

صوت الشرق

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His Holiness Pope Francis Receives Bishop Mar Yohannan Yoseph of India in the Presence of His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch

VOICE OF THE EAST



Mar Aprem Metropolitan Proposes the Vote of Thanks at SEERI's World Syriac Conference at Kottayam. Joseph Marthoma Metropolitan and Archbishop Koorilos of Thiruvalla Also Pictured



His Beatitude Mar Gewargis Sliwa Metropolitan Calls on New Iraqi President in Baghdad in October 2014

VOICE OF THE EAST

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Voice of the East

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Editorial

Youth Conference 2014

The Youth Conference held in Thrissur, India from 3 – 7 September 2014 was a great success. It had many obstacles during its preparation. We had difficulties in finding the financial resources. But God provided more than what was required. We must express special thanks to Bishop Mar Awa Royel of California and Bishop Mar Paulus Benjamin of Illinois for their generous support. We are grateful to His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, our Catholicos-Patriarch for offering his Apostolic blessings for this event.

Our gratitude goes also to two donors from our church in India who together donated nearly a quarter million rupees; nearly half of the total expense of the conference.

We had Padma Vibhushan G. Madhavan Nair, former Chairman of the *Indian Space Research Organisation* (ISRO) to inaugurate the conference and the former Ambassador of India to Italy and the Vatican to conclude the conference. His Grace Mar Coorilose Metropolitan, Moderator of the Mission and Evangelism Committee of the World Council of Churches and Bishop of the Syrian Orthodox Church encouraged our participants with an inspiring speech. The City Police Commissioner Jacob Job gave a very useful talk to the young people to keep away from drugs, alcohol and smoking. The classes of Mrs Pearly Jos (Vice-President of the National Council of Churches in India) as well as Deacon V.V. Joseph were an inspiration to our young participants.

We are grateful to the Central Trustees of the Church of the East in India for allowing the Chaldean Centre to be used for all major meetings. As we had no housing accommodation we rented facilities of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in Peechi for this purpose.

The participants enjoyed visits to the Seminary, Mar Timotheus Charitable Hospital, Bethanya Ashram for Women, Mar Aprem Church and Mar Mari Shleeha Church. Participants had the privilege to participate in the Holy Qurbana in the 200-year-old Mart Mariam Cathedral on Thursday and in Mar Yohannan Mamdhana Church on the concluding Sunday.

I will fail in my duty if I do not record here the dedication and service of Bishop Mar Awgin Kuriakose, Rev'd Fr Jos Jacob Vengassery, Sister Dr Jincy Othottil as well as the two general secretaries of the Youths Association namely Mrs. Limcy Johnson and Mr Biju Francis. There were many sub-committees who also worked for the success of this conference.

A detailed report is included in the Indian Archdiocese News section of this journal.

Mar Aprem Metropolitan

International News

U.S. Bishops Visit Office of the National Council of Churches USA

While attending the In Defense of Christians (IDC) Summit in Washington D.C., His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California, Secretary of the Holy Synod and President of CIRED, along with His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin, Bishop of Chicago and the Eastern USA, visited the headquarters of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) on Thursday, September 11, 2014 at 11:00 am.

The two bishops were received by Mr. Jim Winkler, the President and General Secretary of the NCC USA. The purpose of the visit was a courtesy call, and an exchange of information regarding the plight of the Christians in Iraq and the Middle East at large. For their part, the NCC president apprised the bishops of the work of the Council among the various Churches in the US. The NCC just moved into their headquarters on Maryland Avenue in Washington D.C.

The NCC USA was first founded in 1908 as the 'Federal Council of Churches', and then reorganized into the 'National Council of Churches' in the 1950's. Some 40 different Churches and denominations are members of the NCC in the United States. The membership of the Assyrian Church of the East in the NCC is pending. The Assyrian Church's Commission on Inter-Church Relations and Educational Development (CIRED) is commissioned with collaborating in the membership process on behalf of the Assyrian Church of the East.

Catholicos-Patriarch Calls 3-Day Rogation for Christians of Iraq

His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos Patriarch of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East, has sent an epistle imploring all members of the church and the Assyrian nation to hold a 3 day fast (Rogation) beginning Monday the 1st of September.

The purpose of this rogation is to beseech the mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ upon our Assyrian nation and all who are being persecuted in the Middle East, in particular Northern Iraq.

