

صوت المشرق

Vol 68

May - June 2021

Nos.5 & 6



**His Holiness Maran Mar Awa III
consecrated 122nd Catholicos-Patriarch**

VOICE OF THE EAST



His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch, pictured with prelates and clergy who celebrated the Holy Qurbana with the new Patriarch in Erbil, Iraq



His Holiness Maran Mar Awa III with choir group after the Holy Qurbana in Erbil, Iraq

VOICE OF THE EAST

(A socio-Religious bi-monthly)

(Private Circulation only)

May - June 2021

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

Metropolitan's Palace,

Trichur - 680 001, Kerala, India

Phone : 91487 - 2420978

Personal : 91487 - 2442166

Email : hgmraprem@gmail.com

Website Links

Official: www.news.assyrianchurch.org

Archdiocese of India & UAE: www.churchoftheeastindia.org

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

Diocese of California: www.acoecalifornia.org

Diocese of Europe: www.assyrianchurch-europe.org

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

Unofficial: www.nestorian.org

Contents

1. (Editorial)

International News

2. Message from the Metropolitan
3. Statement on the Election of the 122nd Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East
4. Speech of His Lordship Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa At the Reception after the Holy Synod Erbil, September 2021
5. Grand opening and blessing of St Abdisho's Assyrian Centre
6. Bishops of the Dioceses of the United States Meet Ahead of National Youth Conference
7. Obituary
8. Decrees of the Holy Synod
9. Bishop Mar Awraham Youkhanis Ordains Priests for Diocese of Western Europe
10. Historic Visit of Pope Francis to Iraq

News from India

10. Eastern Syriac Study Guide

Voice of the East

Vol. 68

May - June 2021

Nos. 5 & 6

Editorial

An African proverb says “If you want to go quickly go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” We have to go quickly as well as with the support of others. The evil forces around us are many. Therefore we have to think twice before we act. We need the wisdom of others for actions to be successful. In the present pandemic situation of coronavirus we have to think carefully to prevent more evil outcomes.

We have seen already the evils of this coronavirus. The loss of lives and money are much more than most of us have imagined. Different Churches as well as different political parties are doing their best to help people to face the sad and dangerous situation.

Doctors have done research to prevent the spread of this disease. It is a serious situation. Some people do not follow government instructions to wear masks and avoid large gatherings. The government has given instructions to avoid marriage celebrations etc. Many people break the rules and pay the fine for breaking the rules. The people have to co-operate with the government instructions to reduce the number of guests at weddings etc.

Financially, as well as by arranging vaccination centers, our Church as well as Youth's Association, Men's Association and others in some parishes came forward to arrange vaccination camps to prevent the rapid spread of this pandemic. The Board of Central Trustees, Clergy and other members of our Church came forward to give money for these programmes. One of the Central Trustees Mr. A M Antony donated Rs. one lakh (100 thousand) for giving vaccines.

In addition to these physical programmes some of our parishes arranged special prayer meetings in our different parishes to strengthen us spiritually, similar to the prayers of Bau'tha of Ninavites. We have to physically do some things, as well as spiritually to strengthen us at the time of crises. We can win this battle against coronavirus by spiritually fighting it with prayers. Bau'tha prayers are observed by us every year. But now with corona killing we were facing a tragic case like the time of Bishop Mar Savreesho Metropolitan who prayed with his people to save them when a sickness spread. Although we use Bau'tha prayers every year for three days, now it appeared more real when Covid death began to occur in our midst. May Almighty God who helped the people in the days of Jonah in Nineveh, as well as the people under Bishop Mar Savreesho, listen to our prayers to save us from further misery.

May our Almighty and Merciful God answer our prayers and help us. It is not for the people of India, it is affecting all countries. The rich and poor countries are now suffering all over the world. May the people learn a lesson and humbly pray to God Almighty to save His creation from coronavirus. Let people all over the world turn away from the evil actions. Let justice and peace prevail all over the world.

Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan

Message from the Metropolitan

The Consecration and Enthronement of Bishop Mar Awa Royel of California as the Catholicos-Patriarch of the Church of the East took place at 10 a.m. Indian time in Erbil, Iraq on Monday 13 September 2021 at St John the Baptist Cathedral, Erbil on the occasion of the Feast of the Holy Cross.

