

ܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ

Vol 61 March - April 2014 Nos 3 & 4



A Child lighting the candle from H.G. Mar Aprem Metropolitan on the day of Easter at Mar Yohannan Mamdhana Church, East Fort, Thrissur

VOICE OF THE EAST



His Grace Mar Awgin Kuriakose, Bishop of India, pictured giving the benediction following the 6th Holy Qurbana in Goa in March 2014



Rev'd Fr George Bet-Rasho, Corepiscopa and wife Helen being presented with a certificate of appreciation from Los Angeles Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky on 15 April 2014

VOICE OF THE EAST

(A socio-Religious bi-monthly)

(Private Circulation only)

March - April 2014

Patron : **His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem**

Metropolitan's Palace,

Trichur - 680 001, Kerala, India

Phone : 91487 - 2420978

Personal : 91487 - 2442166

Email : hgmaraprem@gmail.com

Website Links

Official: www.news.assyrianchurch.org

Archdiocese of India & UAE: www.churchoftheeastindia.org

Archdiocese of Australia & New Zealand: www.assyrianchurch.org.au

Diocese of California: www.acoecalifornia.org

Diocese of Europe: www.assyrianchurch-europe.org

Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organisation: www.theacero.org

Unofficial: www.nestorian.org

Contents

1. Editorial (Two Patriarchs)

International News

2. Patriarchal Epistle for Easter
3. Four Sub-Deacons Ordained in Urmia, Iran
4. Metropolitan of Iraq Meets Russian Orthodox Metropolitan
5. India's Voice of the East Now Available on ACN
6. Scholar Dr Erica C.D. Hunter Visits Assyrian Communities in Australia

Indian Archdiocese News

7. NCCI Centenary Celebrations Begin
8. Donation to Mar Timotheus Charitable Hospital
9. Speech of Honourable High Court Justice Alexander Thomas - Bicentennial Talk

Colour photos in pages 7,8,9,10 and cover pages 1,2,3,4.

REMINDER NOTICE

**The International Youth Conference of the
Assyrian Church of the East will be held in Thrissur, Kerala, India from
3rd to 7th of September 2014.**

**Please contact your Diocesan priests and Bishop for further
information on participating.**

Voice of the East

Vol. 61

January - February 2014

Nos. 1 & 2

Editorial

Two Patriarchs

His Holiness the late Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas

Patriarch Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch reposed on 21 March 2014 in Germany. He was 82. Patriarch Iwas was a friend of our Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV and both were natives of North Iraq. Patriarch Iwas was consecrated Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch in 1980, four years after the consecration of our Catholicos-Patriarch in England. The late Patriarch was 3 years older than ours.

His body was brought from Germany to Beirut and the first part of the funeral service was conducted in Beirut under the leadership of the Indian Catholicos Mor Thomas I who travelled from India to Beirut with a large number of Metropolitans and Bishops. As the Indian prelates could not obtain visas to travel to Syria due to the disturbed political situation he could not attend the second part of the funeral service which was conducted in Damascus in the tomb constructed under the supervision Patriarch Iwas himself.

Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop of the Eastern United States was elected to succeed the late Patriarch. Although only 49 years of age he is considered to be a mature scholar and an ecumenical leader. He has been active in ecumenical relations for many years. He attended the closing dinner of the Assyrian Church of the East Youth Conference held in Los Angeles, USA four years ago when I was present. We pray that Almighty God bestows all blessings upon the new Patriarch, known now as Mor Ignatius Aphrem II.

His Beatitude the late Emmanuel III Cardinal Delly

Emanuel III Cardinal Delly, Patriarch Emeritus of Babylon of the Chaldeans, with headquarters in Baghdad died on 10 April 2014 in San Diego, California. He was aged 86. He was a bishop from 1962 where he served as auxiliary to the late Patriarch Paulos Sheikho and later to the late Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid. After his retirement at the age of 75 he was elected Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church. In November 2007 he was appointed a Cardinal Bishop. The late Patriarch was succeeded by the current patriarch, His Beatitude Louis Raphael I Sako.