May God accept our rogation just as He accepted the rogation of our forefathers the Ninevites.

H.G. Mar Paulus Benjamin Testifies at US Senate Human Rights Caucus

On 10 September 2014, His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin, Bishop of Eastern USA testified before the United States Senate Human Rights Caucus. The said caucus included an inaugural discussion on the Islamic State (IS), which has driven 200,000 Assyrians from their homes.

The Caucus was launched by Senators Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.).

Testimony was given by the following persons:

- Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
- Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom
- Pascale Warda with the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization
- Manal Omar from the United States Institute of Peace
- His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin, Bishop of the Assyrian Church of the East
- Sarah Margon from Human Rights Watch

The full text of His Grace's testimony is below:

Senator Mark Kirk, Senator Chris Coons.

Brothers and sisters, honored guests, friends:

I come before you today to tell you of the horrors and difficulties my people, the Christians of Iraq, are undergoing.

We are an ancient people and we have suffered much. Whether we are called Assyrian, Chaldean, or Syriacs, we are one. We are a Christian people that still speak and pray in the language of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Our language and heritage are precious to us, both as Christians, and as Assyrians. We are a proud people who have endured and suffered for centuries. Yet we have still maintained our existence, both as Christians and as Assyrians or Chaldeans or Syriacs.

100 years ago we suffered our genocide and the world has today forgotten it. You cannot let this happen again. It is wrong. It is immoral. It is unacceptable.

What I have seen in Iraq should concern all of you here. It is a human tragedy that seems to be forgotten. But it cannot be forgotten. You, as human beings, as Americans, as Christians or Jews or Muslims, or even as non-believers, must reach deep into yourselves and be outraged and unaccepting of what has happened to this ancient people, who under the framework of democracy, has become almost extinct in the land of its ancestors.

Our people were driven out of their towns and villages in the Nineveh Plain, the land we have lived on for thousands of years. We were forced to abandon our villages and our churches and monasteries. Our people, with their old and young, their sick and their elderly, were forced out of their homes. Their properties were taken. Their homes robbed and looted. The crosses from the churches were taken and our churches desecrated. Over 1200 manuscripts, written hundreds of years ago, were burned.

Not only did this movement, headed by the Islamic State, want us out, but it has tried, under the very eyes of the world and the United States, erase our memory from our land, and leave our people stranded in the streets of poor towns and villages, on their way out, having lost all they have. Thousands are now displaced without sufficient food, shelter, or necessities.

Something must be done and it must be done now. As winter approaches, our people's condition grows direr.

All of our churches and organizations and parties are united in making our stand as a people, the very natives of Iraq, and not losing our place in an Iraq that is democratic and fair and safe. Toward this end, it is important that all of us support the following:

- 1. A safe haven in the Nineveh Plain area and its surroundings;*
- 2. Security that is made up of our people and supported by the international community, namely the United Nations;*
- 3. Compensation for the Christian families that have lost their homes and properties and are left stranded in the streets. This should come from the authorities in Iraq — who were not able to protect the Christians — as well as from other governments and NGOs;*

4. A strong role for the United Nations in Iraq, as well as the United States and other nations, to supervise the fair treatment of vulnerable minorities and peoples in Iraq.

Short of this, we will see an exodus of our people, much like witnessed a 100 years ago. This time, however, it will be the last time, and we will see an end to the last Christians who speak Aramaic. I ask you and plead with you to not let this happen.

H.B. Mar Gewargis Sliwa Calls on New Iraqi President in Baghdad

On 10 September 2014 His Beatitude Mar Gewargis Sliwa, Metropolitan of Iraq and Russia called on His Excellency Dr Fuad Massum, the newly appointed President of the Republic of Iraq.

Opening the meeting, the President discussed the situation affecting displaced peoples in the Nineveh Governorate and other areas controlled by ISIS describing what has occurred in the areas a disaster. His Excellency stressed that his entire efforts are being directed to protect Christians, Yazidis, Sabaeans and other minority groups and to facilitate their return to their homes.

His Beatitude thanked the President for his role in aiding the suffering Christian community during the present difficult circumstances.