His Holiness Mar Awa III becomes the 122nd Catholicos-Patriarch of our ancient and apostolic church.

His consecration was in the presence of a large number of religious leaders, governmental, diplomatic and civil society leaders. Representatives of the Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Chaldean Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Melkite, Ancient Church of the East and many other churches were also present. His Excellency Nechirvan Barzani, President of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region along with other senior dignitaries added to the prestige of the occasion.

His Holiness is the first American-born Catholicos-Patriarch of the Church of the East and will bring youthful energy to the role, leading our Holy Church through difficult times in its ancient homeland in the Middle East and throughout the world where most of our faithful today live in a vast diaspora.

After the Holy Qurbana, the Patriarchal Flag was hoisted and special prayers were offered in all the parish churches in India.

As the Head of the Indian Church I was unable to attend the ceremony due to ill health. I did however participate in the election electronically and the two Episcopos of our Church in India were in attendance.

Also, as Patriarchal Delegate to India, we look forward to welcoming His Holiness to the Archdiocese in the near future.

With the Patriarchal See of the Church of the East having returned to Iraq following decades in exile in the west, His Holiness will lead the Church from Erbil.

Following the consecration, His Holiness has embarked on a range of visits throughout the Region, including to Duhok and Assyrian villages in the north of Iraq. It is expected that he will also visit the Iraqi capital, Baghdad soon to meet with the now small but resilient community of faithful there along with senior officials of the Republic of Iraq.

The Voice of the East offers its best wishes to our new Catholicos-Patriarch and all faithful of the Holy Church and prays that he may lead our holy, ancient and apostolic Church of the East to new heights.

Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan

International News

**STATEMENT ON THE ELECTION OF THE 122ND
CATHOLICOS-PATRIARCH OF THE ASSYRIAN
CHURCH OF THE EAST**

To all the sons and daughters of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East and fellow brothers and sisters in faith,

The Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East would like to inform all the faithful of the Church of the results on the Electoral Council held from the 6th to the 8th of September 2021, at St. John the Baptist Cathedral, Erbil, to choose the 122nd Catholicos Patriarch.

The Prelates of the Church gathered from all dioceses across of the world, except for His Beatitude Mar Aprem Metropolitan India and the UAE, whose health condition prevented him from attending the Holy Synod meeting. We pray to the Almighty God to grant him good health, and we hope to see him with us in the coming councils. With supplication to the Almighty God, and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in the spirit of love and brotherhood, the Synodical meetings took place to elect a new Patriarch for the Church, to succeed His Holiness Mar Gewargis III Sliwa, who submitted his resignation last year for health reasons. We pray to the Almighty Lord to grant His Holiness Mar Gewargis III health and full recovery, and we extend our thanks and respect to him for his holy and glorious service, on the See of Seleucia Ctesiphon, for the past six years.

With the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are pleased on this day, the 8th September 2021, to announce that His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California has been elected as the 122nd Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, succeeding His Holiness Mar Gewargis III Sliwa.

The consecration of the new Patriarch will take place on the Feast of the Holy Cross, Monday 13th September 2021 at St. John the Baptist Cathedral, Erbil, in the presence of all the prelates of the Church, the representatives of sister churches, and official parliamentary guests.

On this holy occasion, we offer glory and honor to God the Father, the Almighty, to the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit who guided us in electing the one who leads the helm of our blessed Church in the sea of this world, towards the blessed port of eternity.

The Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East express its pastoral gratitude to all the faithful of the Church and other sister churches, for their support in prayer and fasting, while we gathered to elect the 122nd Catholicos Patriarch for our Holy Church.

We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Iraqi government, for all the measures and facilities provided to the members of the Holy Synod.

On this blessed spiritual occasion, we raise our prayers to our Redeemer and Savior, Jesus Christ, to make this holy day a celebration for love and peace to prevail in Iraq, Syria and the rest of the countries of the Middle East, that God may protect everyone and guard them always, and love and mercy may be poured upon His children, to end the suffering, and allow our people to live a life worthy of respect and acknowledgment, being the indigenous owners of the land, the oldest civilization known to mankind.

On my own behalf, and in the name of all the prelates of the Holy Synod, and on behalf of all the sons and daughters of our holy Church, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to His Grace Mar Awa Royel for this blessed election guided by the Holy Spirit, and together we look forward to advancing on the path laid by all the great Patriarchs of the Church.