Mar Aprem

✠ **K. MARDINKHA IV**

**THOLICOS-PATRIARCH OF THE HOLY
APOSTOLIC CATHOLIC ASSYRIAN
CHURCH OF THE EAST**

8908 BIRCH AVENUE
MORTON GROVE, IL 60053
U.S.A.



✠ **ܡܪܝܢ ܡܪܕܝܢܟܗ ܕܪܒܗ**

ܡܬܠܝܟܐ ܕܡܬܠܝܟܐ ܕܡܬܠܝܟܐ ܕܡܬܠܝܟܐ ܕܡܬܠܝܟܐ

ܡܬܠܝܟܐ ܕܡܬܠܝܟܐ ܕܡܬܠܝܟܐ ܕܡܬܠܝܟܐ

✠ **ܡܪ ܕܢܚܐ ܪܒܥ**

ܒܬܪܝܟ ܕܟܢܝܫܐ ܡܫܪܩ ܐܠܫܘܪܝܬ ܕܝ ܐܠܡ

**Patriarchal Epistle
The Holy Feast of the Resurrection of
our Lord Jesus Christ – 2014**

Our Beloved Brothers in the Lord the Pure Prelates, our Spiritual Sons the selected Priests, the Honorable Deacons, all the Sons and Daughters of the Holy Church, the Assyrian Nation and all Christians of the world:

Prayers and Blessings receive:

Today the Church of Christ celebrates with great joy the Great Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from among the dead. This is a great Feast and the pride of all the feasts. Therefore let us celebrate the Feast of the Holy Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ with spiritual joy and welcome him in faith and with great honor. By His Resurrection the Lord enlightened the world and gave the hope of Salvation to mankind. The resurrected Jesus filled our hearts with joy. Let us believe that He has been raised with the same human body which suffered and was crucified transformed by His Divine power from the Physical body into the Spiritual body. The Risen Jesus is alive and is setting at the right hand of God the father in heaven.

We are bound to praise God the Father who by the grace of the Holy Spirit has given us sufficiently the Orthodox faith to believe that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ indeed rose victoriously from among the dead and conquered death of sin by the Sacrifice of His Physical body. This the intention we Christians all over the world are celebrating this great feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from among the dead and proclaim to all of the Sons and Daughters of the Holy Church, Assyrian Nation, and to all our Christian Brothers and Sisters in the world.

The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ be to you all most blessed:

As Christians we should rejoice in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from among the dead. By His Resurrection from among the dead, the new and eternal life is bestowed upon mankind. The Holy Church of Jesus Christ tremendously rejoiced in experiencing the great love of God the Father by sending His only begotten Son on earth in order to suffer for the Salvation of Mankind. By His resurrection the Lord made the son of righteousness shine brilliantly and enlightened the erroneous thoughts and minds of human race. By His precious blood imprinted and sealed the legal document by which He granted freedom and Salvation to the whole world.

The fathers of the Holy Church are comparing the Holy Church to a boat carrying her sons and daughters, the faithful believers in Jesus Christ and sailing towards the port of peace. Therefore we ask all the sons and daughters of the Assyrian Church of the East to participate faithfully, with good will, in pure heart and true love in the activities of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East which is directed by the wise and holy captain, our Lord Jesus Christ who will safely bring it to the port

✠ **K. MARDINKHA IV**

**CATHOLICOS-PATRIARCH OF THE HOLY
APOSTOLIC CATHOLIC ASSYRIAN
CHURCH OF THE EAST**

8908 BIRCH AVENUE
MORTON GROVE, IL 60053
U.S.A.



✠ **ܡܪ ܕܢܚܐ ܪܒܝܥ**

**ܡܠܟܝܬܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܬܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܬܐ ܡܠܟܝܬܐ
ܡܠܟܝܬܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܬܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܬܐ ܡܠܟܝܬܐ**

✠ **ܡܪ ܕܢܚܐ ܪܒܝܥ**
ܒܬܪܝܪܝܟ ܕܟܢܝܫܐ ܡܫܪܩ ܐܠܫܘܪܝܬܐ ܦܝ ܐܠܡܐ

abide by the constitution and bylaws of the country of your residency. When you do so, you'll be honored, respected and held in esteem by those who govern.