During the colloquium, His Beatitude conveyed to His Excellency the felicitations and best wishes of His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East on the occasion of His Excellency's ascension to the high presidential office. Also presented to His Excellency during the meeting was a personal message of congratulations from His Holiness the Catholicos-Patriarch

Bishop of Europe Attends Swedish Heads of Churches Meeting

His Grace Mar Odisho Oraham, Bishop of the Assyrian Church of the East in Europe, attended a heads of churches meeting in the Swedish capital Stockholm on 29 and 30 September 2014.

As part of the meeting agenda several topics were discussed including relations between Swedish churches and the current situation of Christians in the Middle East with particular regard to their persecution and displacement.

His Grace provided the delegates with copies of His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV's two letters to the United Nations and European Union explaining the tragedy facing Assyrian and other Christian groups in the Middle East and the systematic human rights abuses perpetrated against them.

Churches participating in the meeting included the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Sweden, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Salvation Army along with a number of Evangelical churches.

It is noteworthy that the Assyrian Church of the East is a member church of the Christian Council of Sweden, an ecumenical group of 26 member churches founded in 1992. The Swedish Ecumenical Council is the predecessor of the current body and was formed in 1932.



ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

*TO HIS HOLINESS MAR DINKHA IV
CATHOLICOS PATRIARCH OF THE
ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST*

Your Holiness,
Dear Brothers in Christ,

It is a moment of grace and a genuine joy for me to welcome you here to the tomb of the Apostle Peter. I greet Your Holiness with affection and I thank you for the gracious words which you have addressed to me, also in the name of the distinguished members of your Delegation. Through you I offer greetings in the Lord to the bishops, the clergy and the faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East. In the words of the Apostle Paul, I pray that “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (cf. *Phil 4:7*).

Our meeting is marked by our shared suffering as a result of the wars presently taking place in various areas of the Middle East, and in particular the acts of violence directed against Christians and those belonging to other religious minorities, especially in Iraq and Syria. How many of our brothers and sisters are enduring daily persecution! When we think of their sufferings, we naturally leave behind all distinctions of rite or confession: in them we see the body of Christ which, today too, is being wounded, struck and reviled. There are no religious, political or economic reasons to justify what is happening to hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children. We feel profoundly united in our prayer of intercession and in our charitable outreach to these suffering members of Christ’s body.

Your Holiness, your visit is yet another step on the path of our growing closeness and spiritual communion following the bitter disagreements of past centuries. Twenty years ago, the Common Christological Declaration, signed by yourself and my predecessor Pope Saint John Paul II, constituted a milestone on our journey to full communion. In that Declaration we acknowledged that we confess the one faith of the Apostles, faith in the divinity and humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, united in one person without confusion or change, division or separation. In the words of that historic document: “We experience ourselves united in the confession of the same faith in the Son of God became man so that we might become children of God by his grace”. I assure you of my personal commitment to continue to advance along this path, and to deepen the friendship and communion existing between the Church of Rome and the Assyrian Church of the East.

I also pray for the work of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, that it may hasten the blessed day when we can celebrate at the same altar the sacrifice of praise which will seal our unity in Christ. As we look forward to that day, we sense that we are walking together in the Lord’s presence, as did our father Abraham on his pilgrimage of faith to the Promised Land. We realize that, although the goal may appear distant and we can only taste it in hope, nonetheless it is a gift promised us by the Lord and it will surely manifest itself. Already what unites us is much greater than what divides us. For this season we feel impelled by the Spirit to exchange even now the spiritual treasures of our ecclesial traditions in order to live as true brothers, sharing the gifts which the Lord does not cease to make to our Churches as a sign of his goodness and mercy.

Your Holiness, I thank you for your visit and I invoke upon you, and upon the clergy and the faithful entrusted to your pastoral care, through the intercession of the All-Holy Mother of God, an abundance of divine blessings.



*His Holiness Pope Francis,
Bishop of Rome and Pope of the Roman Catholic Church:
Fraternal greetings in Christ Jesus our Lord and God*

Beloved and Venerable Brother!

It is with profound joy and gratitude to our Lord and Savior that I personally greet Your Holiness as the Bishop of Rome, here in your own apostolic see. Our gathering today is, in essence, the fraternal embrace in Christian charity of the ancient and apostolic Churches of Rome and of Seleucia-Ctesiphon through the person of their Arch-Pastors and Fellow Ministers of the Gospel. I echo today the words of the blessed apostle St. Paul befitting our gathering as brothers: *"We give thanks to God always for you all, and we remember you in our prayers continually; and we call to remembrance before God the Father the works of your faith, the labor of your love, and the patience of your hope in Jesus Christ"* (I Thessalonians 1:2-3).