We ask the Lord to bless you all in the name of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One Living God, amen.

Mar Meelis Zaia
Patriarchal Vicar of the Assyrian Church of the East
Archdiocese of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon
The official news website of the Assyrian Church of the East in the world

Speech of His Lordship Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa At the Reception after the Holy Synod Erbil, September 2021

Bshim ava.....+

HH Maran Mar Gewargis III Sliwa, Emeritus Catholicos Patriarch, HH Patriarch HG Mar Awa III, HB Mar Meelis Metropolitan, Your Graces, Most Respected prelates of the church of the East, beloved clergies and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, greetings to you all in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is indeed a great privilege and blessing, by the Grace of God, especially in this time of Covid-19 Pandemic, to be part of our Holy Synod, election and consecration of Our New Patriarch HH Mar Awa III at our Mar Yohannan Mamdhana cathedral at Ankawa.

We were indeed going through and especially witnessing an uncommon historical event/moment here at Erbil. At this synod, HH Emeritus Gewargis III Sliwa showed his unique way of patriarchal renunciation with proud heart and courageous mind and greater love towards our Mother Church. And by this action HH has become the first “Patriarch Emeritus” in the entire history of the Church of the East.

With an ever grateful heart, I recollect HH’s visit to India three times in the year 2010, 2015 and 2019. Indian church and faithful could experience the love, hard work, perseverance, concerns and spiritual blessings of HH during these apostolic visits.

On behalf, of the Church in India, H.B Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan, all clergies, Board of Central Trustees, all Parishes, representative council members, and all faithful of the church of the East in India, I take this opportunity, to express our gratitude and deepest love to HH

Patriarch for being an inspiration and a role model to work wholeheartedly for the betterment of the Church of the East.

At this juncture, I am very proud and grateful to extend our heartfelt greetings, humble prayers and wishes to the newly elected Catholicos Patriarch of the church of the East HH Maran Mar Awa III and sincerely pray that Almighty God may shower His abundant blessings, Divine wisdom and strength on His Holiness to lead the sheep and the Entire Church in peace and unity towards the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God.

On behalf, of the Church of the East in India, H.B Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan, all clergies, Board of Central Trustees, all Parishes, representative council members, and all faithful of the church of the East in India, I take this opportunity, to congratulate HH and to Express our respect and loving regards with immense joy and happiness to HH Mar Awa III Catholicos Patriarch.

And it is our Indian traditional way of honouring your Guest with a Ponnada. PONNADA is a shawl adorned around the shoulders of a dignitary who is being honoured. This is a tradition mostly in southern part of India. This piece of beautiful cloth is nothing but a shawl known as Ponnada. And the literal meaning would be “Precious Golden Cloth”.

And also we would like to hand over a small gift on behalf of our HB Dr Mar Aprem Metropolitan, Episcopas, Clergies, Board of Central Trustees, all parishes and faithful of the church in India.

CONGRATULATIONS Your Holiness, With prayers And May Almighty God continue to be with you and bless You for being a great blessing to us all, the entire universal church of the East. Thank you.

Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa, India

GRAND OPENING AND BLESSING OF ST ABDISHO'S ASSYRIAN CENTRE

On Sunday 23 May 2021, the Assyrian Church of the East and Assyrian community of Victoria celebrated the historic opening of the newly constructed St Abdisho's Assyrian Centre in Coolaroo.

The Centre is a Diocesan project to provide an accessible space for members of the community including youth, seniors, women and other groups. The facility will also be the permanent home of the St George Assyrian Language School.

The Grand Opening and Blessing function was led by His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia AM, Metropolitan of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon and His Grace Mar Benyamin Elya, Bishop of Victoria and New Zealand.

The opening was attended by The Honourable Nazih Elasmr MLC, President of the Victorian Legislative Council, Maria Vamvakinou MP, Federal Member for Calwell representing The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP, Leader of the Opposition, Frank McGuire MP, State Member for Broadmeadows, Cr Joseph Haweil – Mayor of Hume City, Viv Nguyen – Victorian Multicultural Commissioner, Victorian Multicultural Commission Commissioner Mohammad Yassin, Hume City Council Councillors Cr Sam Misho, Cr Jim Overend and Cr. Naim Kurt and a range of other dignitaries and representatives from a range of sectors.



