

صوت المشرق

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His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch led the foundation stone laying ceremony and the function for the new Patriarchal Cathedral of the Holy Apostles Mar Thoma, Mar Addai and Mar Mari and the Patriarchal Complex of the Assyrian Church of the East in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan. The function was coloured with the participation of prelates from the Assyrian Church of the East and sister churches, senior government officials and faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East in Iraq

February 2022

VOICE OF THE EAST



The National Executive Committee members of ACEYA-USA



The National Executive Committee of ACEYA-USA holding a brief memorial service at the shrine of the late Catholicos-Patriarch, Mar Dinkha IV

VOICE OF THE EAST

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Voice of the East

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Editorial

End the Split: Towards Unity

With the death of His Holiness the late Mar Addai II, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Ancient Church of the East in Arizona, USA on 12 February 2022, many members of the Church of the East believe this is the appropriate time to heal the schism in the church of nearly 53 years duration. Those who want peace in the Church of the East will welcome efforts for unity.

The split occurred in Baghdad in September 1968 when Mar Thoma Darmo, then Metropolitan of India was consecrated as Catholicos-Patriarch by Mar Addai II and Mar Aprem Metropolitan (the current writer). I will not go into the details of the split, as they are known to many. I have previously written the truth, indeed the whole truth, as I had no involvement in the sectarian tribal politics of the Assyrian people at the time. Following the death of His Holiness the late Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch in March 2015 in Minnesota, USA, efforts were made to heal the wound in the church. These efforts proved unsuccessful. I believe that it is now the opportune time to restore unity in the Assyrian Church of the East. I hope that all those who read my words here will work towards that aim and restore the unity which has been missing in the church for more than half a century.

All Assyrians interested in the unity of the Church should pray and work for the restoration of unity. Whatever has transpired in the past cannot be changed. Grievances of the past should not be an excuse to keep quiet at this appropriate time. My readers should do all the things that they can do to bring unity to our church. We should forget and forgive and restore unity.

After the demise of His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV in 2015, we made serious efforts to bring unity, including the significant measure of postponing the convocation of our Holy Synod to elect a new Catholicos-Patriarch. While unity did not eventuate after the passing of Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV, the passing of Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Addai II presents a new opportunity. Now, Mar Addai II will not oppose such a move, as he is no more. Then who will oppose?

Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan



Let us all offer this spiritual Rogation and make the most of this opportunity to offer our sincere repentance to God just as the Ninevites offered repentance. Let us remember that repentance opens the doors of mercy and forgiveness from God to all those who faithfully and with a pure heart beseech and request it from God. Let us fast this Rogation not only from food physically, but from all sinful acts spiritually.

In conclusion: May Christ accept our fast and hear our prayers as we come together during the Rogation. Let our fast be genuine so that He may bestow His mercy and compassion upon us all.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all: Amen.



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Special Note

This issue of 'Voice of the East' has been delayed due to the suspension of postal dispatch to certain countries due to the Government regulation of Covid 19.

Therefore, some news of January & February are also included in this issue.

International News

HH Mar Awa III Meets His Eminence Ghattas (Hazim)

On Thursday, January 27, 2022, His Holiness received in audience His Eminence Ghattas (Hazim), Metropolitan of the Archdiocese of Baghdad, Kuwait and Dependencies of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch. The metropolitan was accompanied by Rev. Father Stephanos Assali.

The metropolitan expressed his sincere good wishes to the patriarch, and the hierarchs discussed ecumenical and social matters concerning the two Churches in the Middle East, particularly reflecting on the local unified observance of the Prayer for Christian Unity (which took place in Erbil on January 25) by all of the historical Churches present in Erbil.

At this fraternal audience, His Holiness was attended by His Grace Bishop Mar Abris Youkhanna and Rev. Father Eshai Dawood.

HH Mar Awa III Attends Opening of the General Complex of the Chaldean Antonian Order of St. Hurmizd in Ankawa

On Saturday, January 21, 2022, His Holiness Mar Awa III Catholicos-Patriarch participated in the ribbon cutting and the grand opening of the General Complex of the Chaldean Antonian Order of St. Hurmizd in Ankawa.

The celebration was attended by their eminence and grace prelates of sister churches, officials from the Kurdistan Regional Government, Abbot Dr. Samer Soreshow Yohanna, the Chaldean monks and the clergy of the various churches.

The official celebration was held at Mar Yosif VI Odo's hall, where various speeches were delivered, and later the guests were toured at the departments of the complex. At the end His Holiness bestowed his blessings on the attendees at the St. Anton Church.