In conclusion, once again we declare to you all: May the Feast of the Holy Resurrection be richly blessed unto you all! We beseech our worshipful Lord and God to keep you all in good health, peace and tranquility and long and joyful life. We hope and pray that you, O beloved Sons and Daughters of the Holy Church will celebrate this holy feast of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in all peace and joy. Where ever you dwell, together with the all of our Christian brothers and sisters throughout the whole world may peace and tranquility be yours. We pray that peace and tranquility will abundantly be bestowed upon the whole world in general and in particular upon all the countries which at the present time are experiencing bloody wars and including the Middle Eastern countries.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, forever and ever: Amen

K. Mardinkha

✠ **Khanania MARDINKHA IV**

*By Grace: Catholicos-Patriarch of the Holy Apostolic Catholic
Assyrian Church of the East.*

Given at our Patriarchal Cell, Morton Grove, Illinois (USA); on the Feast of the Resurrection 2014



The dates of Patriarch's visit in Russia

May 25 = Qurbana in London (by H.H.)

May 26 = leave London for Moscow (arrive same day)

May 28 = formal visit with H.H. Patriarch Kirill

May 29 = Qurbana at Moscow for Ascension

June 1 = Qurbana at Krosnodar/Rostov

June 8 = Qurbana (back in Moscow) for Pentecost

June 9 = leave Moscow for London (H.H. will stay for two days in London)

International News

Four Sub-Deacons Ordained in Urmia, Iran

December 5, 2013 - Iran

His Grace Mar Narsai Benjamin, Bishop of Iran, has ordained 4 young faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East to the rank of Sub-Deacon.

The ordination, on 29 November 2013, was conducted in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the city of Urmia, West Azerbaijan Province, Iran.

In his sermon on the occasion the Bishop of Iran expressed his joy at the ordination and committed to nurturing and guiding the young Sub-Deacons in their religious education and the strengthening of their spirituality.

His Grace was assisted in the service by the Rev'd Fr Daryawish Azizyan, parish priest, and a large number of deacons.

Also in attendance was Mr Yonathan Bet-Kolia, representative of the Assyrian community in the Majlis (the national legislative body) of the Islamic Republic of Iran along with a large number of faithful from both Urmia and Tehran.

Another ordination of Sub-Deacons is to be held in the Iranian capital Tehran on 15 December 2013. Following this ordination the total number of ordained Sub-Deacons of the Assyrian Church of the East in Iran will be brought to 10 in the hope that many will be elevated to the rank of full Deacon in the future.

Metropolitan of Iraq Meets Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk in Moscow

On 20 February 2014, His Beatitude Mar Gewargis Sliwa, Metropolitan of Iraq, Russia and Jordan met with His Excellency Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Russian Orthodox Church's (Moscow Patriarchate) Department for External Church Relations. The meeting took place at the DECR premises.

The hierarchs discussed the situation in Iraq after the events occurred in 2003, as well as the situation of Christians in the country and prospects for overcoming the crisis. Among the issues raised at the meeting was the social and political situation in Syria. Metropolitan Hilarion discussed the initiatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, aimed at defending Christian minorities in the Middle East.

Also taking part in the meeting were Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; Rev'd Alexander Vasiutin, a DECR staff member; and Rev'd Fr Samano Odisho, parish priest of St Mary's Church, Assyrian Church of the East in Moscow.



**200th Anniversary of Mar Mariyam Valiapalli (Cathedral)
Mar Aprem Metropolitan delivers the Presidential Address**



75th Anniversary of Mar Aprem Church Built in 1940



Laying the foundation stone of the new building of Mar Timotheus High School in Mar Mari Church premises in Kuriachira. Mr. I.G. Joy, the Corporate Manager of our Church Schools, Rev'd Fr Sunny Koola, Vicar of Mar Mari Church, Mar Awgin Episcopa, Mar Aprem Metropolitan, Mar Yohannan Episcopa and Rev'd Fr. T.R. Jos are pictured. Twenty-five-million rupees is the estimated cost of the new building.



Mar Aprem Metropolitan pictured in the classroom of the St. Thomas College, Thrissur where he studied chemistry 59 years ago in the intermediate class. The occasion was the open defense for Ph.D. of Mr Aby Paul, principal of the Chaldean Syrian Higher Secondary School. Left to Right: Mar Aprem, Professor Chetna from Bangalore University, Guide of Aby Paul, Principal Dr Jensen of the St. Thomas College and Dr Babu Joseph, Head of the Department of Chemistry at St. Thomas College.