Prelates gathered at the Patriarchate headquarters in Erbil in connection with the election and consecration of the new Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East in September 2021



Pope Francis greets H H Mar Gewargis III Sliwa in Erbil, Iraq on Sunday 7 March 2021



Metropolitan Mar Meelis Zaia inaugurating the newly constructed St Abdisho's Assyrian Centre in Coolaroo (Melbourne), Australia on Sunday 23 May 2021



Councillor Joseph Haweil, Mayor of Hume City in Melbourne, Australia speaks at the opening of the newly constructed St. Abdisho's Assyrian Centre in Coolaroo, Sunday 23 May 2021



Bishop Mar Awraham Youkhanis ordains new priests, Reverend Father Ninos Babisha and Reverend Father Shimshon Temmo to serve in the Diocese of Western Europe.



Pope Francis greets the crowd as he arrives to conduct Mass at the Franso Hariri Stadium in Erbil in March 2021



H. G. Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan handing over the vegetable seedlings to General Secretary of Men's Association Mr. Anto D Ollukaran for the distribution in connection with the project "A Basket of Vegetables for Onam Festival"



H L Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa speaks at the evening reception after the Patriarchal election at the Assyrian Club in Erbil



H L Dr. Mar Yohannan Yoseph & H L Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopas adorning *Ponnaada* on the shoulders of His Holiness Mar Awa III



H L Mar Awgin Kuriakose presents a gift to the new Patriarch on behalf of Mar Aprem Metropolitan and the Indian Archdiocese

The program included performances from students of St George Assyrian Language School, the Ashur Folkloric Dance Group, remarks from the prelates and elected representatives and was attended by a capacity crowd.

The Diocese expresses its immense appreciation to all those who made this project a reality including the selfless and dedicated building volunteers, the Building Committee, ACEYA • Melbourne and its members for their work in coordinating the opening.

BISHOPS OF THE DIOCESES OF THE UNITED STATES MEET AHEAD OF NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

The bishops of the Assyrian Church of the East in the United States meet recently ahead of the 33rd annual National Youth Conference. Attending the meeting were: His Grace Mar Aprim Khamis, Bishop of the Diocese of the Western USA; His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of the Diocese of California and Secretary of the Holy Synod; and His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin, Bishop of the Diocese of the Eastern USA.

The three bishops held their meeting on Wednesday, July 30th, at the premises of the St. Mary's Assyrian Church of the East in Los Angeles, California. The bishops discussed many topics effecting the life of the Church in the United States. Some of the matters discussed were: 1) the National Executive Committee of the Assyrian Church of the East Youth Association (ACEYA); 2) the Constitution of the ACEYA; 3) the importance of transmitting the faith of the holy Church to our youth, particularly the promotion and use of the Assyrian language among our younger generation; 4) current events in the life of the Church in the States; 5) matters relating to the clergy (priests and deacons) serving the parishes of the US.

Some of the more notable outcomes of this meeting was the unanimous agreement to convene a meeting of all of the priests of the Assyrian Church of the East serving in the United States, to be held in the early fall of this year, possibly in October. The bishops also set their next joint meeting to be held at the same period.

The bishops will participate in the 33rd annual youth conference of all of the parishes of the Assyrian Church of the East in the United States, which will be convened on Thursday, July 1st thru Tuesday, July 6th, in Los Angeles, California. The theme of the conference this year is the 33 Years of the Life of Christ, commemorating the 33rd annual conference. Four hundred youth are registered to attend, in addition to many clergy, parents and chaperones. Further reports on the youth conference will be forthcoming.

Obituary

Mrs. Pannah Sliwa, sister of H.H. Mar Gewargis III Sliwa, Catholicos-Patriarch, passed away on July 24, 2021 in Modesto, California. Funeral was on 29 July in Mar Zaia Cathedral, Modesto, California.

May the late Pannah Sliwa rest in peace with our Lord - *Voice of the East* conveys its heartfelt condolences to her family.

