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Vol 63

July - August 2016

Nos. 7 & 8



Ordination of Three Deacons
Mar Yacob M'Paska Church, Peechi – 15 July 2016

VOICE OF THE EAST

INSTITUTE OF MISSION & EVANGELISM OF THE CHURCH OF THE EAST (IMECE)
1ST BATCH OF 1YEAR ADVANCED BIBLE COURSE (2015-16)
CONDUCTED BY SUVISHESHA SANGHAM (12-07-2016)



Dedication of the Renovated Mar Timotheus Church, Kozhikode by H.G. Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan along with H.L. Mar Yohannan Yoseph, H.L. Mar Awgin Kuriakose, Vicar Rev'd Fr. K.R. Inasu & Church Members – 17 July 2016



After Holy Qurbanain the Chapel of Christian Medical College, Vellore – 10 July 2016. Mar Aprem Metropolitan and Mar Yohannan Yoseph Episcopa pictured with our students and CMC staff.

VOICE OF THE EAST

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

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Voice of the East

Vol. 63

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Editorial

YOUTH CONFERENCE, INDIA

The Youth Conference of the Church of the East held in Thrissur, Kerala, India in July 2016 was a joyous occasion for the young members of our Church of the East, both male and female. The Youths Association was an organization of males and the Women's Youth Association is an organisation for females of the age group between 18 and 45. Although these organizations are separate in every parish in India, the committees worked together under the leadership of Rev'd Fr Tinto Timothy and Rev'd Dr SrJincy Othottil in organising the successful conference.

The 2016 Conference was larger in size than the one held in 2014. That Conference was the first of its kind and was a learning process for many of our young people to meet delegates from our Church universal. The 2016 Conference was attended by three bishops of our Church from outside India, namely Bishop Mar Awa Royel of California, Bishop Mar Narsai Benjamin of Iran and Bishop Mar Paulus Benjamin of Chicago.

Rev'd Fr Dr Aprem Alkhori from Baghdad was an added attraction. The delegates from USA and Australia awakened our young people in India that our Church is not only a small Church located in Thrissur in Kerala, the south west part of India, but a faithful remnant of a great missionary Church which in the eleventh century A.D. outnumbered the Roman and Orthodox churches combined.

If it is reduced to a very small church in India and abroad today it is the duty of the present generation to work towards the restoration of its past glory. Each one of our young members should attempt to learn the past history of our much persecuted church and pledge to be a part of the re-building of our church. Let us all wake up and decide to work together. When we do, we will commence the process of restoration today within our generation.

Mar Aprem Metropolitan



*His Beatitude Mar Aprem Metropolitan of India;
Their Lordships Mar Yohannan and Mar Awgin Bishops; venerable priests and elect deacons, and our beloved
faithful of our Church in India:*

First and foremost: receive the peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and our greetings and the greetings of our faithful in Iraq.

I was truly desirous to have participated with you during this joyous celebration of our holy Church in the blessed land of India. However, sadly I was unable to be present in person because of my physical health, and the fact that I had to undergo an unexpected surgery. Thanks be to God, I feel much better now and am slowly recovering. Therefore, I ask your prayers, that the Almighty might give me the necessary strength and health soon, so that I may in the very near future travel to your country and visit our beloved faithful.

Without a doubt, our holy Church has labored in the past and continues to do so in the present with the aim of spreading the ecclesiastical, spiritual and cultural heritage amongst the youth wherever they might be living. Because the youth are the pillars of our Church's future, she continually encourages and strengthens them to be diligent in putting forth conferences which will benefit the worthy goal of every stage of their lives.

Undoubtedly, your present conference will enable you to draw in the youth of the Church who have marginalized themselves. Therefore, it bears upon the shoulders of our holy Church to support and promote such activities in order to be a source of advancement and progress for our youth, and thus to be the cause of a connection and dialogue among our youth. This will enable them to be active in every facet of the Church's life, and better equipped to carry on the progress in our present age, in a worthy manner.

I offer my thanks to His Beatitude Mar Aprem, and to Their Lordships Mar Yohannan and Mar Awgin for their care concerning this worthy activity, and to every clergy and faithful of our faithful in India who have contributed and helped the Youth Conference to become a success. I also greet all of the guests of this conference at large, and in particular those guests who are participating from diverse countries outside of India.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all; Amen.