Marathon of Bobby Chemmannur: "Donate Blood, Save Life". Mar Aprem Metropolitan and Bishop Mar Augin pictured running in front of the Metropolitan Palace



Cross Chapel stone laying ceremony at the entrance of the Seminary in Thirur



Oshana 2014



Easter 2014



Mission Parish in Goa: Seated in the front row, L to R: Williams Parapully, M.I. Thomas, Mar Awgin, Rev'd Fr Cyril Antony. P.V. Joseph and George Chalakkal



60th anniversary of the first Holy Qurbana in Madras where St. Thomas the Doubting Disciple of Jesus was martyred in 72 A.D. Left to Right: Mar Yohannan Episcopa, Mar Aprem Metropolitan, Member of the Indian Parliament and Mar Awgin Episcopa.

India's Voice of the East Now Available on ACN

Assyrian Church News, the official news website of the Assyrian Church of the East is pleased to announce that the Voice of the East periodical is now available on Assyrian Church News.

Voice of the East is a socio-religious bi-monthly magazine published by the Assyrian Church of the East, Archdiocese of India. The present patron and publisher of the Voice of the East is His Beatitude Dr Mar Aprem, Metropolitan of Malabar and All India.

The magazine was first published by the Youth Association of the Church of the East in India in October 1954 and has been published continuously since. In October 2014, it will mark its 60th anniversary. The founding editor was Mr M.P. Inasu (then General-Secretary of the Youth Association) and the first publisher was Mr Jose Davis Mookan (elder brother of the current Metropolitan of Malabar and All India). In its early years of publication, the Voice of the East also included articles in the Assyrian language. However, this has not been the case in recent years with the contents now solely in English.

Assyrian Church News has made all back-issues of Voice of the East since 2010 available here for unrestricted viewing and for free download in PDF format. New issues will also be uploaded as they are published.

The entire series of back-issues for other years will progressively be uploaded in the near future also.

To access the latest January-February 2014 edition along with editions from 2010-2013, please click the 'Voice of the East' tab at the top of the website.

Scholar Dr Erica C.D. Hunter Visits Assyrian Communities in Australia

In a visit to Australia the distinguished Syriac Studies scholar Dr Erica C.D. Hunter has visited Assyrian Church of the East communities in Victoria and New South Wales.

During her visit Dr Hunter gave two lectures 'The Christian Library from Turfan Project'. The lectures, held on 14 March 2014 at Ishtar Reception Centre in Victoria and on 22 March 2014 at Edessa Hall in New South Wales were very well attended by members of the Assyrian community and individuals from other communities.

Dr Hunter's lecture in both states was entitled 'The Christian Library from Turfan: New Discoveries and New Dimensions for the Church of the East'.

Special guests at the Melbourne lecture on 14 March 2014 were Ms Beryl Turner, Researcher and Editorial Assistant of the Syriac Language Research Centre, Whitley College at the University of Melbourne along with Syriac Studies scholar Dr Nicholas Al-Jeel.

The Sydney lecture of 22 March 2014 was graced with the presence of His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia AM, Metropolitan of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon and the parish priests of New South Wales. Also present was the longstanding friend of the Assyrian community Professor Rifaat Ebied of the University of Sydney.

‘The Christian Library from Turfan’ project aims to catalogue some 900 manuscripts in Syriac, Christian Soghdian and Christian Old Turkic, as well as New Persian that were found in the opening decade of the twentieth century at a monastery site near Bulayiq, Turfan. The texts, dating from the early medieval period (9th – 12th centuries), encompass liturgical texts, Bible readings, hymns and psalters, as well as ascetical texts including translations from Evagrius Ponticus, the Apophthegmata Patrum and East Syrian writers. The lives of John of Dailam and Serapion, the legend of Bishop Barshabba who brought Christianity from the Sassanid empire to Marv as well as a history of the city of Nisibis uphold the culturo-religious connection between the Turfan community and the Church of the East.

Today these manuscripts are held in the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, the Staatsbibliothek, Potsdamer Strasse, Berlin and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst at Dahlem, Berlin. The manuscripts will be published as separate language catalogues in the Union Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts in German Collections (Katalogisierung der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland [KOHD]) a national project of the Academy of Sciences in Göttingen (Director, Dr. O. Feistel, Staatsbibliothek, Berlin). In addition, the project will address various issues, including the transmission of texts between different languages (Syriac, Soghdian and Old Turkic), the usage of liturgical and vernacular languages at Turfan and finally, the links that were maintained with the Mesopotamian homeland of the Church of the East whose patriarchate was at Baghdad.