His Holiness was accompanied by His Grace Mar Abris Youkhannan, bishop of Kirkuk, Diana and Patriarchal Auxiliary, Rev. Fr. Eshay Dawood and Rev. Fr. Martin Nabil.

Assyrians of the Rekan Region Call on His Holiness Mar Awa III

On Saturday, February 12, 2022, His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch, received the faithful of the Church from the tribe of Rekan.



His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch, received a group of youth who returned from the West to live and work in the Kurdistan Region, Iraq. The youth are originally from the US, Canada, Germany, France and Mardin (Turkey). In attendance at the audience were His Grace Mar Abris Youkhanan, Bishop of Kirkuk, Diyana and Patriarchal Auxiliary, and Rev. Fr. Eshay Dawood – 12 February 2022



His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch, received Mr. Stivan Shani, manager of Radio Maria - Erbil, and some members of the radio family
1 February 2022



HG Mar Aprem Metropolitan speaks on the occasion of the Martyrdom Day of Mahatma Gandhi, organized by the Chaldean Syrian Church of the East Men's Association, Mart Mariam Parish



His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan officiates the Ba'utha at Marth Mariam Big Church, Thrissur - 7 February 2022



The President, Chorbishop Gewargis-Bet Rasho, and the Vice President, Fr. Genard Lazar, of NEC meet His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin, Bishop of the Eastern United States



The President, Chorbishop Gewargis-Bet Rasho, and the Vice President, Fr. Genard Lazar, of NEC with His Holiness Mar Gewargis III Sliwa, Catholicos-Patriarch



H H Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch receives HG Mar Shimun Daniel, Bishop of Iraq and the Middle East and the Patriarchal Auxiliary of the Ancient Church of the East for the Christmas greetings – 4 January 2022



H H Mar Awa III leads the service of the foundation stone laying ceremony for the new patriarchal basilica of the Holy Apostles (Mar Thoma, Mar Addai & Mar Mari, Disciples of the East), on the premises of the Patriarchal Complex of the Assyrian Church of the East in Erbil - February 2022.

In attendance at the audience were His Grace Mar Abris Youkhanan, Bishop of Kirkuk, Diyana and Patriarchal Auxiliary and Rev. Fr. Eshay Dawood.

The Holiness of the Patriarch Mar Awa the III, the Patriarch Church of the Assyrian East in the world, met with a number of believers the sons of our holy church from the Christians of the Rikan tribe, on Saturday, February 2, 2020.

The meeting was attended by Niaafa Bishop Mar Abras Yukhna, Bishop of Kirkuk, Diana and the Military Assistant, and Father Isha Dawood

The National Executive Committee of ACEYA-USA Meets in Chicago, Illinois

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Assyrian Church of the East Youth Association of the United States of America met from Friday, January 14 to Sunday, January 16, 2022, at the Cathedral Church of Saint George the Martyr in Chicago, Illinois.

The NEC is a joint ministry between the three episcopal sees of the United States commissioned by their respective hierarchs to be a governing body of the Youth Association in the United States. The committee oversees the planning of the annual national youth conference and works towards the advancement of youth ministry within the country in various capacities.

The NEC consists of four executives and three representatives from each United States diocese, the membership of the committee is as follows:

Very Rev. Fr. and Chorbishop Gewargis-Bet Rasho of Tarzana, CA – President;
Rev. Fr. Genard Lazar of Turlock, CA – Vice President;
Rev. Dcn. Andrew Aziz of Gilbert, AZ – Secretary;
Mr. Wilson Yonan of Chicago, IL – Treasurer;
Rev. Dcn. Allen Youssefi of San Jose, CA – California Diocesan Representative;
Rev. Dcn. Elbron Odisho of Glenview, IL – Eastern USA Diocesan Representative;
Rev. Dcn. Peter Azzo of Chicago, IL – Eastern USA Diocesan Representative;
Rev. Dcn. Zaya Aziz of Tarzana, CA – Western USA Diocesan Representative;
Mr. George Yousif of Warren, MI – Eastern USA Diocesan Representative;
Mr. Paul Kando of Glendale, AZ – Western USA Diocesan Representative;
Miss Kristin Mar-Elia of Turlock, CA – California Diocesan Representative;
Mr. David Elkhoury of Orange County, CA – Western USA Diocesan Representative; and,
Mr. Joseph Hermiz of Modesto, CA – California Diocesan Representative.

