



❖ *The Holy Synod of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East* ❖

The Third Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East Convened under His Holiness Mar Gewargis III, Catholicos- Patriarch

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Synod of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East convened under the presidency of His Holiness Mar Gewargis III Sliwa, Catholicos-Patriarch of the East, from 13-18 May, 2019, in the Church of Saint John the Baptist in the city of Ankawa, the Province of Erbil, (Kurdistan Regional Government), Iraq. Prelates present in the Holy Synod are as follows:

1. His Beatitude Mar Aprem, Metropolitan of India and United Arab of Emirates
2. His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia, Metropolitan of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon
3. His Grace Mar Aprim Khamis, Bishop of Western USA
4. His Grace Mar Emmanuel Joseph, Bishop of Canada
5. His Grace Mar Odisho Oraham, Bishop of Europe
6. His Grace Mar Afram Athneil, Bishop of Syria
7. His Grace Mar Isaac Yousif, Bishop of Nohadra and the Russian Federation
8. His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California and Secretary of the Holy Synod
9. His Grace Mar Yohannan Yoseph, Bishop of India
10. His Grace Mar Awgin Kuriakose, Bishop of India
11. His Grace Mar Narsai Benyamin, Bishop of Iran
12. His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin, Bishop of Eastern USA
13. His Grace Mar Abris Youkhannan, Bishop of Erbil and Patriarchal Auxiliary
14. His Grace Mar Benyamin Elya, Bishop of Victoria & New Zealand

Introduction

Placing its hope in the divine succor of God the Father, and by the grace of the Only-Begotten Son, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit who operates in all things according to His good will: the third Holy Synod was convened under the presidency of the father of fathers, His Holiness Mar Gewargis III Sliwa, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, who sits on the see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon and who occupies the apostolic throne and is the heir of the apostolic preaching of the blessed apostles Mar Thomas from the Twelve, and Mar Addai & Mar Mari from the Seventy-Two—



who are known as the 'Disciplers of the East' and the holy founders of this holy Church of the East and her tradition.

The Holy Synod considered a number of important matters related to the daily spiritual life of the faithful, particularly those of our contemporary context, in which are found persistent challenges against the true Christian faith and morality. Therefore, the Holy Synod stressed the fact that bishops as shepherds and in their apostolic capacity as the governor of the diocese, as well as the priests as spiritual fathers to the faithful, have the sublime obligation to preserve intact this holy flock—purchased by the precious blood of Christ—from every spirit of error which arises contrary to the divine teaching of the Holy Gospel.

Therefore, the perpetual mission of the Church is to help perfect the faithful in holiness, as they continue to grow and to live in Christ. Already in the Old Testament, the Lord God commanded: *"Be holy, for I am holy"* (Leviticus 11:44, 45). Further, in the divine dispensation of the New Covenant, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—the Only-Begotten Son of God who became Man—bestows the perfect and true way of becoming a child of God, by grace, in his commandment: *"Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect"* (Matthew 5:48). To this end, the holy Church of God continually places the saints (that is, those Christian faithful who have been perfected) before the faithful as a living and exalted example of spiritual virtue to be followed. In this Synod, the Church once again recalls these holy examples—that is, the believers in Christ who have been perfected in faith while in the course of this present life—by canonizing two beloved bishops of the Church who have not only labored as shepherds of Christ's flock, but whose exalted virtues and holy way of life encourages the faithful of the Church to strive for this spiritual perfection of faith in our world even today.