Dr Hunter is Senior Lecturer in Eastern Christianity at the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies. Born in Melbourne, she received her PhD from the University of Melbourne in 1982. In 1985 she moved to England taking up the post of Affiliated Lecturer in Hebrew and Aramaic at the University of London which she held between 1998 – 2005. In the late 1980s and early 1990s she was the Gertrude Bell Fellow of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq and worked on the collections of incantation bowls (written in Syriac, Aramaic and Mandaic) in the Iraq Museum.

She was Principal Investigator for ‘The Christian Library from Turfan’ project that was funded by an Arts and Humanities Research Council and has continued as a member of the research group working on the discoveries from Turfan.

The two well attended lectures in Victoria and New South Wales provided important insights into the discoveries relating to the extraordinary missionary enterprise of the Church of the East.

Indian Archdiocese News

NCCI CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS BEGIN

Inaugural Program in Kolkata February 2 - 4, 2014

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) Centenary Inaugural Programme got underway in Kolkata according to the schedule to start the year-long celebrations and observances in various forms and spread across different regions in India.

On February 2, the Centenary Thanksgiving Service was held at 6:00 pm in St. Paul’s Cathedral, Kolkata. Dignitaries at the service included, from the NCCI Presidium, Honorable Bishop Dr. Taranath S. Sagar (President of NCCI), Mrs. Pearly Jos (Vice President of NCCI), Mr. Suman Biswas (Vice President of NCCI) and Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad (General Secretary of NCCI). Other Dignitaries present include Bishop Philip Masih (Methodist Church), Bishop Ashoke Biswas (Church of North India), Bishop Brojen Malakar (Church of North India), Lt. Col. Davidson Varghese (Salvation Army), Bishop Nelson Lakra (Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church), Bishop Emmanuel Panchoo (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Madhya Pradesh), Bishop Paul Sarkar

(Church of Bangladesh), Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Joseph (General Secretary, NCC Sri Lanka), Dr. K. B. Rokaya (President of Christian Conference of Asia and General Secretary of NCC Nepal), Rev. Dr. Martin Krieg (EMW), Rev. Dr. Henrick Rosen (Sweden), Rev. Dr. Young Ju Kim (South Korea), Mr. Sonam Tezin (NCC Bhutan), Ms. Janejinda Pawadee (CCA), Shri Lalthanhawla (Chief Minister of Mizoram), Shrimati Rii (First lady of Mizoram) and many other heads and leaders of Churches and organizations from across the country and abroad.

Bishop Dr. Taranath Sagar brought a powerful and moving message in which he thanked God for the 100 years journey of NCCI, and recounted the blessing of being able to make great contributions to the nation as Indian Churches, organizations and as a council. He encouraged people to continue the Christian commitment to service and betterment of society, and also raised issues and challenges faced in the society and in the Churches such as caste discrimination and injustice found in various other forms. He urged the people to strive for unity, peace and justice as an expression of fulfilling our mandate as God's chosen

On February 3, the worship service was held at Bishop's College at 9:30 am. In keeping with the day's plan for symposium and discussions, the worship was focused on South Asian Ecumenical Solidarity. Ms. Pearly Jos brought the message in which she spoke with the example of different scenarios in the Bible where women were called to take the initiative and act decisively. She challenged the gathering to take serious note of the situation in South Asia and work together towards transformation. In the symposium that followed, the keynote address of Dr. Matthews Chunakara was read out followed by papers presented from Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and India. The discussions all led to the point of needing to work together for the issues in South Asia. The Cultural Programme was held in the evening at the Calcutta Boys School in which the local host committees and local Church based groups enriched the fellowship with their lively and meaningful performances.

On February 4, the commemoration service was held in YWCA, S. N. Banerjee Road, Kolkata, the place where the National Missionary Council of India was formed. Rev. Dr. Collin Cowan, General Secretary of Council for World Mission (CWM) gave the message on **"The power of Integral Mission and Grassroots Ecumenism"** in which he spoke about enriching experience of fellowship in community, Encouragement for life with a purpose in community and Energy for mission by the community in solidarity.