My presence here today, along with my brother prelates and the clergy comprising our delegation, is to express in person, for the first time, my sincere prayers and esteem for Your Holiness and the profound ministry which you carry upon your shoulders. Ever since your election as the Bishop of Rome, I have not ceased to implore the blessings and divine aid of Almighty God for you and the Church over which you preside as Chief Shepherd and Minister. I have personally met and know your two venerable predecessors who presided over the See of Rome, and I am certain that Your Holiness too walks in that same spirit and love for all the Churches of Christ expressed by late Pope John Paul II, of holy memory, and of Pope-Emeritus Benedict XVI. Be assured that I will continually remember you and your important ministry in my prayers and supplications before the Lord.

My visit to Your Holiness at the Vatican also coincides with the meeting of our mixed committee for theological dialogue between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Roman Catholic Church. Our journey of dialogue and pilgrimage of love began in 1984, with my first official visit to the Vatican and my meeting with your predecessor the late Pope John Paul II, of blessed memory. Since that pivotal moment, our two Churches have willfully accepted the call to dialogue and ecumenical exchange as two Sister Churches, as being an invitation coming to us from the Lord himself-he who prayed for the very unity of the Church and her faithful (cf. John 17:21). Since then, our two Churches have actively engaged in ecumenical gatherings, official dialogue meetings and fraternal exchanges on an international level.

Our common witness to the Risen Christ and to his saving Gospel is essential for the life of our two Churches, both *ad intra* and *ad extra*. To us, our witness of the Resurrection of the Lord and of the Gospel is indispensable to the very essence and nature of who we are as 'Church, which is the living Body of Christ. To the world, our common witness gives credence to the Church's divine mission to evangelize and proclaim the Good News of salvation to all men, and indeed to the entire world. It is my prayer and desire that this ecumenical pilgrimage together might continue and bear much spiritual fruit, to the greater glory of God and for the good of all his holy, catholic and apostolic Church. By this, the world will believe that the Father sent the Son for our salvation, and to have eternal life in him.

Our mutual journey in love and dialogue will help to proclaim together hope to a world that is ever-more marked by strife, suffering and violence. Never has there been a generation of humanity in greater need of Christ and his love than our world today. In the Middle East, our brothers and sisters in the faith of Christ continue to suffer on a daily basis for the sake of his holy Name. The recent atrocities committed against the indigenous people and Christians of the Nineveh Plains in Iraq, namely the Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syriacs, is a living witness that Christ is still persecuted and rejected by the world. Men of an evil will choose suffering and death, as opposed to the grace, peace



and life which can only come from Christ. The civilized world today, and particularly the international community, cannot just stand by silently and allow these atrocities to be committed against the Christians and the non-Christians alike, and against all the peace-loving peoples and races in Iraq, Syria and in the Middle East at large.

Although the violence and the suffering continue, no man or woman with a morally formed conscience can allow this to happen, nor can they accept it. For our part as the Churches of Christ, we ought to stand together firmly at the side of our persecuted brethren and be a voice to the voiceless, while consistently proclaiming the moral good to peoples and nations of all religious affiliations. I would like to thank Your Holiness personally for speaking on behalf of the persecuted, and for utilizing all the ecclesiastical and diplomatic means at the disposal of the Holy See to alleviate these atrocities and to bring about justice and peace in that region of the world marked by great strife and aggression.

In conclusion, I thank Your Holiness for your warm and fraternal welcome to the Vatican. May the grace and peace of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ remain with Your Holiness always, and strengthen you as you continue to faithfully administer the See of Rome and shepherd the holy flock entrusted to your archpastoral care.