[signed]

†Gewargis III Sliwa
By Grace: Catholicos-Patriarch of
the Assyrian Church of the East.
21 July 2016

Correction from the last issue

In the list of nine central Trustees the following name got deleted in the final proof in page 15.
The name is **Mannuthy Jose Tomy** (Tomy Jose).

International News

Assyrian Delegation Attends Conference on Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C.

At the invitation of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, and with the express blessing of His Holiness Mar Gewargis III, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, a delegation of the Assyrian Church attended the Conference: “Threats to Religious and Ethnic Minorities under the Islamic State,” on July 28, 2016. The conference was co-sponsored by the US Department of State’s Office of International Religious Freedom and the Georgetown University in Washington. The following day, a closed-session meeting took place at the State Department, with many diplomats and parliament representatives present from numerous countries.

The Assyrian delegation, consisting of His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California and Secretary of the Holy Synod, along with the Very Rev. Archdeacon William Toma of the Diocese of Eastern USA, took part in the public session of the conference held under the auspices of the Berkley Center’s ‘Religious Freedom Project.’ The conference was attended by representatives of the various religious and ethnic minority entities in Iraq and Syria. The US Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom, David Saperstein, addressed all those in attendance. Also addressing the body was Knox Thames, the Special Advisor for Religious Minorities in the Near East and South and Central Asia, attached to the same US State Department’s Office of International Religious Freedom.

During the first panel of the public session of the Conference, His Grace Bishop Mar Awa was invited to speak on the first panel which dealt with the perspectives of religious and ethnic leaders, most of whom were from Iraq. During this first panel discussion, the panel members discussed the current status of religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria victimized by ISIS. Threats that are posed to these groups are of both a humanitarian and security nature. The daily challenges of these communities were also discussed. Further, the impact of the recent declaration of the atrocities of ISIS against the Assyrian/Christian and other non-Christian communities as an act of ‘genocide’ by the US Secretary of State was also discussed by the panel.

Secretary of the Holy Synod Meets with Synod Secretary of the Coptic Orthodox Church

On Saturday, May 28, 2016, His Grace Bishop Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California and Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East paid a fraternal visit to His Grace Anba Raphael, the Bishop of Central Cairo and the General Secretary of the Coptic Orthodox Church, at the St. Antonios Coptic Orthodox Church in Hayward, California at 12:30 pm.

H.H. Mar Gewargis III Sliwa Returns to Iraq Following Treatment

His Holiness Mar Gewargis III Sliwa, our Catholicos-Patriarch, received medical treatment in Germany for a few days in recent times. He returned to Baghdad in the first week of August. From Baghdad His Holiness has gone to Erbil, capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, which is the headquarters of our Church after the Patriarchate relocated to Erbil from Chicago following the demise of the late Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV on 26 March 2015.

Joseph Haweil for City Council

Mr Joseph Haweil of Melbourne, Australia is contesting a Council seat in Melbourne's Hume City Council. We wish him every success. He is a long-standing friend and supporter of the Church of the East in India and of Mar Aprem Metropolitan. As the member of the ACERO Board of the Assyrian Church of the East in Australia he is very active in Church circles. He represents the Assyrian Church of the East in Australia in many ecumenical meetings. He reads the proof of the *Voice of the East* magazine as well as several books of Mar Aprem Metropolitan. Mar Aprem Metropolitan had been a guest in his home in Melbourne in December 2008 and Joseph has been the guest of Mar Aprem at the Metropolitan Palace in Thrissur in 2010 and again in 2014. We all wish him victory in this election and do meritorious service in the nation of his adoption.

Indian Archdiocese News

Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East India – Youth Conference – 2016

Sujo Jose, Mar Qardagh Church – Chennai

The Youth Conference – 2016 organised under the auspices of the Arch-diocese of India was held from 21st to 24th July 2016 at Thrissur, Kerala. 'Get Up! Don't be afraid' (Matthew 17:7), one of the most emboldening words of Jesus to his disciples was the theme chosen for the conference with a view to encourage and equip the youths to face the growing challenges and concerns of the contemporary society.

