

# ܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ

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January - February 2021

Nos.1 & 2



Nisibis Assyrian Theological College, Sydney, Australia officially opened on Sunday 28 February 2021

## VOICE OF THE EAST





Reverend Fr. Ramen Youkhanis and Reverend Fr. Shlemon Dinkha graduated with their Masters of Theological Studies from the Australian Catholic University, Strathfield.



Children of St Hurmizd's Assyrian Primary School, Greenfield Park participating in the Assyrian Church of the East Children's Association's (ACECA) fourth annual summer program in January 2021.

**VOICE OF THE EAST**

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## **Voice of the East**

**Vol. 68**

**January - February 2021**

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### **Editorial**

### **Nisibis Assyrian Theological College in Sydney**

It is a glad news indeed that the Nisibis Assyrian Theological College has been opened in Sydney, Australia. Metropolitan Mar Meelis Zaia A.M. ought to be congratulated for his efforts to start such an institution. Since there is a large number of Assyrians living in the Sydney area this Theological College will be of immense help for the Assyrians to learn theology at the university level.

We had already opened St Hurmizd Assyrian Primary School and St Narsai Assyrian Christian College in Sydney in past years which have resulted in hundreds of graduates already. The College will be of help not only to the Assyrians living in Sydney, but international students coming from other countries. Since we do not have a Theological College, this Nisibis Assyrian Theological College will attract students from all over the world.

We always recall with pride the historic theological Schools in Edessa and Nisibis in the early centuries where St. Aprem and St. Narsai in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries had taught. In recent years, because of the persecutions, our Church had lost that name and fame of the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. Therefore, the opening of the Nisibis Assyrian Theological College in Sydney will increase the name and fame of our Assyrian Church of the East.

We need our scholars to help our Nisibis Assyrian Theological College in order to spread the name and fame now lost. The opening of the College presents a valuable opportunity to once again ensure sound theological training in the tradition of the Church of the East to our faithful.

When individuals like myself travelled to New York and Princeton Theological Seminary to study, the question was often asked, why don't you go to study at your own seminary or theological institution? I had to explain that at present we have no Theological Colleges and we have to study at Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox schools to receive degrees of higher education, including the Ph.D. That being said, studying in New York and Princeton provided me the opportunity to share with scholars of other churches, the faith, history and tradition of my own Church.

The opening of Nisibis Assyrian Theological College in Sydney is an opportunity for theology scholars from all over the world to revise their misunderstandings and study the writings of Saints Aprem, Narsai, Bawai, Odisho and others.

May God Almighty prepare scholars in our generation and make use of their abilities for the benefit of the present generation. We all can work together to research old manuscripts and make new studies on our Church. My best wishes to His Beatitude in his efforts to make this new Nisibis Assyrian Theological College known universally and to be useful to the present generation and that which follows.

Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan

## **Sydney Priests Graduate with Master of Theology**

On Monday 16th November recently ordained priests, Reverend Fr Ramen Youkhanis and Reverend Father Shlemon Dinkha graduated with their Masters of Theological Studies from the Australian Catholic University, Strathfield.

Initially planned to have graduated in April 2020, however due to COVID the graduation ceremony was postponed to November 2020 alongside hundreds of other ACU students.

Rev'd Fr Ramen and Rev'd Fr Shlemon were ordained on Sunday 6th September 2020 in Sydney as the official parish priests of St Hurmizd's Cathedral and St Mary's Church, respectively.

## **Sydney's Children on the Fourth Annual Summer VBS 2021**

The Assyrian Church of the East Children's Association (ACECA) hosted its fourth annual summer program, from Monday 11th January to Friday 15th January 2021 at St Hurmizd's Assyrian Primary School, Greenfield Park. The week long program, themed "Rocky Railway" took the children on mountains of fun, a faith-filled adventure where children discovered how trusting Jesus pulls them through life's ups and downs.

Each day 250 children were lead into spiritual lessons with 50 of ACECA's most dedicated and hardworking teachers and volunteers. Through station rotations: imagination station, Loco Motion Games, KidVid cinema, and Wild Bible Adventures, the children experienced how to trust our Lord in every situation.