Give at the Vatican, on this 2nd day of October, in the year of our Lord 2014

+ K. Mardinkha



Khanania MARDINKHA IV

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



Seminary Cashew Farm – Second Stage Inauguration Meeting on 30 September 2014. Honourable Member of Parliament Mr. P.K. Biju Inaugurates and Mar Aprem Metropolitan Presides



After the ordination Service of Deacon Enson Isaac of UAE Mart Mariam Parish at Mar Mathai Shleeha Church in Marottichal on 27 September 2014



**His Grace Mar Odisho Oraham, Bishop of Europe (First from Left) Attends
Heads of Churches Meeting in Stockholm on 29 and 30 September 2014**



**His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California, Secretary of the Holy
Synod and President of CIRED, along with His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin,
Bishop of Chicago and the Eastern USA, visits the headquarters of the
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) on Thursday,
September 11, 2014**

H.G. Mar Awa Royel Addresses Washington D.C. 'In Defence of Christians' Summit

On 11 September 2014, His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California and Secretary of the Holy Synod addressed the 'In Defence of Christians' summit held in Washington D.C. between 9-11 September 2014.

According to 'In Defence of Christians', "The primary purpose of the Summit is to bring all members of the Diaspora together in a newfound sense of unity. Whether Orthodox or Catholic; Evangelical, Coptic or Maronite; Syriac, Lebanese, Chaldean or Assyrian – all Middle Eastern Christians will be called on to join together in solidarity.

"This solidarity will strengthen advocacy efforts with policy makers and elected officials and make more palatable grassroots outreach to the American public. Thus united, Middle Eastern Christians will invite all people of good will to join the cause to defend the defenseless, to be a voice for those who are voiceless.

"The survival of these historic Christian communities is not merely a moral imperative; it is in the interests of all nations and peoples of the West and the Middle East."

This is the text of His Grace's speech:

Your Holinesses, Your Beatitudes, Your Excellencies and Graces,
Reverend Fathers, Dear Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great honor and privilege to be here with you this afternoon, representing His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East (along with my brother His Grace Bishop Mar Paulus Benjamin), who could not attend due to health reasons. His Holiness sends his greetings, prayers and love to each and every one of you, with a particular gratitude to Toufic Baaklini and the organizers of the IDC.

This afternoon's panel discussion is a most pertinent one, I believe, because it gives a sense of direction and purpose to our discussions and deliberations in which we have engaged during the course of this summit. It is a topic that affects the daily lives of our Churches and peoples, both in the Middle East and in the Diaspora, namely: What indispensable role does Christianity have to play in the Middle East?

That Christianity does have an important role to play in the Middle East today cannot be questioned. The changing demographics of our Churches and peoples in our homeland in the Middle East goes hand in hand with defining the vitality of the role of our Christian faith in the East today.

Notwithstanding the fact that many of our Churches have migrated to the West, and as a cause we have seen the dwindling of the numbers of our faithful in the Middle East, the roots of Christianity and its important role in society cannot be undone. I would like to echo the words of His Holiness Pope Francis stated in Jordan during his visit to the Holy Land this past May: "We will not be resigned to think about the Middle East without Christians!"

I propose to look at the important and vital role of Christianity in the Middle East in its three important moments or junctures, namely: past, present and future.

First, historically Christianity has played a role in the Middle East, indeed from the inception of our faith and beginnings of the Early Church, which has marked an important change in the life of humanity as a whole. The very mystery of the Incarnation itself, unique to the Christian faith, marked a turning point for all of humanity, indeed on a cosmic level: God stepped into history in order to show His solidarity with man—God became man, that man might become God. Therefore, by its very nature Christianity has the vital role of being a salutary faith (i.e. offering salvation to humanity) and demonstrating the proximity of our Creator to his most cherished of creations—man. In the Incarnation, the Son of God (the Word become flesh), announced to us the Gospel of salvation and eternal life in his name.

Christianity, therefore, is not just another religion in the Middle East (even the classical nomenclature of comparative religion as being one of the three ‘monotheistic’ religions does not suffice!), but it offers salvation to the world and to the peoples of the Middle East. As Christians, we can never lose sight of the importance of the missionary aspect of the Church. By its very nature, the Church must evangelize and bring the Gospel to all peoples—even to those who are enemies of the Gospel. This is evident in the great commissioning of the Twelve by our Lord (cf. Matthew 28:18-19).

As the Church grew and became present in the whole East, it brought civilization and learning to all the peoples of the Middle East. The history of the court physicians of the Abbasid caliphate, for example, is all too well-known in the annals of history. The fact that Greek learning and philosophy passed into the Latin language and to the Arabs via the Syriac translators and fathers is living proof of the pivotal role of the Christian East in the society and social context of their day for countless generations.