The four day conference commenced with a registration of more than 325 youth delegates from across the world including USA, Australia, Iran and Iraq. The Inaugural session was presided over by H.B. Dr. Mar Aprem, Metropolitan, Arch-Diocese of India & UAE. H.G. Mar Awa Royel from California, H.G. Mar Yohannan Yoseph, H.G. Mar Awgin Kuriakose from India, H.G. Mar Narsai Benjamin from Iraq and H.G. Mar Paulus Benjamin from Chicago were the other prelates present. His Beatitude enlightened the gathering with a bird's eye view on the history of the Church of the East and also encouraged to spread the faith and be responsible witnesses to the church established in 52 AD by St. Thomas the disciple of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Ajith Kumar IPS (Inspector General of Police) officially inaugurated the conference urging the youth to just capture only as much information that is required from media, internet and other sources and to stay away from overloading of information. He also emphasised that such conferences should enable the youths to identify their hidden and inborn talents and to use them for the betterment of their own lives and the lives of others. H.G. Dr. Mar Awa Royel rendered the keynote address and offered inspiring thoughts on the significance of the Church and what it calls to be real members/faithful of the church.

The 2nd day of the conference unwrapped with a Bible study by H.G. Mar Yohannan Yoseph who related the theme to the restoration of the body through the story of the woman who was sick for 12 years (Matthew 5:25) and the restoration of the soul through the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). The 1st session, the Theme presentation by Fr. Jerry Kurian from the United Theological College Bangalore propelled the youths not just to 'be good' but to 'be good enough'. He highlighted the culture of youths today urging them to befriend Jesus who gave His life for us. Also encouraged them to get involved in key decision making bodies in the churches as youths are the key change agents.

H.G. Dr. Mar Awa Royel offered profound insights on the subject "Saints of the Church of the East". His Grace enlightened the youths on the meaning, ecclesiastical recognition, canonization and the veneration of saints, rendering a holistic view on the relevance of saints in our church.

This session was followed by H.G. Mar Paulus Benjamin who exposed the delegates to the various Challenges, Struggles and Vulnerabilities confronting the Church today. His Grace highlighted the adverse impact of Globalisation, Modernisation, Secularism, Consumerism and also encouraged the youths to live by the apostolic tradition and teachings of our forefathers. The Indo-Assyrian Cultural night was a delightful time of singing, dancing and sharing the culture of the fellow youths including Indians, Assyrians and the Philipppines.

Day 3 was hosted at YMCA Youth Centre, Kannara, a site known for its calm, aesthetic beauty and serene atmosphere. The day commenced with a Bible study by H.G. Mar Awgin Kuriakose who challenged the youths on the definition of love, spoke on the aspects of 'Fear' and 'Fear Not' from a biblical perspective and also encouraged them to boost up their faith to be bigger than their fear. Fr. Abraham Thomas from the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam, emphasised on the 'Free Will' of the youths to respond to the encouraging words of Jesus 'Get Up! Don't be afraid'. He compared the event of transfiguration as an experience of a journey of ascension, witnessing, fellowship and prayer leading to freedom from fear at the mount of transfiguration and to descend back into the world to work for His kingdom without fear.

Rev. Dr. Aphrem Alkhori created awareness among the youths regarding the ecclesiastical laws of marriage, engagement and divorce according to the Nomocanon. Prof. C. Raveendranath, Honourable Minister for Education, Government of Kerala educated the youths on bio-diversity and the relevance of preserving the environment for maintaining an ecological balance. The day ended with a campfire with all the youths joyfully exhibiting their inborn talents of singing and dancing.

Day 4 of the youth conference commenced with a Holy Qurbana co-celebrated by H.G. Mar Narsai Benjamin with all other prelates at Marth Mariam Big Church, the Cathedral of the Church of the East in India. The youths later visited the Poomala Dam which is used mainly for irrigation purposes and also the Church Seminary at Thiroor. The Youth Conference – 2016 ended with a Valedictory function presided over by H.B. Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan in the presence of distinguished dignitaries, Bishops from India, USA and Iran, members of the Board of Central Trustees and special invitees – Bishops and priests from Pilippines. Guests of Honour at the function were Honourable Minister for Agriculture Adv. V.S Sunil Kumar and Mrs. Ajitha Jayaraj, Worshipful Mayor, Thrissur Corporation.