The worship service is followed by a commemoration program which is chaired by NCCI Treasurer, Rev. Dr. Augustine Jeyakumar. Shri Lalthanhawla, Chief Minister of Mizoram addressed the gathering and wished the council well to continue the witness and service as an ecumenical body. An NCCI publication, "Prophetic Ecumenism: The journey ahead" was released at this time. Representatives of several countries, NCC's and constituent members of NCCI brought greetings and wishes to the National Council of Churches in India.

As the celebrations begin with the inaugural programs, the atmosphere is marked with a solemn sense of gratitude for God's leading all these one hundred years, the joy of enabling and eager anticipation about the opportunities that lie in the future for advancing the ecumenical vision towards the greater glory of God and in service of Church and nation.

Rev. Sunil Raj Philip, Executive Secretary,
Convener, Publicity and Promotion Committee,
NCCI Centenary Celebration

Mar Aprem's Tour

Mar Aprem Metropolitan of India is planning to go to Russia on 26 May 2014 and go to UAE on June 09 and celebrate Holy Qurbana on his 75th birthday, Friday June 13 at Sharjah and go to England on 14th June for ten days.

Speech of Honourable High Court Justice Alexander Thomas Bicentennial Talk

1 Respected His Grace, the Most. Rev. Dr. Mar Aprem, the Metropolitan of the Church of the East, Mar Yohannan Yoseph & Mar Awgin Kuriakose, Episcopas of the Church of the East, HG Dr. Yuhanon Mor Milithos Metropolitan of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, HG Dr. Elias Mor Athnasios, Metropolitan of Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church, Rt. Rev. Gregorios Mar Sthepanose, Episcopa of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Msgr Dr. George Kombara, Vicar General of Syro Malabar Arch Diocese of Trichur, Hon'ble Member of Legislative Assembly Shri. Therambil Ramakrishnan, Worshipful Mayor of Trichur, Shri. Rajan P Pallan, other dignitaries on the Dias, brothers and sisters of the Church of the East

2. I deem it as a great privilege and honour, in being invited to inaugurate the bicentenary celebrations of the Marth Mariam Valiyapalli. This historic Church has been visited by very high dignitaries like the Maharajas of Travancore and the former Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi and others and I am told that Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had visited the Metropolitan Palace in Trichur in 1934 and 1931 respectively. In India, the Assyrian Church of the East is popularly known as the Chaldean Syrian Church, which is based in Trichur.

The Metropolitan of the Church of the East in India, His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem, is not only a committed person of religion and spirituality, but is also a Scholar par excellence, in the fields of Church History, East Syriac Language and Liturgy. I would venture to say that Metropolitan Mar Aprem and Emeritus Metropolitan Mar Chrysostom Marthoma, represent the twin faces of the laughing Buddha of the Global Church. To persons like me, Metropolitan Mar Aprem and the late Paulos Mar Paulos personified the Chaldean Church of the East in India.

3. Apart from being one of the oldest Oriental Churches in the World, the Chaldean Church of the East in India, though a miniscule Church going by numbers, is one of the best role models and icons among the Churches in the actual practice of ecumenism and reaching out to the internal rival factions for bringing about genuine reconciliation and peace within the Church facing divisions. Unity among the two factions of the Church of the East in India was accomplished in 1995, due to the path of brotherly reconciliation shown between Metropolitan Mar Aprem and Mar Timothy II and this reconciliation demonstrated to the entire Churches in the World that divisions and factionalisms can be resolved without the involvement of Courts.

4. The Church of the East has intimate and organic connections with its brethren in Countries like Iraq, Iran and the Diaspora of its members settled in Western Countries. Reports of Human Rights Organisations and media have disclosed substantial displacement of Chaldean and Nestorian Christians from Iraq and neighboring places. The forcible displacement and migration due to violence prone atmosphere is a matter of great concern for all who believe in human rights and civil liberties, as those uprooted people are thrown to untold misery and torment. Patriarch Louis Raphael Saka, the Head of the Chaldean Catholic Church, in Baghdad had recently appealed to all Chaldean Catholics and Assyrian Christians not to leave their Iraqi homeland, as their religious uniqueness is inextricably linked with the history and geography of Iraq and called upon the Iraqi Christians to build bridges of love with their Muslim brethren.