**Decrees of the First Holy Synod of the
Assyrian Church of the East, Convoked by
His Holiness Mar Awa 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 Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch of the East, from 14-15 September 2021, in the Cathedral 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 Meelis Zaia, Metropolitan of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon
2. His Grace Mar Aprim Khamis, Bishop of the Western USA
3. His Grace Mar Emmanuel Joseph, Bishop of Canada
4. His Grace Mar Odisho Oraham, Bishop of Scandinavia and Germany
5. His Grace Mar Afram Athneil, Bishop of Syria
6. His Grace Mar Isaac Yousif, Bishop of Nohadra and the Russian Federation
7. His Grace Mar Yohannan Yoseph, Bishop of India
8. His Grace Mar Awgin Kuriakose, Bishop of India
9. His Grace Mar Narsai Benyamin, Bishop of Iran
10. His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin, Bishop of the Eastern USA
11. His Grace Mar Ahrs Youkhannan, Bishop of Erbil and Patriarchal Auxiliary
12. His Grace Mar Benyamin Elya, Bishop of Victoria and New Zealand
13. His Grace Mar Awraham Youkhanis, Bishop of Western Europe
14. His Grace Mar Elia Isaac, Bishop of Baghdad, Ukraine and Georgia.

Introduction

Placing its hope in the divine succor of God the Father, and the grace of the Only Begotten Son, and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who operates in all things according to His Holy will, the first Holy Synod convened under the presidency of the father of fathers, His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, who sits on the Apostolic See of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, who occupies the Apostolic throne and is the heir of the Apostolic preaching of the Blessed Apostles, St. Thomas of the Twelve, and Ss. Addai and Mari from the Seventy-Two, who are known as the Disciples of the East, and are the holy founders of this Holy Church of the East and her tradition.

The Holy Synod, before all, offers its thanksgiving to God, the Father, for the gathering of all the prelates for the election and consecration of His Grace Mar Awa Royel, the Bishop of California and Secretary of the Holy Synod, to the supreme rank of Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East and for the convocation of the first Holy Synod under the presidency

of the father of fathers, His Holiness the Patriarch. All of the members of the Holy Synod, as one body, are praying for the overall condition of those living in the Middle East and are beseeching the Lord God to protect all of children of our Holy Church and Assyrian nation, and the children of the Archdiocese of India, without any harm.

The Holy Synod offers its gratitude to His Beatitude Mar Aprem Mookan, the Metropolitan of India, who participated in this Synod via writing as he was unable to physically join the sessions due to reasons of health. The Holy Synod prays for a blessed life and continuous two-fold health of body and soul for the Metropolitan of India.

The Holy Synod offers its gratitude to the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil, Iraq, for all of the support in the meeting of the Holy Synod. Also, the Holy Synod offers its gratitude to all the sister Churches, who participated in the celebration of the consecration of the new patriarch.

This first Holy Synod deliberated on urgent matters regarding the administration of the Holy Church. If the Lord wills, there have been other concerns that have been left for future sessions of the Holy Synod.

The Decrees of the Holy Synod:-

- I. The Holy Synod affirmed that the capital city of Erbil will henceforth be the Patriarchal Diocese.
- II. His Grace Mar Abris Youkhannan is assigned as the bishop of Kirkuk & Diana, and Patriarchal Auxiliary until the next meeting of the Holy Synod in 2022.
- III. The Holy Synod decreed the establishment of a Patriarchal Advisory Committee to offer counsel to His Holiness. The members of this committee are:
 - a. His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia, who has been granted the title of *Patriarchal Vicar* and is also the head of the committee;
 - b. His Grace Bishop Mar Emmanuel Joseph;
 - c. His Grace Bishop Mar Afram Athneil;
 - d. His Grace Bishop Mar Narsai Benyamin;
 - e. His Grace Bishop Mar Paulus Benjamin.
- IV. The Holy Synod assigned His Grace Mar Awraham Youkhanis, the Bishop of Western Europe, as the Chairman of the Patriarchal Commission for Youth Affairs.
- V. The Holy Synod decreed on filling the vacancies in various commissions of the Church, and His Holiness the Patriarch will appoint candidates to fill the open positions in due course.
- VI. The Holy Synod decreed that the Diocese of California will temporarily be under the authority of the Patriarchal See until a new bishop is named for this diocese.