Yet another historic event came to an end offering great appreciation to the organisers especially the convenors Dr. Sr. Jincy Othottil and Fr. Tinto Timothy along with the team who toiled from dawn to dusk for the success of the conference and also to all delegates both from India and abroad for their active participation and co-operation all through the conference. Youth dispersed imbibing the theme 'Get Up! Don't be afraid!' and also hoping to meet again for the next youth conference.

The inauguration of the shrine of the Late H. H. Mar Dinkha IV at the Tomb in Montrose Cemetery, Chicago is postponed from September 18 to 25, 2016.



H.G. Mar Narsai Benjamin Gives Benedictory Address at the Inaugural Session of the Youth Conference – 21 July 2016



H.G. Mar Paulus Benjamin Gives Benedictory Address at the Inaugural Session of the Youth Conference – 21 July 2016



H.G. Mar Awa Royel – Keynote Address at the Inaugural Session of the Youth Conference 2016– 21 July 2016



Sister Dr. Jincy Othottil– Icebreaker & Self-Introduction after the Official Inaugural Session of the Youth Conference 2016



Prof. Ravindranath, Hon. Minister of Education of Kerala – Lecture on “Get Up: Don’t be Afraid” – For Humanity and Nature – Saturday Evening at YMCA Kannara (Youth Conference – 23 July 2016)



H.G. Mar Aprem Metropolitan – Presidential Address at the Closing Session of the Youth Conference – 24 July 2016

Dr. K. SUREKHA MEMORIAL ORATION 2016

On Tuesday 16th August 2016
At Seminar Hall
Kannur University Thalassery Campus

Dr. K. SUREKHA

Associate Professor,
Department of Microbiology
& Biotechnology (2003-2015)
Kannur University



An inspiring teacher, with an incomparable strength and an ever enthusiastic drive to overcome hurdles, Dr. Surekha, from Vadakara, completed her early education followed by graduation in Zoology from Vadakara. She completed her Post - graduation from Devagiri College, Calicut, and pursued her doctoral program in the area of insect taxonomy under the guidance of eminent Taxonomist (Late) Prof. Dr. T. C. Narendran, at the Department of Zoology, University of Calicut. Later, she joined as Research Associate of CSIR in the Division of Entomology, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi. During this period she was awarded the Darwin Fellowship, by the Govt. of UK and went on for her Post-Doctoral work on Taxonomy of Parasitic Hymenoptera under Dr. John La Salle, CABI, at the Natural History Museum London.

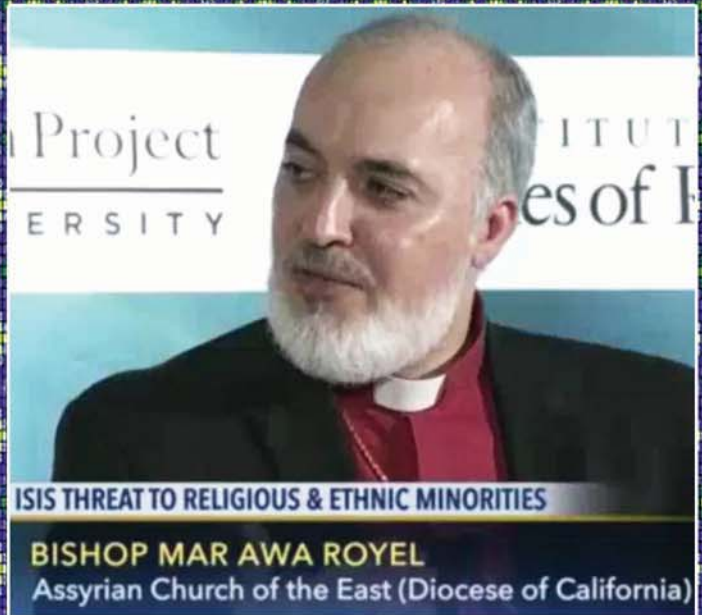
Prior to her joining Kannur University, she was working as Research Associate at the Coffee Research Sub Station, Coffee Board of India, Chettalli. During this period she was deputed to CIRAD France on Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advanced Research Fellowship for a training program in Molecular Biology. Her main focus of research was the isolation and targeting of Surface Antigenic Proteins of *Staphylococcus aureus* and development of kits for the diagnosis of pathogenesis by the organism. She received external fundings for her research in this area. Under her supervision, two scholars were awarded Ph.D. She has delivered invited talks and presented papers at various International Conferences in the US, South America, Costa Rica, United Kingdom and at national conferences held at various venues in India. She was highly concerned about the needs of the society and was regularly invited by local administrative bodies to deliver classes.