Today, we are standing under the shadow of the great sorrow caused by the demise of His Holiness Ignatius Zakka Iwas I, the Patriarch of the Antioch and the entire East and the Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church. The Syrian Orthodox Patriarch was constrained to seek exile in Lebanon, due to the civil war in Syria. It is reported in the media that the funeral of Patriarch Ignatius Zakka will be held in Damascus on 28th of this month and let us all fervently pray that the Divine Providence will grant the full grace for the serene and peaceful conduct of that funeral. The Churches in Syria and in the ancient lands of Babylon, Persia and neighbouring regions are facing times of great turbulence. The Western and other super powers, Israel, the Arab world and all other influential players are not taking effective steps in tune with their

international responsibilities to end such strifes and bring at least a semblance of peace, in such regions. In the context of the International Law obligations for protection from hostilities against religious minorities, the real question to be posed to the World Citizenry and the Global conscience, is not as to which is the community that is at the receiving end in such strifes, but as to whether the victims are facing hostility and discrimination due to their being a religious minority.

While the Churches and civil society groups should take necessary steps with International Human Rights agencies for alleviating such problems of displaced religious minorities, the more appropriate response in the long term, for the Churches to adopt is the path of inter-religious dialogue and inter-cultural dialogue, so as to deal with the actual causes of such problems and not merely to go in for treatment of the symptoms. The Churches should take active role for bringing in genuine peace in West Asian regions like Israel, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, etc. The light spread by two great men who have recently assumed high positions of authority, Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church and President Hassan Rouhani of Iran, have kindled high hopes among those who aspire and dream for World peace. The recent Iranian peace deal is a key pointer to many such events that may unfold for the flowering of peace in that hot spot region. In March 2013, Pope Francis spoke on inter-religious dialogue, as follows:-

“The Church is aware of the importance of the promotion of friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions. I want to repeat this: the promotion of friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions. [The Church] is also aware of the responsibility that we all bear to this our world, to all of creation, which we should love and protect. And we can do much for the good of the poorest, of the weak and suffering, to promote justice and reconciliation, to build peace. But, above all, we must keep alive the thirst for the Absolute in the world, not allowing a one-dimensional vision of the human person, in which humanity is reduced to that which it produces and consumes, to prevail. This is one of the most dangerous pitfalls of our times.

“We know how, in recent times, violence has produced an attempt to eliminate God and the divine from the horizon of humanity, and we feel the value of witnessing in our societies to the original openness to the transcendent that is inscribed in the human heart. In this, we also feel close to all men and women who, although not claiming to belong to any religious tradition, still feel themselves to be in search of truth, goodness, and beauty, God’s Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, and who are our precious allies in the effort to defend human dignity, in building a peaceful coexistence between peoples, and in carefully protecting creation”. The recent bold utterance of His Holiness Pope Francis that “*My God is not a Catholic*” gives tremendous hope and faith for each one of us to go forward in this great adventure in our times in the quest for peace.

1. The great thinker, philosopher and theologian, Prof. Raimond Panikkar, has contended that peace requires more than nuclear, military or economic disarmament and that peace can ultimately be obtained only by cultural disarmament, which requires that absolutism be abandoned for true reconciliation through ongoing intercultural dialogues. He has effectively said that peace cannot be won or achieved through our struggles, but is something which is only to be received as a gift. As the great Buddhist work, Dhammapada has said:-

“Conquering, we engender hatred;

Conquered, we suffer.

With serenity and gladness we live

If Victory and defeat are overcome.”

The world’s inhabitants are clearly not only inter dependant, but simply unable to achieve peace. Inter-cultural dialogues, inter-religious dialogues and intra-religious dialogues will be the means to vanquish the Dvaita and Duality between victory and defeat, leading to the Advaita and Auality of peaceful, inter dependent co-existence.