The event organizers ensured a COVID Safety Plan was in place protecting the health of the children and volunteers throughout the program.

See below link for a video compilation of the event:

<https://fb.watch/356clydPfV/>

## **Patriarch H. H. Mar Gewargis III Sliwa Meet H. H. Pope Francis**

(From Face book)

For the first time in the history of Christianity two spiritual leaders successors of two Apostolic See (His Holiness Pope Francis the successor of St Peter and His Holiness Mar Gewargis III, Catholicos-Patriarch successor of St Thomas) met in historical land of Mesopotamia.

This was the first trip of Pope Francis after one year of Coronavirus.

This mutual respect and fraternal love encourage faithful of both churches to strengthen their faith and hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm sure that two Apostles from heaven are watching their successors and are praying for them to lead and keep their churches far from evil.



## ***Editorial***

*(Translated from Malayalam  
Paurasthyanadham Magazine)*

The Year 2020 is over. It has not promised us the prospects for a glowing future. 2020 is scarred with the issues evolved through the outbreak of Covid-19 virus shaking the very foundations of our economic growth, health care and community welfare. It engaged us fully with the fight against the disease, leaving everything unattended. Now at last we have the vaccine. How long it will take and how effectively it can be administered is still not clear. Since the development of the vaccine took less time than usual as the urgency demanded it, we are still on the path of determining the possible side-effects of the vaccine. The pandemic also created barriers for the believers. They could not attend Qurbana without restrictions. An active Church life was not possible for the most part of 2020. The year witnessed many unfavourable decisions made in India by the Government. It affected mainly the farmers, who are considered as the backbone of the Indian economy. Also, the whole world witnessed travel restrictions, poor economic growth, high death rates, lock downs etc. There is almost no nation which escaped the pandemic.

However, 2021 does not project an altogether bleak future. We know that the vaccine is already there. There is the hope that the pandemic will be under control in the coming months. Though there are new threats coming out, many virologists think that they can be contained by the newly developed vaccine. Recently, there are moves to eradicate corruption which is ever growing in India and in many states in India. On the other hand, the move to suppress the farmers to facilitate the growth of the corporates, is facing resistance from the farmers themselves. Those who thought that they could put the farmers' life at stake, making false promises and suppressing them only to favour the corporates, were let known that such efforts and suppressive methods cannot succeed, even if they claim they can take any decision as they have majority in the government of the State. They are forced to realize that only with an open mind and commitment to the citizens they can succeed in their endeavour.

The challenges we faced in 2020 remind us on thing. Challenges are always part of the human life. We ought to be always equipped for that. This is the same in the case of believers. It is a misconception to think that a believer in Christ never has to face any challenge in life. It is the other way round. We always need to face challenges. In the year 2018, a good number among the population in Kerala was confronted with heavy flood which for most of them was the first time they ever faced such a catastrophe. But it taught them a good lesson: how good is to be helpful for others. Jesus Christ faced a lot of challenges in His short life span. He did not evade them but faced them even unto the cross. Even at the cross he was praying and saving others. For a Christian, there is no other Way than that of the Cross. If we are not ready to realize this, our life will only be filled with uncertainties and failures. This flood and Pandemic make us remember that we are not above God and His Creation. We cannot subdue it. We ought to learn from the fall of those who wanted to be like God. The Book of Genesis shows us the destiny of those who wanted to be like God and those who wanted to construct a tower that reaches the heavens.

The Birth of Jesus is another signpost to us. On the one hand, it is the hope for the New Year and on the other hand it is the symbol of the downfall of the aggressors. The Birth of Jesus as one among the marginalized of the society survived the aggressive politics of annihilation of Herod. It survived as the brightest ray of Hope for the underdogs in the world. World history is full of such examples. When the Mighty tries to wipe off the oppressed, they will outlive it giving hope for many to come. The fight of the Farmers in India to retain their right will succeed though the forces against them are mighty and powerful.