The Holy Synod also saw the importance of evangelization—the spreading of the Holy Gospel of our Lord—even as our Lord Jesus Christ commanded his disciples: *"Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit..."* (Matthew 28:19). The Holy Gospel, which is the joyful proclamation that gives a real and lasting joy to the whole world, is the dominical and spiritual law capable of bringing men of all generations to the Kingdom of God. With regard to those within the Faith, the Church must from early childhood promote spiritual programs for the young in every parish. In this way, we will be able to sow the Good Seed of the Word of God in those hearts which are pure and ready to receive it. Along with them, the youth of our Church have an important and active role not only to hear the Word of God, but also to live it daily. Therefore, the Synod stressed the importance of national youth conferences in the various dioceses of the Church. We are happy to announce the convocation of a worldwide youth conference, which will bring together representatives of all of the youth of our Church, and which will take place in the land and upon the soil of the birth of our apostolic Church—Mesopotamia.

In conclusion, the Holy Synod emphasized the importance of the Christian virtues and way of life, and the nourishment of the Good Seed of the teaching of Our Lord (i.e. The Gospel) in the daily life of the children of the Church. When we fulfill the commandments of Our Lord and live according to His will, it is only then that we shall attain true joy, which is spiritual in nature. Only then will we be fulfilled and will our true human nature be manifested—as beings created in the image and likeness of God. The faithful have ongoing questions today concerning matters of Christian morality. Equally pertinent in this discussion is the obligation of preserving intact the definition and meaning of the family, that is, a man and a woman united in holy matrimony, who become father and mother, having children as the blessed fruit of this sacred union, which is blessed by the Lord God in His holy Church. This is the design and order which has been once and for all established and sanctified in an unalterable fashion by the Creator



of all creation, the Lord and God of all—even as we read in the Book of Genesis. Therefore, it is the obligation of each and every faithful to observe this divine order established by God Himself, preserved by the law of the Gospel and the constant and unequivocal teaching of the holy Church of Christ.

The following are the decrees of the Holy Synod:

A. General Decrees

I. Concerning Dioceses and the Election of Bishops:-

1. The Holy Synod decided concerning the fulfillment of Decree 5, No. 1 of the Holy Synod of 2016 concerning the bifurcation of the Diocese of Europe into two dioceses. Therefore, it is decreed that the western part of Europe shall henceforth be an independent diocese, titled 'Diocese of Western Europe', and which shall be comprised of the faithful in England, France, Belgium, Austria, Holland and Greece. The episcopal see shall be in the city of London (Great Britain). In addition, the Holy Synod defines the other diocese as 'The Diocese of Scandinavia and Germany,' governed by His Grace Mar Odisho Oraham, and comprised of the faithful found in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Germany. The episcopal see shall remain in Stockholm.
2. The Holy Synod assigned bishop-elect, the Very Rev. Narsai Youkhanis, to the newly created Diocese of Western Europe. The episcopal consecration shall take place on the Sixth Sunday of the Resurrection, i.e. May 26, 2019.
3. The Holy Synod elected the Rev. Fr. Isaac Tamrs as bishop for the Diocese of Baghdad, having also jurisdiction over the faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East in the Ukraine and in Georgia. The episcopal see shall be the capital city of Baghdad. The consecration shall take place on Sunday, November 3, 2019.

II. Concerning Saints and the Procedure of Canonization

The Holy Synod established a formal process for the canonization of saints in the Church of the East. Therefore, when the holy Church wants to formally canonize one of the faithful, the process established by the Synod must be followed. Therefore, in accord with the process established by the Synod, the following were officially included in the catalogue of saints of the Church of the East: the late Mar Abimalek Timotheus (1878-1945) of blessed memory, the metropolitan of Malabar and All India. His commemoration shall be observed on May 1st of every year. Also, the blessed Mar Yosip Khnanisho (1893-1977), of hallowed memory, is officially canonized as a saint of the Church of the East. His commemoration is the second Sunday of July of every year.

III. Concerning the Promotion of Theological Learning

The Synod confirmed the founding of the 'Nisibis Theological College' based in Sydney, Australia. The Synod asks desires that it be supported by the bishops by sending clerical students to this



institution, particularly those found in the West. This theological institution is also open to all of the lay faithful and all those interested to further their learning.