6. The Apostolic Assyrian Church of the East, with its See in Baghdad, popularly known with the misnomer “Nestorian Church” was one of the most significant Christian communities to develop east of the Roman Empire and in its days of glory, it had about 8 million adherents and

stretched from the Mediterranean to China. The Church had a rich history from its Apostolic beginnings to the present day, when it is faced with problems of survival in its own Country of origin, Iraq and is almost forgotten by the Christian West. Christoph Baumer, in his illuminating work on the history of Assyrian Christianity, titled "The Church of the East", has stated thus :-

"The Church of the East is the Martyr Church of history. No other Church has made so many sacrifices through the steadfastness of its confessing members, who countered oppression and persecution with the strength of their faith. It is also a confessors' Church, in so far as its Missionaries poured out to the borders of the World then known in Mesopotamia – to India, Central Asia, Tibet and China and to the Mongols. The Church can be rightly be proud of its past; on hopes that it can create from this consciousness the inner strength to withstand further trials.

The path adopted by Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV of a renewal of dimensions of religiosity, spirituality, pastoral care, humanitarianism and cultural work is the only correct one. The Church has enough exceptional features to work out its unique profile. Among these are : First, its primordial, almost archaic liturgy ; Second, the use of a liturgical language closely related to the language of Jesus; Third, a rich mysticism ; Fourth, the lack of the always problematic priestly celibacy; and Fifth, the absence of the stifling idea of the originals in, which leads to, Sixth, an emphasis on free will the Church of the East is an Asian Church, which has preserved its oriental roots. As such it has the potential to attract those people in Asia for whom the Catholic and Protestant Churches have less appeal"

7. Before I conclude, may I take this opportunity to call upon Metropolitan Mar Aprem and the Church of the East to take active interest in the promotion and learning of Aramaic and East Syriac language at least among the members of the Church. This could be a small step in the re-creation of the Universe of the language and culture of Yeshua Messiah, so that Christianity is firmly rooted in its oriental origins and so that the life and teachings of Yeshua is better understood and practiced, from the perspective of the man who lived and breathed in the East. This would help in a long way to deconstruct the religiosity and spirituality of Yeshua from the exclusivisms of the Hellenized and Westernized perspectives of modern day Christianity. My revered teacher, Prof. Vishnu Narayanan Namboothiri, has often said that the Vedas and the Upanishads can be best read and understood in Sanskrit language in which those works were originally written. So also, Koran can be best read and understood in the medium of Arabic, the language in which it was originally inspired to be written. I hope that the Metropolitan Dr. Mar Aprem will take effective steps to collaborate with institutions like the Saint Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (SEERI), Kottayam and the Beth Eprem Nasrani Dayara set up near Kuruvilangad, for the better promotion of Syriac language amongst the members of the Chaldean Church of the East in India. Teaching your young children about Syriac alphabets and the rudiments of that language during vacation bible classes in the summer for about a week or so, would also be a worthwhile attempt in this direction. As a small, but significant step in this regard, I would recommend to the Metropolitan to depute a select band of young members of the Church of the East, as observers to the ensuing World Syriac Conference 2014, to be held at the SEERI, Kottayam in the first week of September 2014.

8. It was the love of your predecessors to celebrate the liturgy in East Syriac, which is the language closest to the one spoken by Yeshua that has sustained the existence and growth of the Chaldean Syrian Church in India. Trichur has nurtured the Chaldean Christians since the times of Sakhthan Thampuran, who patronized them for trade and commerce. The Chaldean Syrians have in turn contributed richly to the trade and commerce of Trichur. Yet, the Chaldean Syrians can contribute something more substantial, to Trichur, which is the culture capital of Kerala, by making it also a world of letters and the word. If the Chaldean Church of the East can take some effective steps for the promotion of East Syriac and Aramaic languages, it will be a great contribution that this church can give to Trichur, the land that has nurtured the church denomination in India having its umbilical cord connection with the oldest Eastern Apostolic Assyrian Church in the world.

9. With these words and with the blessing and prayers of all who have gathered in this august assembly, may I take this opportunity to declare the formal inauguration of the Marth Mariam Valiyapalli bicentenary celebrations 2014-15.



Metropolitan Mar Gewargis Sliwa of Iraq visiting Moscow on
20 February 2014



His Grace Mar Narsai Benjamin, Bishop of Iran pictured with the newly
ordained Deacons on 29 November 2013 in Urmia, Iran



Prelates, Clergy, Sisters and the Church Members at the Funeral of Rev'd Fr Antony V. Kokken aged 73 at Mar Yohannan Mamdhana Church on 20th March 2014