New Year is not without challenges. But the hope that the year 2021 gives us is more than enough to eradicate our fears that filled our minds in 2020. We wish a happy and prosperous 2021 and we expect that every one of us will fulfill our duty to make this year happy and filled with hope. Let God shower His abundant blessings upon us.

### **Solidarity for the Peasant Struggle**

The Chaldean Syrian Church of the East Men's Association held a vehicle rally to show solidarity with the struggling farmers in Delhi demanding the repeal of the new agricultural laws by the Central Government. The vehicle rally, flagged off by Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa at Church Square in Paravattani Mar Addai Sleeha Church, ended at Marth Mariam Cathedral, Thrissur. Mayor M. K. Varghese inaugurated the closing ceremony. Mar Awgin Episcopa lit the candle and presented it to the mayor, priests and members of the Men's Association. The Mayor held up the burning candle and spoke in solidarity with the peasant struggle.

Men's Association President Rev. Fr. Jose Vengassery presided over the function. Men's Association parish Presidents Rev. Fr. C D Pauly & Rev. Fr. Cyril Antony, Councilor Mrs. Sheeba Babu, Men's Association General Secretary Mr. Anto D Ollukaran, Youth's Association General Secretary Sojan P John, Adv. Baby P Antony, The Board of Central Trusty Mr. Jim Ukken, Mr. M R Timothy, Mr. Aby Ponmanissery and T R Devassy spoke on the occasion

### **Women Now Altar Servers**

Malayala Manorama  
12 January 2021

Vatican City: The canon law was amended to ensure greater participation of women in the Catholic Church. Women were officially allowed to read the Gospel during the Mass and to be helpers at the altar. Although it is currently practiced in many countries, the Pope amended the law to allow it to be practiced elsewhere without objection. But they are not allowed to perform the rites performed by the priests. These were previously reserved for men only. Pope Francis said the amendment was in recognition of the service women render to the Roman Catholic Church.

## **Limits of Human Understanding**

Geo George, Author & Writer, Bombay

Crooked people do evil, and upright people do right. The people no longer have any publicly acknowledged standard of truth. In movies hero beat the villain people watch with thrill. In politics both the parties fight each other public watch with favoritism. The masses of people generally do not understand that this indicates a withdrawal of God's blessing. Sin distances people not only from God himself but also from the nature. The fact that the work of a man's hand comes back to him. Is this either a blessing or a curse, depending on the character of the person and the nature of the work.

### **Many suffered bigger losses.**

The buyer says the item he desires is worth. Very little, in order to drive the price down. But offer he buys it, the item belongs to him, so his words change now he boasts of its value. Wisdom requires weighing the words of other people. A dishonest person could use one set of weights or measures for selling and another for buying, in order to buy more goods for the set price or to sell produce for the price. Many times farmers has no knowledge to decide the price before they enter into a market Many times big corporate always exploit farmers in contract. Sometimes the poor farmers really faced loss of income has taken back seat from the farming sector and poverty remain in their families. As head of the family food needs of the family are not met always due to these problems.

Sometimes widow, fatherless, handicapped persons, farmers, fishermen, uneducated persons and the poor are the main target. These naturally disadvantaged groups in society were easy targets for the strong to oppress. These current circumstances are only temporary. God will bring judgment on these who oppress his people. This concern for the weaker members of society is with God. The real love to this person's God only show. Love implies commitment and devotion rather than being simply an emotional response. The loves for the riches are the main reason behind all. Even the least educated farmer understands that there are laws of nature that must be obeyed if life and health are to be preserved.

Many times famers suffered bigger losses due to sudden disaster. Disaster is a sudden calamitous event bringing great damage loss, and destruction and devastation to life and property. Then damage caused by disasters is immeasurable. This time many Business people are usually wealthy land owners come forward to exploit the farmers. Many do wrong to achieve the compensation and do a lavish lifestyle .Public very late realise these corrupt selfish persons.

### **Life lessons**

Evil men are people committed to opposing God's will. They do not understand justice and what it requires in a government or a society. Leading others in the wrong path. Poor man can be morally superior to a rich man. The wicked make the helpless poor suffer, while they themselves prosper.