Dr. Surekha was, Fellow of Royal Entomological Society, London, 1995. She was Life member of "Association for Advancement of Pest Management in Horticultural Ecosystems", Bangalore, "Applied Zoologists Researchers Association (AZRA)" Cuttack, and Life Member of Prof. T.C. Narendran Trust for Animal Taxonomy. She was member of different Academic & Administrative bodies of CUSAT, Calicut University, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kuvempu University, Mysore University, Mangalore University and Kannur University.

Her husband Dr. P. Kurian Raphael, is a Senior Scientist (Entomology), Coffee Research Sub Station, Indian Coffee Board, Govt. of India, Chettalli, Kodagu Dt. Karnataka and son, Athul P. Kurian is pursuing his graduation in Microbiology at St. Joseph's College, Bangalore.



H.H. Mar Gewargis III Sliwa
Catholicos-Patriarch of the
Assyrian Church of the East



Bishop Mar Awa Royel
Diocese of California



Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom
(Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan) Visits
H.G. Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan at Metropolitan Palace

Tharissur - 18 July 2016

Endowment at Kannur University

We are happy to learn that Kannur University has instituted an Endowment in the name of Dr. Surekha Kurian. She is one of the brilliant professors who joined our church from the Hindu religion. We deeply regret her sudden passing away due to cancer.

Ordination of Three Deacons

Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan, Mar Yohannan Yoseph Episcopa and Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa ordained three deacons at Mar Yacob M'Paska Church, Peechi on Friday 15 July 2016. The new deacons are:

1. Deacon Simon Kanjirathingal (Mar Yacob M'Paska Church, Peechi)
2. Deacon Abi Pallipuram (Mart Mariam Big Church Cathedral, Thrissur)
3. Deacon Babu Karakada (Mar Addai Shleeha Church, Paravattani)

Qurbana in Kozhikode

On 17 July 2016 Mar Aprem Metropolitan assisted by Mar Yohannan Yoseph Episcopa and Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa dedicated the renovated Mar Timotheus Church in Kozhikode. A new altar as well as an auditorium were added to this church. Rev'd Fr K.R. Inasu, Vicar of this parish and Retired Chief Engineer Mr. Peter Thermadom were decorated with golden crosses at the public meeting held after the Holy Qurbana in the upper floor of the new auditorium. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Supreme Head of the one-million-strong Mar Thoma Syrian Church who was on a visit to the city of Kozhikode paid a visit to our church.

Mar Qardagh Church, Chennai

Mar Aprem Metropolitan and Mar Awgin Episcopa blessed the hall and parsonage of Mar Qardagh Church on 3 July 2016. It was the 1944th *Dukhrana* (Memorial) Day of St. Thomas who was martyred and buried in Mylapore in the city of Chennai (former name Madras) in 72 A.D. An attractive souvenir depicting the history of the parish during the last 60 years was released in the public meeting. This is the first church building built by Mar Aprem Metropolitan after he took charge of the Indian Archdiocese in 1968.

Meritocratic Day

Mar Aprem Metropolitan and Bishop Mar Yohannan Yoseph gave leadership to the meritocratic programmes of the Chaldean Syrian Higher Secondary School on 23rd July 2016. Honourable Minister E.P. Jayarajan was the Chief Guest. 117 girls donated 12 inches of their hair for making wigs for cancer patients.

Mar Chrysostom Metropolitan

Philipose Mar Chrysostom Metropolitan Emeritus of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, who cooperates with our church, paid a visit to the Metropolitan Palace, Thrissur. The 99-year-old Metropolitan visited Thrissur in connection with the shooting of a movie about him. Mar Chrysostom Metropolitan travelled to many places in India including New Delhi, the national capital to interview the President of India, the Prime Minister of India and other very important personalities. **A hundred years with 100 important people.** Mar Chrysostom Metropolitan had written the foreword to the first humour book captioned **Bishop's Jokes.** Mar Chrysostom has the record for longest active service as a bishop, 54 years-long. The Mar Thoma Syrian Church has more than one million members. We have permission to use their church in Muscat for Qurbana as we have no church or hall of our own.