The second important moment of Christianity’s vitality for the Middle East is the present. And, indeed, this is a pertinent moment for all of us gathered here today under the aegis of the IDC, and it is a matter of concern for all of the Churches that continue to struggle for survival in the Middle East. It cannot be denied that the role of the Christians of the East in helping to build up the new Arab nation-states that were constructed after the First World War and as result of the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire was a most decisive one. Christians excelled in areas of science, mathematics, culture, education, medicine and literature, not to exclude their influence and important role in the political life of the countries of the Middle East which they have known as their homes. The many private schools owned and operated by the Christians since the formation of the modern Arab states are a living testimony to these contributions on the part of the Christians. Respecting the culture and religious sensitivities of the Muslim Arabs all the while, Christian educators tutored and imparted learning and culture to the most elite of the Arab fabric of society. Further, till this very day Christian caretakers and those in the medical field have cared for children, women and the elderly of Muslim Arab society without distinction and in a most superb and caring manner. We can only imagine what a vast void would be left in modern-day Muslim Arab society were there no Christian schools, hospitals, child and elderly care facilities operating (and successfully!) in the Middle East today.

What this means is that Christians are an indispensable part of the fabric of Muslim/Arab society in the Middle East today; they have always been, since the rise of Islam in the early 7th century!

The third and final moment of the vitality of Christianity in the Middle East is the future. What will the face of Christianity look like 5, 10 and 20 years from now in front of an Islam that is growing ever more intolerant and fundamentalist? The history of the Church in the East teaches us many lessons, and we can see well-established patterns and tendencies that, more or less, repeat themselves any given number of years. However, can the world stand by and continue to allow that to happen? What will become of a Christianity which is ever so persecuted, but continues to contribute to the good of the society in which it lives, even though that society is unwelcoming and antagonistic? How will our Churches survive in the East in the coming years? What can we do to insure that survival, or at least (if utterly nothing else) slow it down considerably?

I'm of the opinion that this 'third moment' of Christianity's vitality to the Middle East will be determined by one possible factor among many, and that is the unity of the Christian Churches in the East!

It is no understatement that our present Cross and burden being borne by all of our Churches in the Middle East has indeed brought us together. The present summit, the IDC and many other organizations across the globe demonstrate the willingness of the Christian Churches in the East to come together, to 'unite' as it were, in order to understand our common plight and search out common solutions and answers to our plight. There is a certain level of unity that is demonstrated, and on the first day of the summit many of the eminent speakers expounded upon the topic of the 'Call to Unity.' Patriarch Aram I reminded all of us that unity is an essential part of the Church's very nature and fabric. And that is exactly the point that I would like to propose as the 'third moment' of Christianity in the Middle East—i.e. the future of our Churches in the lands we know and call our own, yet which in a very real way are not welcoming and are not our own.

The ecumenical movement in the life of our Churches as a real response to addressing the concerns and fears of survival of Christianity in the Middle East for the future cannot be overstated. Although we are united in a very real sense here today, but yet we acknowledge that we are not yet really united. The scandal of the division of the Body of Christ (his Church) is a wound that we all suffer from in our daily lives and in the lives of our Churches and faithful. Crystallized dogmatic expressions and anathemas continue to be a part of our ecclesial, canonical and liturgical identity in a very real and definitive sense. And the greatest scandal is that we cannot as of yet fully and really participate at the Lord's altar together, in order to partake of the one Bread of Life and the one Chalice of salvation.

As we move forward in the lives of our Churches in the face of neighbors who have not acted so neighborly towards us, let us remember our own sins, and make the firm resolve to proclaim one Gospel together, one Christ and one faith. We have been united these days together as brothers in sisters in Christ on account of the evil perpetrated against our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, let us take this momentum and move together, and be united really and visibly into the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church built by Christ himself, so that the gates of Hades might never prevail against her. Thank you.

Indian Archdiocese News

Inaugural Indian Youth Conference A Resounding Success

The Youth Conference of the Archdiocese of India was held in Thrissur, Kerala between 3 and 7 September 2014 under the theme 'Life in Its Abundance (John 10:10)'. In particular, the theme was considered with respect to its multifaceted implications in the religio-political and social life.

The inaugural Youth Conference of the Church of the East in India was staged with the imprimatur of His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East and under the patronage of His Beatitude Dr Mar Aprem, Metropolitan of Malabar and India. His Grace Mar Awgin Kuriakose, Auxiliary Bishop of India gave leadership to the organising committee with the support of The Rev'd Dr Sr. Jincy Otthotil.