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

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARIAT

**STATEMENT FROM THE HOLY SYNOD SECRETARIAT  
CONCERNING THE HEALTH OF HIS HOLINESS MAR GEWARGIS III,  
CATHOLICOS-PATRIARCH**

For Immediate Release  
19 March 2021

The Secretariat of the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East would like to inform all of the faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East that on Monday, March 15, 2021, the bishops of the Church were informed by His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin, Bishop of the Diocese of the Eastern USA, that His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Gewargis III Sliwa had undergone an out-patient medical procedure at the Evanston Hospital, in Evanston, Illinois. Physicians completed a cardiac ablation on His Holiness, due to the heart arrhythmia which the Patriarch has been experiencing since his stroke of December 2019.

His Holiness left the hospital on the same day of his cardiac ablation procedure, and he is resting well at the home of his brother in Chicago, Illinois. There have been no complications, and the physicians are happy with His Holiness' recovery as they continue to monitor his progress.

We thank all of the clergy and faithful for their continued prayers for His Holiness' health, as we supplicate our merciful God to His Holiness Mar Gewargis in good health. Any further updates will be given in the future.

*Given this 19th day of March, 2021; from the Secretariat of the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East.*



†Mar Awa Royce

By Grace: Bishop of California &  
Secretary of the Holy Synod







Cemeteries decorated with flowers and lamps on the day of Festival of Anneede (service for the departed)



The Chaldean Syrian Church of the East Men's Association expresses solidarity with the protesting farmers in Delhi by candle lights and the posters.





As part of the implementation of the plan, "Subiksha Keralam" the Malayalam Manorama newspaper distributes the kit to their readers to make nutritious food garden. The Agriculture Minister Mr. V S Sunil Kumar inaugurates the programme by giving a kit to a member of Mar Narsai Parish, Mrs. Seena Joby.



Thrissur Corporation Mayor Mr. Varghese M K meets H.G. Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan and H.L. Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa along with the Board of Central Trustees at the Metropolitan Palace, Thrissur. From Left to Right: Mr. Joshy Antony, Mr. Sajjan Mampilly, Mr. Tenny C L (Chairman), Sheeba Babu, H.G. Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan, Bishop H. L. Mar Awgin Kuriakose, Mr. Paul Parapukara, James Ukken & Mrs. Binu Joshy.





**Cover illustration:** A depiction of certain symbols and themes used in the Hymn of Couplets. Some of these symbols are: the sun, heavenly light, clouds, the sky, sea, mountain, vine tree, dove and earth. For Bar Hebraeus the dove symbolizes the union of the soul/mind with the Lord, however, of the ten doves on the cover, five are focused on earthly matters while the other five are aiming towards the heavenly light (this is based on Jesus' parable of wise and foolish virgins. Matt.25:1-13)

Evil people always follow injustice. In a world like this, it is no surprise to find officials violating justice. Many times we observed instances in which a person who was technically in the right still lost his case, while someone who was actually in the wrong won the dispute. Innocent victim crying for justice.

The people having Great wealth and power are boastful and greedy. They look for opportunities to destroy the innocent in order to advance their own interest.. Money answers everything i.e., money is freely exchangeable and has the ability to exert a powerful influence over the course of affairs to produce the result one desires. Person's words will be outward evidence of their inward character. You shall not prevent justice. You shall not show partiality and you shall not accept bribe.

Follow the Christian faith Christians rightly discern their sins and turn from them and seek forgiveness then (as a general principle) they will not experience Gods disciplinary Judgment. Not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. Care for Gods church, greedy for gain. A lover of God. Corruption of this world which is rooted in sinful desire.

### **Hungry for power**

Violent language, Crooked, Selfish ambition and double minded persons promote quarrels and fights and it will also lead to killing people each other. The person is preparing a hidden trap for someone, but he is the one who will be harmed. Some leaders never give women's a proper space to work and slowly dragged them into controversies. Now a days in this world many misuse their liberties to harass other person with false and baseless allegations.