Our Membership in the Church—the Household of God

Address delivered by His Grace Bishop Mar Awa Royel, Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Bishop of California at the Youth Conference-India:

Reading: I Timothy 3:15

“These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

I. Introduction

It is very important that each and every member of the Assyrian Church of the East realize and recognize his/her place in the Church. Unfortunately, ‘membership’ nowadays has been strictly limited to paying a certain amount on an annual basis and considering that to be sufficient for our membership in the Church; that could not be farther from the truth! When we come to know our place in the Church, and what *real* membership in the Church entails, then we can fulfil our Christian vocation to a much greater degree.

II. The Church in Sacred Scripture

The *Church* (and I mean the ‘Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East’ when I use this term) has a divine origin and institution. In the Old Testament, the congregation of the Israelites (the *Qohel*) was considered a foreshadowing of the Church of the New Covenant. The Israelite congregation, gathered around the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem and worshipping God by means of prayers and sacrifices, constituted the Old Testament Church. Prophetically, Daniel 2:44-45 speaks about God setting up a kingdom that would endure forever and never be destroyed; this indicated the Church. Another term used in the Old Testament is *Knushta*, usually translated as the ‘congregation’ of Israel. Both *Qohel* and *Knushta* were expressions of ‘Church’ under the Old Covenant. Again, this was a foreshadowing of the Church, which would be revealed in its fullness in Christ Jesus under the economy of the Lord in the New Testament.

The fulfilment of the Church can be seen in the New Testament. Two important New Testament texts that help us understand the constitution of the Church are to be found in Matthew and in Acts:

1. In Matthew 16:18-19 we see the institution of Christ's one Church upon the 'rock,' indicating the confession of Simon Peter. After confessing Jesus to be the 'Messiah, the Son of the living God,' Jesus blessed Simon bar Jonah and called him the 'rock' on account of his faith: "*And upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Sheol shall not overcome it.*" This text is foundation for the Church, because it clearly demonstrates the divine foundation of the Church, as well as the unity of the Church. That is, that *Christ himself* founded the Church, and that he founded *one* Church. The word 'Church' is also used in Matthew 18:17 where Christ mentions that the offending brother is to be brought before the Church; if he were not to heed the Church too, then such a one should be considered a pagan and a tax collector.
2. After the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, the true 'birthday' of the Church takes place on that exact day—the Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus' resurrection from the dead. In Acts 2 we read that Jews from various parts of the East had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Pentecost feast, and there in the Upper Room, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in the form of tongues of fire and sat upon each one of the (eleven) disciples.

The Greek word for Church is *Ekklesia*, and it means 'to call out a people for a purpose.' This Hellenistic aspect of the word denotes the fact that the Church is the faithful gathered from among the 'Nation' (Israel) and 'the Nations' (i.e. the non-Jews) into one sanctified Body.

The Aramaic/Assyrian word is '*Edta*, which denotes a 'feasting' or a 'celebration.' The Hebrew term *Qohel* (from the Old Testament literature) denotes a gathering, collection; it is from this word that the Greek *synagogue* (used in the Greek Septuagint meaning 'assembly') is extracted. The Assyrian '*Edta* is actually the feminine form of '*eda* which means 'feast' or 'festival.' The Church being feminine, therefore, is the body that celebrates her salvation in Christ. Mar Abdisho of Nisibis (d. 1318) in his *Marganitha* (*The Pearl*), Part III, Chapter VIII, explains that the word Church means a gathering with festivity:

"The term 'Church' implies a congregation and an assembly met together to unite in acts of festive celebration. It is symbolic of things above; for as the nine orders which minister to the Most High are divided in to three degrees, just so the Church. The Patriarchs, Metropolitans, and Bishops occupy the place of the Cherubim, Seraphim, and Thrones; the Archdeacons, Periodueute, and Priests, the place of Dominions, Authorities and Powers; the Deacons, Subdeacons and Readers, the place of the Principalities, Archangels and Angels. The name of 'Church' as we have said, has this signification; for Christ does not call material foundations and stones a 'Church' but the total congregation of those who believe in Him. The nave and the sanctuary are called the Church metaphorically, and at times the name city is applicable to those who live in it, as when it is said: 'all the city went out to meet Jesus.' And at times in its buildings as when it is said: 'He entered into the city.'"