The first meeting began on Friday evening with the members of the NEC with His Grace Bishop Mar Paulus Benjamin and the parish priests of the Diocese of the Eastern United States for an open discussion on the status of the youth ministry in their respective diocese.

The NEC and the diocesan clergy spoke at length at the requests of the parish priests for a unified and structured curriculum to better form and catechize the future of our Holy Church. Additionally, the NEC and clergy of the Eastern United States collectively emphasized the role of the local pastors in the advancement of youth ministry. After the meeting was adjourned, the NEC joined the youth of the Chicago land parishes for a joint Bible study and fellowship hosted by Mar Gewargis Cathedral Youth.

On Saturday, January 15, 2022, at 9:30 am, the NEC met with the organizing committee for the 34th annual National Youth Conference hosted by the youth groups of the Chicago land area. The organizing committee presented the working draft of the schedule and registration packet to the NEC and both groups discussed additional opportunities to make the youth conference a time full of spiritual growth and genuine Christian fellowship.

After a productive meeting with the conference organizing committee, the members of the NEC proceeded in a formal meeting to discuss current and future projects of the national board. In this meeting, the NEC discussed various aspects of the youth ministry across the United States, and motioned to:-

- Assign Rev. Fr. Genard Lazar of Turlock, CA, as ‘Coordinator of Religious Studies.’ Within this role, Fr. Genard will formally appoint a sub-committee to build a curriculum, set future themes for conferences, and aid in assisting youth groups in religious education;
- Approve an addition to the articles of the constitution of the ACEYA-USA, pending the approval of the bishops of the USA, to clearly define the ecclesiastical authority of the association within the current constitution;
- Reaffirm the letter from (*then*) Bishop Mar Awa Royel, as the former President of the NEC, that states the requirements for eligibility to attend the national youth conference;
- Form a media sub-committee of the NEC that will work specifically to engage our members on various social media platforms;
- Define chapter membership within ACEYA-USA between established parishes and diocesan missions;
- Select the theme for the 34th Annual Youth Conference; and,
- Accept the budget and registration fee for the 2022 National Youth Conference.

The NEC adjourned the official meeting at 4:00 pm and members partook in a dinner hosted by the local diocese in honor of the visit of His Grace Mar Aprem Athniel, Bishop of Syria.

On Sunday, January 16, 2022, the NEC attended the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, and then members of the committee held a brief memorial service at the shrine of the late Catholicos-Patriarch, Mar +Dinkha IV, of thrice-blessed memory, at Montrose Cemetery. President, Chorbishop Gewargis Bet-Rasho, led the prayer service and gave a short reflection on the work of the late patriarch for the advancement of youth ministry in the universal church, especially in the United States.

The NEC also visited the shrine erected in honor of ACEYA-USA's patron saint, St. Mar Benjamin Shimun XXI and requested his blessed intercession for the entirety of the youth association.

The President, Chorbishop Gewargis-Bet Rasho, and the Vice President, Fr. Genard Lazar, then, on behalf of the entire NEC were received by His Holiness Mar Gewargis III Sliwa, in an audience in respect of the Patriarch Emeritus.

Finally, the leadership of the NEC also met with His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin, Bishop of the Eastern United States, at his Bishopric in Morton Grove, Illinois to thank him for allowing us to meet in the diocese.

The NEC will continue to meet virtually over the next few months and will convene again, in person, at the 34th annual National Youth Conference in Chicago, Illinois in July 2022.

News from India

Mahatma Gandhi Commemorated

The Chaldean Syrian Church of the East celebrated the Martyrdom Day of Mahatma Gandhi on the initiative of the Thrissur Mart Mariam Valiyapally Men's Association.

The Chaldean Syrian Church declared solidarity with Gandhiji's ideas for the Indian freedom struggle. Mar Abimalek Timotheus Metropolitan was the only Bishop of India who visited Mahatma Gandhi wearing the *khadar* cassock. St. Mar Abimalek Timotheus was a great man like Mahatma Gandhi. He asked the King of Kochi that the girls were also a part of the society and that facilities should be made available for girls too to study.

The first Christian bishop to attend a *Dalit* public meeting in Pudukkad was St Mar Abimalek Timotheus. St Mar Abimalek Timotheus cared about *Dalits* (lower cast among Hindus) as much as Mahatma Gandhi. Sri M P Surendran, Senior Journalist of Mathrubhoomi News was speaking on the topic "Chaldean Syrian Church and Mahatma Gandhi".