Many times several police complaint is politically – driven or falsely implicated. Many police complaints are not investigated properly. Many times money power suppresses crucial information and also not updated the official records. Before the investigation ends media trial in the T.V channels' watching the main crimes public started speaking who is right and who is wrong? Before the investigation ends or court Judgment. This trail on media always shows in front of the public many innocent people as victims of crimes. The police often torture innocent people until a confession is obtained to save influential and wealthy offenders. Right of privacy of an individual is not protected. As per our constitution safe guard the privacy of his family, marriage, motherhood and others are always destroyed.

Addiction to drugs, tobacco and alcohol always harmful to your mind, body and soul. These addiction One Million Indians die of tobacco use every year. Ninety percent of oral cancer cases in Indian men are due to chewing of tobacco. Delhi has reported the highest number of suicides as per the NCRB data in 2018. Uttar Pradesh has reported comparatively low percentage of suicidal deaths. 29,017 murder cases were registered in 2018. 378,277 cases registered under the crime against women category in 2018. In India, corruption takes the form of bribes. Government should come forward to prevent the crimes, Unemployment, measures ensuring woman safety and poverty. Church authorities' duty to create awareness programmes how to avoid addiction to anything that causes harm to self and others.

Every Christian must practice essential features of a good life like listen to good instruction. Be kind to the poor and orphans. Avoid friendships with those who lack self control Acknowledge the rule of God. Understand that love and integrity are what bring real happiness. Always be fair to the needy and the helpless. Rescue from the power of the wicked. All are children of the most high.



All Christian leaders pray to our Jesus that police and other investigating agencies actions should be fair and impartial. Jesus Christ loves the truth. Every Christian lives a meaningful life. And their hearts should not support evil thoughts, murder and adultery. God made man in his own image, and so to murder another human being is to murder what is most like God, and is thus implicitly an attack on God himself. Evil returns upon the evildoers. The great reversal taking place in the world, in which the first are becoming last and last are becoming first, the proud are being brought low and humble are being exalted.

No Christians become the sons of disobedience. People who habitually live in disobedient sin without repentance and thereby prove themselves to be children of the devil. Bible teaches how Christians are to lead holy lives. Jesus loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Christians must be careful to guard their integrity and public reputation because public sins dishonour god. Jesus Christ is our model. The bible our instruction book. Jesus physical suffering on the cross to save us from the sins. Always remember the Victory of Christ over sins. The personal moral ideas as ages pass and cultures changes and decay. Follow the bible truth which is essential in every one life. The fear of the lord leads to riches and honour.

## **Book Review**

### **The Hymn of Couplets (On Divine Wisdom)**

by Bishop Emmanuel Mar Emmanuel of Canada, Toronto 2020

This book is a collection of couplets of eight authors, the first one being the famous Mar Gregorious Bar Hebraeus (1226 - 1286), Maphrian of the Syrian Orthodox Church. The last one of the compiler of this book namely is Bishop Mar Emmanuel of the Diocese of Canada. Number of pages 309+.

The authors are:

1. Gregorious Bar Hebraeus (1226-1286, Maphrian of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch.
2. Khamis bar Qardahe (12??-13??), poet (and priest?) of Arbil, Mesopotamia, the Church of the East.
3. Isho yahw bar Mqadam (13??-14??), Metropolitan of Nisibis.
4. Yawsep II (1667-1713, Union Chaldean Patriarch of Diyarbakir.
5. Somo of Pyyo, (16??-1742), Priest.
6. Abba Eliyas Shyr (1860-1949) Monk, (Priest).
7. Abba Philipos Isaac (1917-2004) Monk, (Priest).
8. Emmanuel of Canada (1958 - ), Diocesan Bishop of Canada, the Assyrian Church of the East.

This book is an ecumenical work, as the authors are of three major Syriac denominations, namely Syriac Orthodox, Chaldean Catholic and Assyrian Church of the East to which the compiler Bishop Emmanuel belongs. The compiler Bishop Mar Emmanuel opines that the monasticism was very much respected since its emergence in the 4th century in the Syriac Churches, whether, Orthodox Syrian or Chaldean, Catholic or Assyrian Church of the East.