VII. Synodal Decree concerning the Archdiocese of India:

- a. Regarding His Beatitude Mar Aprem Mooken: The Holy Synod assigned Mar Aprem Mooken as the *Patriarchal Delegate to India*, retaining the dignity of metropolitan. His Beatitude will remain the Metropolitan's Palace, and the Church will continue the support and financial obligations carried out thus far.
- b. Regarding His Grace Mar Yohannan Yoseph: His Grace Mar Yohannan Yoseph, due to reasons of his health, has been given by the Holy Synod a medical leave-of-absence from all episcopal duties, in the Archdiocese of India and all countries under the authority of the named archdiocese, until the next meeting of the Holy Synod. His Grace shall retain the episcopal dignity and shall move to the Mar Timotheus Bishop's Palace. The Central Trustees Committee shall pay for all of His Grace's medical expenses from the past, current, and future, and will provide all that is necessary to maintain his livelihood without reserve or inquiry. His Grace and all priests will withdrawal all the lawsuits and complaints against the Central Trustees Committee or any of entities of the Church. By the same token, the Central Trustees Committee will immediately publish an apology in the Church magazine and retract any statements against His Grace Mar Yohannan. Further, His Grace will hand over to the metropolitan any and all financial accounting and funds of all institutions that were under his care.
- c. Regarding His Grace Mar Awgin Kuriakose: The Holy Synod grants His Grace Mar Awgin Kuriakose the title of *Patriarchal Administrator of the Archdiocese of India*, and is given all ecclesiastical and legal duties, privileges and responsibilities of the Metropolitan. His Grace is herewith given full authority and jurisdiction over all churches, clergy, and ecclesiastical institutions of the Archdiocese of India and the parishes under its archdiocesan authority, including the United Arab Emirates and the Gulf countries. His Beatitude Mar Aprem Mooken will give full legal delegation (power of attorney) to His Grace Mar Awgin Kuriakose, and Mar Awgin will move into the Metropolitan Palace at the earliest.

Here conclude the decrees of the Holy Synod.

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

†Awa III

By Grace: Catholicos-Patriarch

Bishop Mar Awraham Youkhanis Ordains Priests for Diocese of Western Europe

On Sunday 23 May 2021, His Grace Mar Awraham Youkhanis Bishop of the Diocese of Western Europe elevated two deacons to the ranking of priesthood to serve in Western Europe, Reverend Father Ninos Babisha and Reverend Father Shimshon Temmo.

After necessary visa paperwork and applications are completed, Reverend Father Ninos Babisha will commence theological studies in Vienna, Austria, and will be responsible for our communities living within Austria. Reverend Father Shimshon Temmo will commence his theological studies and service in Athens, Greece, caring for our communities living in Egaleo and Thessaloniki, along with his wife Mrs Mirna Temmo.

His Grace extends his gratitude and thanks to His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia AM Metropolitan for his support. Australia's border closures caused many issues for the plans of the Diocese of Western Europe. His Grace Mar Awraham desired to ordain the new priests in their respective parishes in Europe. Nonetheless, His Grace was able to travel to Sydney, Australia to fulfil the ordinations in order to prepare for the arrival of the new priests into Vienna and Athens.

May the Lord bless Fr Babisha and Fr Temmo as they commence their service in Europe, and embark on a God-fearing and holy priesthood, pleasing to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Our sincere prayers and congratulations to our communities in Austria and Greece.

Historic Visit of Pope Francis to Iraq

In March 2021 Pope Francis made the first Papal visit to Iraq. Patriarch Joseph Younan III of the Syriac Catholic Church also visited Iraq. Our Patriarch His Holiness Mar Gewargis III Sliwa flew from USA to his headquarters in Iraqi Kurdistan to meet with the Pope. A detailed report of Pope's first visit to Iraq is published in the magazine '**one**', June 2021. An article entitled 'The Samaritan Pope' (pages 32-37). 'Healing wounds' in Iraq by Laura Ieraci is informative. Another article in the same issue is 'People, Look East' The Encounter of 'Living Churches' by Bishop Nicholas J Samra (page 26-31).

These two articles give some information about Iraq and the Christians in Iraq.

The Pope's whirlwind schedule had him traveling to four governorates, five cities and five prayer sites within 72 hours and included visits with political and religious leaders, Christian and non-Christian.

"Before coming to Iraq, the Pope said he wanted to be close to the Christians who are suffering," said the priest. "But when we realized he was really here with us, that he was here for us, praying with us, we could feel the entire Church in the Lord with us.

And, during the visit, he said, "there was a lot of joy - joy in the air! Everyone was so happy. It was so good to see in the eyes of the people."