This clearly asserts that believers gathered together as 'Church' are gathered to worship and celebrate together. That celebration entails thanksgiving for the salvation given to us by God the Father completed through the Son Jesus Christ and perfected in us by the Holy Spirit. The

Church's gathering and worship, therefore, is reflective of the Holy Trinity itself. Therefore, the Church gathers to celebrate her salvation and new life in Christ. There are two important New Testament texts that demonstrate the nature and the life of the Early Church in the apostolic age:

1. **Acts 2:42** "*And they remained constantly in the doctrine of the apostles, and they took part in prayer and in the breaking of the Eucharist.*" Notice these elements of what the Early Church consisted in, namely, a permanence in: 1) the apostolic doctrine; 2) prayer; 3) the breaking of the Eucharistic Bread.
2. **Acts 2:46** "*And daily they remained steadfast in the temple in one spirit, and in the house they would break the Loaf...and they glorified God, having favour before all the people, and our Lord increased daily those who lived (i.e. who participated in salvation) in the Church.*" Notice the other elements of the Apostolic Church here: 1) prayer in the temple, being of one spirit; 2) breaking the Eucharistic Loaf in the home; 3) glorifying God and participating in 'life' (i.e. salvation).

Another important element is the profession of faith ('Symbol of Faith') expressed by the Church in the *Nicene Creed*(325); in the Creed we profess, "[We believe] in One, Holy, Apostolic and Catholic Church." The fathers of the Nicene Council identified these four elements that are constitutive of the Church: 1) the unity of the Church (cf. Matthew 16:18); 2) the holiness of the Church (by baptism and the apostolic proclamation or *Kerygma*; see Ephesians 5:26-27); 3) the apostolicity of the Church (see I Corinthians 12:28; cf. Ephesians 3:4-5); 4) the catholicity, or universality, of the Church (see Romans 16:4; cf. 16:16 for 'Churches of Christ' in the plural denote the multiplicity of the 'Local Church.')

III. My membership in the Church

Again, it cannot be stressed enough that membership in the Church is not effected by paying a set fee on annual basis! Membership in the Church comes by these two concurrent methods: 1) God's invitation to salvation and eternal life in Christ; 2) the conviction of the believing faithful that they are the body of the Church. Money does not constitute membership in the Church. The poorest parishioner and the one who donates the most are equal in the eyes of God. Therefore, it is important to first build the foundation of what 'membership' in the Church entails and how it is constituted:

1. *Membership primarily occurs when we are regenerated according to the Spirit at baptism.* The very first and foundational step for becoming a member of the Church is baptism. That is the sacrament through which God imparts new (regenerated) life to us according to the Spirit. In baptism, we share in the Lord Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. It is the first sacrament which one who desires to be incorporated into the Assyrian Church of the East must receive before he/she can participate in any of the other sacraments of the Church. Jesus told Nicodemus how important baptism is for the Christian: "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly I say to that no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of the water and the Spirit'" (John 3:5).
2. *Membership in the Church means being incorporated into the one Body at baptism.* Once we are baptized in water according to the Spirit, then we are incorporated into the Church, which is the Body of Christ. Each and every one of us, whether clergy or layman, have our own part and place in the greater Body of

Christ. There is no distinction among us in terms of equality, granted that there is a difference between the ordained, priestly ministry and the ministries of the Church in which the laymen engage in. St. Paul stresses this important point: “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jew or Greek, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (I Corinthians 12:12-13).