“Monasticism had been highly revered within the Christian Church since its emergence in the 4th century. Many ascetic writers found the roots of monastic discipline in the life of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, and even Elijah the prophet. Thus Abdisho of Nisibis (1318) argued that Paul’s letter to the Hebrews points to such a practice at the very beginning of the Christian movement.”



“They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented - of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise. God having provided something better for us. that they should not be made perfect apart from us. (Hebrews 11:37-40).”

“In his hymn, Bar Hebraeus indicates that the journey toward perfection passes through three stages, that of the body, the soul, and the spirit. This approach, however, can be traced back to the ascetic writings of John of Apamea in the 5th century, which is the earliest Syriac discussion of these three stages. The other seven authors who have contributed to *memra dzawge* have followed in Bar Hebraeus’ footsteps, offering their respective insights into the path to perfection.”

Bishop Emmanuel explains that the “Hymn of Couplets” was published only in 2005 in Baghdad by the Chaldean Hurmizd monastery.

Bishop Emmanuel admits that:

“We must admit that the present edition falls short of including all existing and known manuscripts. However, we believe that is nevertheless a step in the right direction since it will facilitate further research on this important work. We hope that future studies will be crowned with the publication both of a comprehensive critical edition of the work and of its translation into a modern language.”

Further, Bishop Emmanuel adds:

“As a critical edition, our work lists all variant readings among the manuscripts consulted. Furthermore, it conveniently groups each set of eight parallel couplets (i.e. 16 lines from eight authors) onto a single page, which makes the overall text 305 pages long. This arrangement is very important since it facilitates the comparison of the different couplets from each author. Each page also includes many lexical definitions (totaling more than ten thousand words) and at times brief interpretations of words and phrases.”

I wish all Assyrians, scattered all over the world, will read this book and encourage youngsters to do so. I was staying with Bishop Emmanuel in Toronto on the day he was awarded a Ph.D. Degree at the University. While he had gone to University to receive his diploma, I looked through the books in his library and wished I had more time to spend with him to read the books.

This book is printed with an attractive cover. The five or six pages printed in English would attract a non-Assyrian like me to peep into this book. More books have been published in English about the Syriac poems of saints Aprem and Narsai. But they belonged to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. This book entitled **The Hymn of Couplets** belongs to the period from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Bishop Dr. Mar Emmanuel ought to be congratulated for the uniqueness of this work. The idea of bringing together writers of these modern centuries is indeed ecumenical. As a matter of fact there are more poets in Syriac language. This new book will inspire other writers to study them and make it available in English.

Bishop Emmanuel is a voracious reader and this book, “The Hymn of Couplets” is an example of his vast reading. My wish and prayer is that Bishop Dr. Mar Emmanuel will not stop his studies. May he write many more books in future.

The author was a priest in Chicago and was in-charge of the press for the Assyrian Church of the East. In 1990 after he was consecrated an Episcopa he moved to Toronto in Canada. After moving to Canada in 1900 he earned four University degrees, namely B.A., M.Div.,

M.A. and Ph.D. He is a scholar among Assyrian bishops. When he earned Ph.D. degree he continued his scholarly interests and this book, **The Hymn of Couplets** is a result. His book of 8 authors begins with the work of Maphrian Gregorious Bar Hebraeus, the well known scholar of the Syriac Orthodox Church who worked at the end of 12<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

I hope this book will be read especially by the members of the Orthodox Syrian Church, Chaldean Catholic Church, as well as the Assyrian Church of the East.

## **Mar Yohannan Mamdhana Church East Fort, Thrissur**

### **Memorial of Mar Yohannan Mamdhana (Church Festival) Festival of Anneedhe (Service for the departed) Ba'utha of Ninevites (Lent for 3 days)**

On August 11, 1888, the *Thrisivaperur* (Thrissur) Magistrate's Court issued an order prohibiting the Chaldean Syrians from burying their bodies in the Cemetery in front of the *Kuruvila Achen* (Thomas Archdeacon) Church in connection with *Valiyapalli* (Big Church). Following this, the Chaldean Syrians bought a few plots of land on the East side of the Fort.