Sister Luma said what most people worldwide likely know about Iraqi Christians is how their communities were destroyed by ISIS.

"But the pope's visit to Iraq showed that what was destroyed in the Nineveh Plain was rebuilt," she said. "And it was rebuilt because Christians around the world wanted it rebuilt."

The Patriarch said improving interreligious relations through relationship-building in a community context is not only a pastoral priority in the follow-up to the Pope's apostolic visit, but necessary to rebuild Iraq.

"I don't believe in dialogue among religions. Religions cannot dialogue," said the Patriarch, explaining his approach. "There are people who dialogue and it's mostly a life dialogue. This means we have to speak about our common togetherness in one country."

"It's normal to have negative emotions after we lost our motherhouse in Mosul," Sister Caroline said, referring to the first committee meeting she attended and her exchange with an imam.

“But when he began speaking with me, I felt like I was speaking with a brother,” she said. “He respects me and my words, and I respect his words. It was something new for me. It opened a new door for me, a new dialogue, a new fraternity.

“We had interreligious dialogue before 2014, but it was just words,” she continued. “This time, it’s different, and we’re returning to it with greater ease, as brothers.”

“The Pope’s trip was a big blessing for all Iraqis, but for Christians, he confirmed us in our faith, and he renewed our trust in the future and in our fellow citizens,” said the Cardinal. “He asked all Iraqis to do that - to build peace, stability, respect and harmonious coexistence.”

“I think for Christians, it is very easy to forget and forgive, and the more Iraq is safe and stable, the easier it is to forgive,” he said.

The Pope’s visit with the spiritual leader of Iraq’s Shiite Muslims, Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani, in Najaf on 6 March exemplified this model. The visit was also a gesture of the Pope’s “great respect” for the ayatollah as a religious authority and for Iraq’s Muslim Shiite majority, said Cardinal Sako.

The Cardinal said the conversation between the two leaders during their 50-minute private visit was “very spontaneous, from heart to heart.”

The ayatollah’s office issued a statement, saying he “affirmed his concern that Christian citizens should live like all Iraqis in peace and security, and with their full constitutional rights.”

Mr. Rasche, Vice Chancellor of the Catholic University of Erbil, said the Pope’s consistently encouraging and meaningful messages throughout his visit snowballed into a surge of energy and appreciation among Iraqi Catholics, evident at the closing Mass.

News from India
Eastern Syriac Study Guide
Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan

SEERI, Kottayam has published a book on the study of the Syriac language. This book is called the Eastern Syriac Study Guide. This book helps you to learn Syriac at home. A few years ago I wrote a book called Teach Yourself Aramaic in English. Many priests and people in many parts of the world still use this book of mine. This book, published by SEERI, is helpful in learning Syriac in greater detail.

It was written by priest Dr. Raju Parakottu; SEERI’s director, Fr. Jacob Thekkeparambil’s assistant. This 364-page book is more informative than my book. I hope those who want to learn will definitely buy this book worth Rs 300/-. Raju Achen’s Syriac books are written not in Eastern Syriac but in Western Syriac. But it is good for students (priests and layman) who are studying in SEERI to learn to read both dialects/scripts. The books of Mar Aprem (St Ephraim) are available in both languages.

After priest Dr. Raju wrote a book to study Western Syriac, he also wrote a book for the needs of Eastern Syrians like me. Fr. Justin Nilankavil of our Church, who is now studying for his M.Th at Vadavathur Seminary in Kottayam after studying Syriac in SEERI, has also helped in writing this book. This has been mentioned in the preface of the book. The costs of Rs.300/- for this 365-page book is very affordable. I pray that more people may use this book to learn the Syriac language.



Consecration ceremony for the new Catholicos-Patriarch lead by Mar Meelis Zaia AM Metropolitan along with the other prelates of the Assyrian Church of the East at St. John the Baptist Church Ankawa, Erbil, Iraq, September 13, 2021



After the consecration, His Holiness Maran Mar Awa III leading the Holy Qurbana along with other prelates St. John the Baptist Cathedral, Ankawa, Erbil, Iraq 13 September 2021



**The newly consecrated Catholicos-Patriarch
Maran Mar Awa III with Indian Prelates
H L Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa & H L Dr. Mar Yohannan Yoseph
Episcopa in Erbil, Iraq**