The conference's opening day commenced with more than 200 Indian youth participants registering. Joining the Indian delegates were 5 Assyrian participants visiting from abroad; 2 from the United Kingdom, 2 from Australia and 1 from Latvia living in Russia.. A large number of attendees were expected to be present but were prevented from attending owing to the ongoing crisis facing the Assyrian community in Iraq. Regrettably, a number of delegates from the United States were also unable to attend having been refused visas by the Indian government. The opening session of the conference was attended by the Metropolitan and two Bishops of India, a large number of the clergy of the Church of the East in India along with notable dignitaries. Guest of Honour at the inaugural session was *Padma Vibushan* Dr G. Madhavan Nair, former Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization who was honoured for his work in service of humanity and of the Indian nation.

The event programme was in full force from day 2 opening with the consecration of the Holy Qurbana in Syriac by His Grace Mar Awgin Kuriakose at Marth Mariam Cathedral; the Metropolitan headquarters of the Church of the East in India. Notably, the Youth Conference coincided with the 200th anniversary of Marth Mariam Cathedral which is the oldest church in the town of Thrissur. The first lecture of the conference was given by His Grace Dr Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, Moderator of the World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. His Grace, a noted leader in the field of eco-theology offered profound insights into modern themes confronting the Christian faith and the relevance that the Christian churches can have in addressing prevailing social, economic and political issues of the modern age. The daily programmes were also filled with numerous biblical, spiritual and fellowship activities which positively engaged the youth and enhanced their experiences. The day's programme was concluded with excursions to the following institutions of the Church of the East in India: Bethanya Old Age Home for Women, Mar Aprem Church, Mar Mari Sleeha Church (Kuriachira) and the Seminary of the Church of the East in Thiroor.

Day 3 of the Youth Conference included two lectures; one given by Mrs Pearly Jos, a member of the Church of the East in India and present Vice-President of the National Council of Churches in India and His Beatitude Dr Mar Aprem, Metropolitan. Both lectures were welcomed with

much enthusiasm by the attendees and spurred ongoing discussions both on the conference theme and in the case of the Metropolitan's lecture, on the history of the Church of the East in India and abroad. The highlight of the day's programme was the Indo-Assyrian Cultural Night featuring musical and folkloric performances performed by both the Indian and Assyrian delegates. As the conference coincided with the Kerala State Festival of Onam, a number of the performances were related to this particular celebration.

Day 4 was graced by the presence of a number of major academic and political personalities whose presentations from a number of perspectives inspired the delegates. The day's programme commenced with a lecture by Professor Rifaat Ebied of the University of Sydney. Professor Ebied spoke on the theme of martyrdom in the Christian church with particular reference to the Assyrian and Coptic communities of the Middle East. The renowned Syriac scholar, Dr Sebastian Brock next addressed the delegates discussing the origins of his interest in Syriac studies and providing an update recent development in the field. The afternoon programme included visits to Mar Thoma Church (Pattikad), Mar Timotheus Memorial Orphanage (Kalathode) as well as Mar Timotheus Memorial Hospital and Dr.Santhosham Old Age Home (Kunnathumkara). The evening was closed with an impressive Valedictory Function in which His Excellency K.P. Fabian, renowned Indian diplomat was the Chief Guest.

The conference closed with the consecration of the Holy Qurbana in the Malayalam language at Mar Yohannan Mamdhana Church in East Fort.

Given the resounding success of the event and its positive impact upon the spiritual and social life of the delegates, it is the hope that such conferences can continue to be staged into the future. The Archdiocese of India and all those involved in staging the event were lauded by the delegates for having organised a stimulating programme, attracted notable guest attendees and put together an event of the highest standards.

8th World Syriac Conference, SEERI, Kottayam

The *St Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute's* 8th World Syriac Conference was held at the SEERI Headquarters between 8 to 14 September 2014. Scholars from all over the world attended. Mar Aprem Metropolitan, Mar Yohannan Yoseph Episcopa, Rev'd Fr Narsai Youkhanis of Sydney and Sr Dr Jincy Othottil presented papers from our church.

