (lifestyle)
- Focused on the approval of people vs. approval of God
- Judging the value of serving based on outcomes vs. taking delight simply in serving.

When to practice this discipline of Service?

- Serving by the frantic energy of human efforts or serving because of the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- You will be energized if you are submissive to the Holy Spirit.
- Serving only when opportunities or people seem important enough to merit participation and when you feel like it versus willingness to act in any and all opportunities where there is need.

Problems/ Fears connected to practicing this discipline

- Not knowing when God is prompting us to take action
- Fear of being taken advantage.
- Wanting to get credit for our service/ not down with the hidden service motif.
- Only wanting to help people as we see fit, not waiting to find out what their need is as they see it.

-----By Young Adult Group



Orthodox Center

Hand Bell

The deacons use this to proclaim the important occasions. The occasions are:

- + When informing the holy birth at the start of the Holy Qurbana.
- + When we say "Oh thou who was crucified for us" three times.
- + At the time of reading of the Gospel.
- + Blessing of the censer.
- + Celebration of the Shooshepo.
- + Waving of hands over the Qurbana.
- + Blessing the bread.
- + Again when the priest raises his hands.
- + Waves hand over the Paten and Chalice.
- + In the midst of the song "Harken, gracious Lord".
- + Elevation of the Paten and Chalice.
- + Proceeds towards the west with the Paten and Chalice.



Learn about a Church Organisation

Karunya Centre for Cancer Patients

Karunya Guidance Centre

A Home for poor cancer patients during treatment

Karunya Vishranti Bhavan

A centre to rehabilitate terminally ill cancer patients

Address:

Karunya Vishranti Bhavan
Kattela, Sreekaryam.
Trivandrum 695 017
phone: 0471 2596418

Praying the Psalms

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"What matters is not what we feel like praying about, but what God wants us to ask him for. Not the poverty of our own heart, but the riches of the Word of God must decide how we are to pray."

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer in The Psalms - Prayer Book of the Bible).

The psalms are unique within the Bible. Within them we find the complete range of human emotion and need, and they offer a rich source of conversation with God. As we find within them verses and phrases which tie into our own thoughts, so too, we can find other verses which speak to us powerfully of the truth of God's promises to us. The Psalms have been an invaluable resource to prayer in every generation and tradition. (More about prayer and the bible)

Pointers for Prayer:

Depending upon your needs, you may find some of these verses helpful in your prayer time:

- **When you want to praise God:** Psalm 92:1,2, Psalm 100, Psalm 150
- **When times are hard:** Psalm 138:7,8, Psalm 94:17-19, Psalm 18:1,2,
- **When your integrity is tested:** Ps.1:1-3, Ps.119:9,11,104,105, Ps.25:10,21
- **When you want God's protection:** Psalm 27:4-8, Psalm 91:1-16
- **When you are tempted to hit back:** Psalm 37:7-9
- **When you want God's guidance:** Psalm 32:8, Psalm 27:1,14
- **When you need to be reminded of your dependence on God :** Psalm 105:3,4

from Prayer Guide

prayerguide.org.uk/alone.htm

Sunday Service:

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

Sunday School:

Sunday School every Sunday after the Holy Qurbana.

October 14th : Field Trip

October 22nd : Food Drive Start

Church Events:

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

- **Choir Practice on Sunday's After Holy Qurbana.**
- **STMOC Building committee is organizing parish wide meeting for an update, presentation and Q&A session on Sept 24th 2006 after the Holy Qurbana.**
- **H.E. Mathews Mar Barnabas will be visiting our Parish on October 1st 2006.**
- **Coming up in October Annual retreat. Details to follow.**
- **Young Adult Retreat is on Nov 10th -12th at Wrightwood camp and Conference Center. Registration available through web at <http://retreat.stthomasla.com>**



Prayer Corner

Church Activities:

- **Prayer meeting will be held at the residence of Mrs. Manju and Mr. Raji Skariah's at Placentia on Saturday September 30th @ 6:30 PM.**
- **The Young Adults meeting will be held at the residence of Mrs. Susheela and Mr. Philip Abraham at Aliso Viejo on Saturday October 7th @ 6:30 PM.**
- **The Martha Mariam Samajam meeting will be held at Church on Sunday October 8th after the Holy Qurbana.**

Meanings of Words Often Used in Church

Hoothomo : Concluding Prayer of the Holy Qurbana

Hoso vabu koola Now and always and for ever

Suban la-olmeen: and ever

Kadeesanmar : Saints

Kadeesathaloho : Holy art thou O God



**Have any Questions?
OR**

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

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