The meeting was presided over by H L Mar Awgin Episcopa and was inaugurated by His Grace Metropolitan Mar Aprem. Vicar Rev. Fr. Cyril Antony, Men's Association General Secretary Sri Anto D Ollukaran and Valiyapally Men's Association Secretary Sri Sojan P. John spoke.

All ceremonies were broadcasted on an online platform for believers in accordance with the Covid protocol set by the Government.

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

(Translated from Malayalam)

Dowry: Everyone knows that dowry is banned by the government. However, the means of obtaining dowry often lead to murder. Although the law states that girls have the same rights as sons in their father's property, sometimes they commit atrocities in order not to give it away. There are many activities in the society that challenge the Government rules and the police. We need to think about how to fight and defeat this social injustice. Christian ways must guide our lives.

Parish festivals are about to begin. In 1953, the Mar Thoma Darmo issued a public edict banning unnecessary fireworks and rallies, which some parishes gladly accepted. But some individuals and parishes did not pay any heed to that command. They still work to celebrate the festivals as they wish. Let us pray for all good.

It is not easy to bring the police to control the crowd at the bands and fireworks. People who stand for the faith should be prepared to observe the feast once a year in a spiritual sense. Some people think that it would be better to bring an elephant and get it up as there is not enough fireworks and rhythms. The spiritual meaning of the festival should be kept intact. May God bless us.

Ba'utha

I'm writing these words during the three days of Lent, also known as the Lent of Nineveh. What always amazes me is these prayers and the wisdom of the author of this book. These three day lent prayers were written by the Church Fathers at a time when Bible societies or other sources were non-existent. They have studied and understood the Bible by reading the manuscripts.

In the absence of the printed Bible, people copied the Bible by hand writing. They had studied the Ethical jurisprudence (Law of Moses) and the books of the prophets to put their lives in order. When the Jews went to church on Saturday, they read the scrolled Bible manuscripts. Hand written copies of the Old Testament were preserved in Jewish synagogues. The Jews often read from the Old Testament books during Friday evening worship and Saturday morning worship. There were ministers in the synagogues who had a good voice of reading.

Bible Quest 2021.

The Bangalore-based organisation "India Campus Crusade for Christ" has released the results of their annual Bible Quest-2021 Exam. Chaldean Syrian Church members have achieved something that our Church can be proud of. Our Church won the first and second prizes. First prize went to the wife of Mr. Villadam Shaji, Ernakulam. The second prize was won by Princy, wife of Mrs. Edakalathur Baiju of Aprem Pally Parish. They got 94 & 93 marks out of 100 respectively. Let this be an inspiration to everyone. I hope more children will be able to take the exams next year.

Festival of Anneethe

Our Church celebrates the Festival of Anneethe on Friday, 25 February. It is the day of Friday just before the starting of the Great Lent.

Maramon Convention - 2022

The 127th Maramon Convention, organized by the Marthoma Church, was inaugurated on Monday, February 14, by Dr. Theodosius Metropolitan, Head of the Marthoma Church. The convention is held on the sandbanks of river Pamba near Kozhencherry. Thousands attend this eight-day convention. CDs of the songs sung at conventions are often released.

The Chaldean Syrian Church of the East has a very close relationship with the Marthoma Church. His Grace Dr Mar Aprem Metropolitan was a regular attendee in the Maramon Convention. It is doubtful whether His Grace will be able to attend the convention this time due to some age-related difficulties.

However, His Grace has attended the Maramon Convention 50 times. This is the 51st time. His Grace first attended the Maramon Convention in 1963 when he was a deacon. He returned after staying there for six days. He returned to Valiyapally at a time when the Church was in turmoil. His Grace remembers that Valiyapally was under the protection of the police during those days and the police stopped him from entering the Church. During his time of study in Bangalore as a deacon, and while studying for his M.Th. in America he was not able to attend the convention for four years. In addition, he regularly attended the Marathon Convention, except for one or two more years lost.

Prayer for the Healing of the Nation was the main theme of this year's Maramon Convention. Each person was admitted to the entrance of the tent by checking their body temperature using thermal scanning equipments. Admission to the tent is limited to 1,500 people at a meeting that meets Covid standards. Collector Divya S Iyer has issued a special directive on the rules to be followed on the Sands of Pumba for Maramon Convention as per the Covid norms.