As per the request by some of the *Valiyapalli* congregation on October 30, 1888 the then Divanji Sri Govinda Menon ordered from Ernakulam Hajoer Kachheri as per order No. 591 for the construction of a Cemetery and an adjoining *Karma Pally* (small church). Shortly afterwards, a Thatch- terracotta church was built and the consecration of both the church and cemetery was carried out on 1 November 1888.

After the arrival of Metropolitan Abimalek Mar Timotheus in India in 1908, the dilapidated church was demolished and rebuilt a little to the east, in the style of Chaldean Syrian churches around the East and West, and in the name of St. John the Baptist (Yohannan Mamdhana Church). The foundation stone of the new church was laid on December 15, 1909 and was consecrated on March 19, 1910 by St. Mar Abimalek Timotheus Metropolitan and celebrated Holy Qurbana. However, when services were not available for the liturgy in Marth Mariam Big Church, Thrissur due to litigation and court cases, Yohannan Mamdhana Church became the center and the head of the Chaldean Syrian Church of the East for all the activities. Thus, for many years, this church became a diocesan church.

When the new system was established in 1954, this church, like many other churches, became a new parish. The first vicar of the parish was the Venerable Mangalam Francis Kashisha. He is also the longest serving vicar in this church. Shri Mookan Devasi Kochhausep and Shri Immatty Lonappan Kunjuvarith have served as the first Kaikaran of the parish. From 1995 to 2001, it was the diocesan church of Metropolitan Mar Timotheus II.

The church is about 92 years old and has undergone a lot of physical and restoration work. In addition, due to limited space, the congregation was forced to attend services in large numbers, both inside and outside the church. The church, which conducts an average of 40 to 50 *Anneedhe* services on Sundays, has decided to demolish and build a new church in view of the constant demand from the parishioners and church members. March 19 is an unforgettable day in the long history of Mar Yohannan Mamdhana Church. Consecration and the first Holy Qurbana of the new church was held on March 19, 1910 which build instead the first Thatch- terracotta church. The last Holy Mass in the church was on Sunday, March 19, 2006.

After Mass on the morning of Sunday, April 23, 2006 (New Sunday), the foundation stone of the latest built church was laid by His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan. On Sunday,

25 March 2007, His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan consecrated and celebrated Holy Qurbana in the newly built Mar Yohannan Mamdhana church in Thrissur.

In about a year, this dream of a magnificent, beautiful and majestic church was made a reality by the strong determination of the then Vicar Rev. Fr. K. R. Inasu, Asst. Vicar Rev. Fr. Tinto Timothy, then caretakers (*Kaikars*), members of the Parish Council, various other committees and well-wishers.

The parish celebrates 'Ward Day' on the first Sunday after the Tithe every year. After the morning Mass, *Anneetdhe* (a service for the departed ancestors) conducts. The Feast of the Remembrance of St. John the Baptist is celebrated here on the first Friday after the *Epiphany* (*Dhinha Thirunaal*). In connection with the reconstruction of the church, we had to demolish the old Cross Church in front of the Yohannan Mamdhana Church and give away about 3.9 cents of land to the corporation, as the part of the Government rules. Following this, the new Cross Church was attached to St. John's Arcade, and with the permission of the builders of the old Cross Church, the 'Cheeramban Joseph Elsie Trust' built a new one.

The Cross Church was consecrated on 15.1.2010 after the Holy Qurbana together with His Grace Metropolitan Gewargis Sliwa and His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan. That evening, for the first time in the history of Yohannan Mamdhana Church, it was a divine experience of meeting prelates who came for the Synod gathered in our Church compound. In the morning of the feast of St. John the Baptist on January 15, 2010, at the Holy Qurbana, His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan consecrated Mar Yohannan Yoseph and His Lordship Mar Awgin Kuriakose as *Arkidyakon* and *Cor-episcopa* respectively.

This church was consecrated and celebrated Holy Qurbana on March 19, 1910 by Metropolitan Mar Abimalek Timothy and celebrated its centenary on 2010. Behind the church there is beautiful cemetery under the control of the Central Trustees, where our late ancestors are resting.