Ordination of Deacon Enson Isaac Othottil, Sharjah

Enson Isaac Othottil of Mar Mathai Shleeha Parish, Marootichal (paternal cousin of Sister Dr. Jincy Othottil and maternal cousin of Bishop Mar Awgin Kuriakose) was ordained a deacon on Saturday 27 September by Mar Aprem Metropolitan, assisted by Bishops Mar Yohannan Yoseph and Mar Awgin Kuriakose. In addition to the clergy of the parish (Rev'd Fr Shaji Kottayathihakren and Deacon A.V. Sheejan), Rev'd Fr. N.J. Kuriakose, Rev'd Fr. Franklyn Varghese and Deacon Abin Daniel assisted in the holy service. There was a reception meeting honouring the new deacon, who is the 4th clergyman from this small parish. Deacon Enson Isaac will assist at Holy Qurbana in the UAE Mart Mariam Parish meeting in Sharjah every Friday at 7.30am in St. Martin's Church.

Mar Aprem Metropolitan expressed his joy at the fact that now five deacons are serving as honorary deacons in our Indian archdiocese who dedicated their lives for honorary altar duties during the past five years. It is hoped that two more will come to make a number of seven as in the New Testament Church.

Seminary Cashew Farm

On Tuesday 30th September 2014 a public meeting was held in the Seminary of the Church of the East about 10 kilometers from Thrissur. A six acre plot of the total 52 acre land was earmarked as the cashew model farm. This model cashew plantation is a joint effort of the Seminary and the Government Agricultural University to improve quality cashew production. Saplings are supplied by the Extension Department of the Kerala State Agricultural University. For five years the University will provide financial help. After the five year period the farm is totally ours. The cashew trees will yield cashew fruit within three years. The fruit can be eaten and the nut seen outside the fruit can be processed and canned and earn foreign currency.

The speakers praised Bishop Mar Yohannan Yoseph, who came forward to organise the cashew plantation in addition to the goat farm and cultivating other vegetables. The Bishop thanked all who came, especially Mr Binny Emmatty of our church who arranged for the Member of Parliament Mr. P.K. Biju to inaugurate this function. Mar Aprem Metropolitan presided over the meeting and planted trees along with others.

Sunday School Teachers Conference

The annual conference for Sunday school teachers was held in Mar Yohannan Mamdana Church on Sunday 5 October 2014. Mar Aprem Metropolitan, patron of the Sunday Schools, celebrated Holy Qurbana assisted by Bishop Mar Awgin Kuriakose. After hoisting the flag, the Metropolitan inaugurated the conference. The main speaker was Dr Saju who is an international trainer who led many conferences and training seminars.

In the afternoon Bishop Mar Awgin Kuriakose gave a lecture about our faith. The general secretary of our Sunday Schools, Rev'd Fr Simon Emmatty organized this conference efficiently.

Bishop Mar Yohannan Yoseph

Mar Yohannan Yoseph Episcopa participated in a delegation of the Assyrian Church of the East lead by the Catholicos-Patriarch to the Vatican in mid-October and participated in the Vatican–Assyrian Dialogue on 1 October and returned to Dubai on 4 October. He is scheduled to conduct a prayer meeting in the house of Rafi Mathew of our UAE parish and celebrate the Holy Qurbana at the National Emirates School on Friday 10th and return to India on the following day.

Collection for Iraq

A collection is being taken in our churches in India to send to the suffering people in Iraq and Syria. Mar Aprem Metropolitan issued an appeal to all members of our church to contribute one day's income for our suffering brethren in Iraq, Syria etc. One million Indian Rupees is the target; equivalent of between \$16-17,000 USD. We pray that the collection will be finalized in October.



**Blesson Antony and Members of UAE Parish Receive
Mar Yohannan Yoseph
At Dubai Airport on 11 October 2014**



**Mar Aprem Metropolitan Inaugurates Sunday School
Teachers Conference on 5 October 2014. Dr Saju and
Rev'd Fr Simon Emmatty, General Secretary of the
Sunday School Pictured**



**Dr. G Madhavan Nair, former ISRO
Chairman Inaugurating the Youth
Conference - India 2014**

Youth Conference - India



**Youth Conference - India: Mar Aprem Metropolitan and
Mar Awgin Kuriakose Seated in the Front Row Middle.
Prof. Sebastian Brock of Oxford and Prof. Rifaat Ebied
of Sydney Seen on Either Side of the Metropolitan**