Ba'utha (Rogation) of the Ninevites

The Chaldean Syrian Church of the East celebrated the Ba'utha of the Ninevites (three days of fasting prayer) on February 7, 8 and 9 at Mart Mariam Valiyapally, Thrissur from 7 am to 3 pm. Due to the Covid epidemic, believers were admitted to the churches according to government-mandated standards. On February 7, HG Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan officiated the service. Valiyapally Vicar Father Cyril Antony, Fr. Justin Neelankavil, Fr. Binu Joseph, Fr. Sijo Johnny, Fr. Nimson and Fr. Delmin also participated in the service. For those who could not reach the church there was live broadcast on YouTube and Facebook from 7 am to 3 pm. On the third day, the 9th, the worship service concluded with a solemn ceremony presided over by His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan. In addition to Marth Mariam Church, Ba'utha was celebrated at Mar Yohannan Mamdana Church, East Fort, Mar Thoma Shleeha Church, Pattikad, and St. Thomas Church, Ernakulam.

January

05. Memorial of Mar Zaia
06. Epiphany
07. Memorial of Mart Mariam
07. Memorial of Mar Yohannan Mamdhana
14. Memorial of Pathros & Paulose
21. Memorial of 4 Evangelists
28. Memorial of Mar Esthapanose Sahda

February

04. Greek Malpans
07-09 Ba'utha of Ninevites
10. Kubalthaibutha
11. Memorial of Syriac Malpans
13. Mar Yonan
18. Mar Awa Catholicos
25. Friday of Departed
27. Lent Begins

March

04. Forty Martyrs Crowned in Ghieda
16. Mar Benyamin Shimun, Martyr (1918)
23. Mid Lent
25. Tidings to Mart Mariam from Angel Gabriel

April

03. Mar Michael, Friend of Angels
08. Friday of Lazar
10. Oshana
14. Pis'ha of our Lord (Maundy Thursday)
15. Good Friday
16. Holy Saturday
17. Easter
22. Confessor's Day
22. Mar Shimun Bar Sabbae
24. New Sunday
24. Memorial of Mar Gewargis

May

01. Memorial of St. Mar Abimalek
Timotheus (d.1945)
02. Rabban Hurmizd
03. Children of Shmonie
13. Mar Sargis, Mar Bachos
15. Mar Addai Shleeha
15. Mart Mariam
26. Sulaqa (Ascension)

June

05. Pentecost
08. 1st Holy Qurbana by Mar Yakob
10. Friday of Gold

July

02. Mar B'hisho
03. St. Thomas Day
10. Memorial of St. Mar Yosip
Khananisho (d.1977)
15. Mar Kuriakose and Mother Yolethe
22. Memorial of 72 Apostles
24. Nusardail & Memorial of 12 disciples
29. Mar Yakob of Nisibis

August

01. Beginning of 15 Day Fast
05. Mar Mari Shleeha
06. Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor
12. Mar Eyyob Hdayyavaya
15. Death of Mart Mariam (Shunaya)
26. Shmone and her Children

September

01. Rabban Hurmizd
02. Mar Shimun Barsabbae
08. Birth of Mart Mariam
09. Mar Qardagh Sahda
13. Festival of Cross
13. Consecration of H H Mar Awa III
14. Mar Bhisho
18. Remembrance of Yonakhir & his wife Hanna,
Mother of Marth Mariam
19. Mar Shallitha

October

01. Mar Khananiya, who baptised St. Paul
07. Mar Elia Prophet
12. Three Hundred Saints of Shigar
15. Mar Pithyon
23. Mar Moshe Nwiya
30. Hallowing of the Church
31. Mar Gewargis Sahda

November

06. Day of Tithes
15. Memorial of All Saints
18. Mar Augin Thoovana
19. Mar Yaqob M'pasqa

December

1. Subara (Advent) Begins
2. Mar Gabriel of Karsa,
2. Mar Abdisho Armaya
18. Mar Awa of Nineveh
22. Memorial of 12000 Martyrs
25. Christmas



HH Mar Awa III receives His Eminence Ghattas (Hazim), Metropolitan of the Archdiocese of Baghdad, Kuwait and Dependencies of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch along with Rev. Father Stephanos Assali – 27 January 2022



On Wednesday, February 2, 2022, His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch, receives Mr. David Hunt, Her Majesty's Consul General to Erbil.



His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch, His Grace Mar Abris Youkhanan and Rev. Fr. Eshay Dawood along with the faithful of the Church from the tribe of Rekan



His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch cutting the ribbon at the grand opening of the General Complex of the Chaldean Antonian Order of St. Hurmizd in Ankawa