The late Dr. Paulose Mar Paulose was a member of this parish. Similarly, H. L. Dr. Mar Yohannan Joseph Episcopa is also a member of this parish. The Bishop's Palace for the H. L. Dr. Mar Yohannan Yoseph Episcopa and H. L. Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa and the associated Mar Simon Chapel are also located in this parish. When His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan distributed the charges of the parishes to the Episcopas of India, this parish came under the control of His Lordship Mar Awgin Kuriakose.

The Almighty may bestow all the blessings and prosperity to His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan to lead our whole church for a longer life. We wish our Church to continue to thrive with the blessings of H. L. Dr. Mar Yohannan Yoseph and H. L. Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopas, along with the priests and laymen.

## **Monthly Thoughts of H.G. Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan**

(Translated from Malayalam Paurasthyanaadam Magazine - February 2021)

### **Festivals**

This year's parish feasts were over without much fanfare. There are government obstacles due to Covid-19. People do not have enough cash and are not spending much. That's why



unnecessary celebrations are minimal. Believers must be prepared to give up unnecessary celebrations for any reason. Christians should set an example for other religions. But some of us still have the misconception that when the firecrackers in the temples explode, the firecrackers should explode in the churches as well. There should be harmony between religions. But we must abandon the misconception that Christians should celebrate the festivals with protest and fireworks. Ever since the ceasefire was abolished during the time of the late Mar Thoma Darmo, the desire to celebrate has remained in the minds of some people even today. It would be good for the Church to get rid of that thinking. Many people think that Church festivals should be celebrated only spiritually but those who are interested in alcohol still want fireworks and drums.

### **Prohibition of alcohol**

When the Chief Minister of Kerala shared his ideas with the Christian superiors through video conferencing on February 2, I demanded that the government should be prepared for a ban on alcohol. A Christian pastor who spoke after me also recommended my proposal. In fact, other Cardinals and Bishops agree with this. However, due to the lack of faith and dedication members of Christian community do not seek for a ban on alcohol, which is a good source of revenue for any government. It is unfortunate that a ban on alcohol cannot be enforced in the country of Mahatma Gandhi. We must take a sincere action in this matter, which I and other leaders have repeatedly demanded in front of the Thrissur Corporation, in front of the Collectorate and other institutions as a protest. It will definitely benefit us and our future generations.

### **Fellowship**

Fellowship among the parishioners is declining. The Church has a constitution and is designed to run in a disciplined manner. But we must be careful that the elections in the Church do not degenerate into disputes and group activities. We must understand that Church Council Meetings are not for quarrels. Say new ideas and make changes where changes are needed. Some people from parishes outside Kerala are coming with great effort to attend the Church Council Meeting in Thrissur. For the benefit of these effort we must attend our Church Council Meetings with patience and discipline. Unnecessary talk and repeated matters will prolong the time of meetings. Meetings can be fun and relaxing if everyone is diligent.

Mar Aprem Metropolitan

## **Festival of Anneede (Service for the departed)**

The members of the Chaldean Syrian Church of the East offered prayers and flowers to renew the memory of their departed loved ones at the tombs in various cemetery in connection with the Festival of Anneedhe (Service for the departed) in Thrissur. The candlelight procession was also devotional. H. L. Mar Awgin Episcopa at Mar Yohanan Mamdana Parish, East Fort, Fr. K. R. Inasu at Pattikad Mar Thoma Shleeha Parish and Fr. Sunny Koola at Mar Addai Shliha Parish, Paravattani were present at the Holy Mass on Friday. In the cemetery, a public anointing service was held and incense were lit. The cemetery was beautifully decorated with colorful flags, illuminations, flowers, candles etc.



H.G. Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan and H.L. Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa inaugurate the public meeting of Mar Thoma Shleeha Church Festival, Pattikad, 6 January 2021.



A bicycle rally conducted at Thrissur by the Chaldean Syrian Church of the East Men's Association declaring solidarity with the struggling farmers in Delhi





Patriarch H.H. Mar Gewargis III Sliwa meets H.H. Pope Francis in the historical homeland of the Church of the East, ancient Mesopotamia