IV. Concerning Clergy

The Holy Synod reviewed the matter of those priests who were suspended by the Holy Synod of 2015 (Decree 10). Therefore, as a sign of charity and spiritual fatherhood, the Holy Synod absolves these priests and lifts from them their suspension as of the date of this decree. However, the practice of their priestly ministry rests with the local bishop of the diocese in which they are found. Nevertheless, this Holy Synod desires to reiterate the importance of the fact that priests must not abandon their parishes, especially in the Middle East. The faithful in the parishes must not remain without the services of the Church administered by the priests. This is in accord with the canons of the Church.

V. Concerning the Youth of the Church

The Holy Synod decreed the convocation of an international youth conference for 2020, to be comprised of representations from the youth of the Church worldwide. His Grace Mar Abris Youkhanan will organize this conference (in Erbil).

VI. Concerning the Canonical Collections of the Church

1. The Holy Synod decreed that His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin shall form a committee to formulate a modern compendium, or canonical collection, of the synodical canons of the Church. This work shall be completed within five years, and a report shall be given to the Holy Synod.
2. The Holy Synod decreed that His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia shall be responsible for revising the 1986 Diocesan Constitution, which concerns the dioceses in the western hemisphere. This revision shall be forwarded to the Holy Synod for confirmation within one year's time.

VII. Concerning the Liturgy

1. The Holy Synod gave permission for the translation of the Holy Qurbana into modern Assyrian, prepared by His Grace Mar Awa Royel. This translation shall be reviewed by the committee headed by His Grace Mar Isaac Yousif, which shall then be put forth for ecclesiastical approbation within three months. Then, the text shall be put forth for approval by the upcoming Holy Synod.
2. The Holy Synod confirmed that the liturgical committee, under the presidency of His Grace Mar Awa Royel, is to prepare the rubrics of the celebration of the Holy Qurbana of the sacred Mysteries, with accompanying commentaries. The aim is to prepare all of the clergy of the Church worldwide to celebrate the rite in one uniform fashion. This text shall then be forwarded to the review committee, headed by His Grace Mar Isaac Yousif, and put forth for ecclesiastical approbation at the upcoming Holy Synod.
3. The Holy Synod gave its approval for the official translation of the Gospel Lectionary into modern Assyrian by His Grace Mar Isaac Yousif, to be approved by the Holy Synod.



VIII. Concerning Christian Morality

The Holy Synod discussed at length various matters concerning Christian morality, and the moral challenges which the faithful of the Church encounter on a daily basis. Particularly discussed was the matter of marriage after the ordinance of God, being one of the foundations of the Christian life and family—in accord with the Sacred Scriptures and the teaching of the Assyrian Church of the East. In order to confirm to the faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East the teaching concerning of our holy Church, the Holy Synod commissioned His Grace Mar Abris Youkhanan to prepare a formal Synodal statement demonstrating the Church's teaching and official position on matters of Christian morality.

Here end the general decrees of the 2nd Holy Synod of Mar Gewargis III.

For the affirmation of the above, we hereon affix our signatures:-

+Gewargis III Sliwa
By Grace: Catholicos-Patriarch

+Aprem
Metropolitan of India

+Joseph Meelis Zaia
*Metropolitan of Australia &
New Zealand, and Lebanon*

+Aprim Khamis
Bishop of Western USA

+ Emmanuel Joseph
Bishop of Canada

+Odisho Oraham
Bishop of Europe

+ Aprim Athneil
Bishop of Syria

+Iskhaq Yosip
Bishop of Dohuk & Russia

+Awa Royel
*Bishop of California;
Secretary of the Holy Synod*

+Yohannan Yoseph
Bishop of India

+Awgin Kuriakose
Bishop of India

+Narsai Benyamin
Bishop of Iran

+Paulus Benjamin
Bishop of Eastern USA

+Abris Youkhanan
Bishop of Erbil; Patriarchal Auxiliary

+Benyamin Elya
Bishop of Victoria & New Zealand