3. *The members of the Church constitute one household.* Once baptized and incorporated into the Church, the individual member, taken collectively, constitute a spiritual ‘household’ or family of God. This means, that God is the head of the ‘household,’ and we are his children. St. Paul admonishes the Galatian Church: “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10). Paul further refers to the Church as ‘God’s household’ in I Timothy 3:15.
4. *Everyone is important in the Church and has his/her own part to do.*
 - a. Jesus Christ is the head of God’s household, the Church. Paul mentions in Hebrews 3:6, “But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house, whose house we are, if we hold on to our confidence and to our hope firm until the end.” Thus, the household belongs to God, Christ is the head of that household and we are an integral part of that household as its members. In this household, we are not only united to one another as fellow-members, but we are also united to Christ who initiates that unity, holds it firm, and sanctifies the members of the Body: “Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family” (Hebrews 2:11).
 - b. No one is more or less important in the Church. Granted, *functions* may be distinct. That is (for example) while a parishioner can become a member of the parish Motwa, that does not mean that the same parishioner can celebrate Qurbana on Sunday! While both are ministries within the Church, the functions and roles are quite different. Each baptized faithful is an important and integral part of the Church, of which all the faithful collectively make up the one Body of Jesus Christ. Paul stresses this in Ephesians 4:14-16: “*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves; and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*”
5. *As members, we are ‘co-heirs’ with Christ.* Through baptism, we sacramentally share in the Lord Jesus’ suffering and death. Thus, God makes us worthy to be heirs of the Kingdom and of the promises given to the faithful in Christ. We become ‘co-heirs’ because God has adopted us as his children, and we therefore share in the status which Christ enjoys as the Son of God (albeit to a finite degree). Paul states in Romans 8:17: “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

IV. What shall I do?

Now that we have some background information on membership in the Church, it is important to remember that our faith must be an action-filled one. The apostle James said it best almost two millennia ago, "Faith without works is dead!" (James 2:26). We have to put our membership into action; below are some helpful pointers:

1. *Be an active part of your parish youth group.* Remember that, to quote the famous disclaimer of the PBS (Public Broadcasting Station), 'this program is brought to you by you!' Similarly, 'this Church is brought to you by you!' Take an active role in your youth group. This not only includes attending all of the fun activities involved, but also in the Bible Studies and in the prayer-life of the Church (i.e. Qurbana, ramsha and sapra prayers, the fasting seasons, etc.). Take part in your youth groups meetings, fundraisers, charitable works, etc. Another important contribution is giving ideas to your youth group on projects that are in line with the mission of the youth ministry; these could include: a. serving at a local soup kitchen; b. visiting the elderly of the parish; c. visiting the needy; d. visiting those in prison (aka, prison ministry); e. collecting funds and goods for needy Assyrians in the Middle East and other parts of the world (such as the Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organization); f. collecting toys for needy children during Christmas; g. having a 'Giving Tree' at your parish during the Christmas season, etc.
2. *Attend Bible Studies religiously!* This is no merely meant to augment the number of Bible Study attendees in a given parish; rather, it is fundamental for the growth of your spiritual life. Remember that all that is done in the youth groups of our Church around the globe is done for the greater glory of God, the advancement of the Holy Church and our spiritual building-up into solid and faithful Christians.
3. *Take part in your parish's various ministries.* Some of these ministries include: 1) the choir (men and women); 2) ushering (for the young men only); 3) Sunday School teacher/assistant (usually the women do a great job with this!). For the young men, they are highly encouraged to consider a vocation to be readers (*qaroye*), sub-deacons (*hupadyaqne*) and deacons (*shamashe*). This entails getting involved in the ordained ministry of the Church. Once one has reached the diaconate (*shamashuta*), then there is also the encouragement to consider a vocation to the priesthood. Of course, the ordained ministry involves first a calling on God's part. However, one must hear and answer that call, and say yes to God's invitation to serve his Church in that ministerial capacity.
4. *Remember to serve your Church later in life.* Once you have passed the 'youth years' and have succeeded in life, remember to come back and serve your Church in whatever capacity you feel God is calling you to serve. Remember that as a gentle and loving mother, the Church has nurtured your faith and has given birth to you in baptism according to the Spirit.
5. *Share actively and participate in the liturgical and prayer life of the Church.* While it is true that the 'family who prays together, stays together,' how more true is it on a macro level: 'the Church that prays together, (not only stays, but) grows and lives together.'



Mr. Ajith Kumar IPS (Inspector General of Police) Inaugurating the Youth Conference 2016 at Thrissur – 21 July 2016



Valedictory Function on 24 July 2016, the 4th Day of the Youth Conference 2016 Inaugurated by Honourable Minister for Agriculture Adv. V.S. Sunil Kumar



Participants in the Youth Conference 2016 at Thrissur along with prelates, priests, foreign delegates, and with the Board of Central Trustees