

صوت الشرق

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Catholicos-Patriarch His Holiness Mar Awa III with newly ordained Deacons, Sub-deacons and Readers at St. Mar Zaia Cathedral, in Modesto on Sunday 17 July 2022

VOICE OF THE EAST



His Holiness Mar Awa III cuts the hair of brothers at the ordination service conducted at Mar Addai Parish, Turlock on Sunday June 12, 2022



After the ordination of Deacon Thimotheus Joy, H L Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa with Fr. AC Antony and Fr. K R Inasu

VOICE OF THE EAST

(A socio-Religious bi-monthly)

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Editorial

Holy Synod - September 2022

The Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East will convene in Iraq from 14-19 September 2022. Concerns of this Holy Synod must be for the unity of our Church. Whatever progressive plans are proposed, there is no use without unity. We should make serious efforts for uniting our Church. The faithful members of our Church all over the world should pray for this to be a priority. Unity is an essential factor for Christian witness in our community.

In recent years the meetings of the Holy Synod have been convened more often than before. That's good, but if we don't prioritise Church unity, we'll miss the target. Let us hope and pray that the Synod of this September will produce positive results in this regard. Let us regularly plan conferences and meetings to keep the matter of Church unity alive, otherwise our church will not progress. While it is true that only prelates attend Holy Synods to plan for the progress of the Church, all clergy and laity have a role in praying for the unity of the Church.

I ask that all faithful throughout the whole world keep praying for the unity of our Church on all the days of the Synod. In that way all members around the world will be involved in the success of the Synod. Let us all take the responsibility in the success of the Synod in achieving the much needed unity. This time the faithful should not only be watching and listening for the news of the Synod's deliberations but be participants through our prayers. Thus the unity of our Holy Church should be the concern of all members of our Holy Church.

We have a tendency to blame other Churches for our failures, and that may be true to some extent. Because other churches have an interest in our church's failure in one way or another. They may like to see the decline of our Church. But we have a responsibility to build our Church up from strength to strength. May the present generation prove to be the proud descendants of our forefathers and restore the name and glory of our great Church.

Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan

Meeting with Mor Dionysius John Kawak

On Monday, July 11, 2022, His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch, visited the Archdiocese of the Eastern United States, for the Syriac Orthodox Church, and was warmly welcomed by His Eminence Mor Dionysius John Kawak, the Diocesan Archbishop, at the Mor Aphrem Center in Paramus, New Jersey.

His Holiness thanked His Eminence and the Syriac clergy for their love and respect. The meeting was followed by a fraternal meal.

His Holiness was accompanied by His Grace Bishop Mar Paulus Benjamin, His Grace Bishop Mar Abris Youkhanan, and Rev. Fr. Adday Francis.

HH Mar Awa III in Sydney

On Sunday 22nd May 2022 His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch, met with all committees who serve the church across many ministries throughout Sydney's parishes. Collectively over 200 individuals are committed to ministries who serve the parishes in one way or another, whether it's the parishes' youth ministries, children's ministries, senior programs, ladies auxiliary committees, choirs, etc.

His Holiness commended their hard work and encouraged them to continue their good work for the glory of Christ and our Holy Church.

His Holiness was accompanied by His Eminence Mar Meelis Zaia AM, His Grace Mar Benyamin Elya and Sydney's parish priests.

HH Mar Awa III Visits

St Hurmizd Assyrian Primary School in Sydney

On Tuesday 24th May 2022 His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch, visited St Hurmizd Assyrian Primary School in Sydney, Australia. The school community warmly welcomed His Holiness and accompanying prelates and reverend fathers for a while school assembly where the students showcased all the wonderful aspects the school teaches them, both academically and spiritually.

After the assembly His Holiness planted an olive tree to mark this historical visit to the school, being the inaugural Patriarchal visit of His Holiness Mar Awa III. His Holiness extends his prayers and blessings to the school as they celebrate their 20th anniversary this year.

HH Mar Awa III in Melbourne, Australia

Last Wednesday 11th of May, we were blessed with the visit of His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East,

Voice of the East

accompanied by His Grace Mar Benyamin Elya, Mar Abris Youkhanan and members of the clergy.

The night's program begun with short talks from youth committee members, followed by an address by our beloved bishop, His Grace Mar Benyamin Elya, and finished with His Holiness Mar Awa III, who delivered a beautiful keynote address to the youth, encouraging them to never neglect their spiritual lives, and to always be within the protection of the Church. He urged them to use their gifts for the enhancement of our Church and Nation, stressing the blessing and responsibility that comes with being Assyrian.

After presenting His Holiness with gifts from the youth, all those who attended had the wonderful opportunity to meet His Holiness personally.

We extend our utmost gratitude to our shepherd, His Holiness Mar Awa III, His Grace Mar Abris Youkhanan and His Grace Mar Benyamin Elya for making time to visit our lovely youth.

Ordinations in California

Mar Addai Parish, Turlock

In Sunday June 12, 2022, His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos Patriarch, laid right hand and bestowed the holy orders of the Holy Church upon the following brothers at Mar Addai Parish, Turlock.

Michael Nesan - Subdeacon
Colin Bethishou - Subdeacon
Sebastian Ovrachim - Lector
Shmueil Warda - Lector

Izaiah Alkhas - Lector

We, Mar Addai Parish, express our sincere gratitude to our holy father and pray that our Gracious Lord will bless and strengthen the newly ordained.

St. Mar Zaia Cathedral, in Modesto

On Sunday, July 17, 2022 (the Seventh Sunday of the Apostles), His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch, conducted ordinations at St. Mar Zaia Cathedral, in Modesto, for the Diocese of California. The youth who received holy orders will be serving the St. Mar Zaia Cathedral in Modesto, and St. Mar Gewargis Parish in Ceres, California.

The following were ordained by His Holiness: 1) to the Order of Deacons: Joseph Yonan, Isaac Royel, Lazar Haydo, Edward Yako; 2) to the Order of Sub-



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STATEMENT ON THE AID FOR ASSYRIANS IN UKRAINE

After the war that began between Russian and Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the situation of all Ukrainian citizens has been one of many hardships. Through the coverage of various media outlets and through personal contacts, we saw and heard about the harsh living conditions of Ukrainians. We were also made aware about the Assyrian community that has found a home in Ukraine and their situation throughout the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Since the start of the war, the Assyrian community in Ukraine has been split into three different fractions. The first group of Assyrians are living in Ukraine, but in territories that is occupied by Russian forces. The second group of Assyrians have fled the country and sought refuge in various countries throughout Europe. Finally, the third group of Assyrians are now displaced within Ukraine across many different cities.

I, as chairman of ACERO-US, and with the consent of the trustees of the organization, authorized an immediate aid package to be sent to assist the Assyrian community in Ukraine, through Mr. Givargis Badari, the Vice-President of the Assyrian Association of Ukraine "Assyria."

Shortly after, I invited the Rev. Fr. and Chorbishop Gewargis Bet-Rasho, Parish Priest of St. Mary Church in Los Angeles, California, and the Assyrian Universal Alliance Secretary General, Mr. Carlo K. Ganjeh to assist and organize a Zoom meeting with many Assyrian entities and organizations in the United States to make known to them the current situation in Ukraine and further discuss the possibilities of sending additional aid.

The following Assyrian organizations, after our meeting on March 25, 2022, made considerable donations to the Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organization of the United States of America, to send a second aid package to help the Assyrian community in Ukraine via Mr. Badari:

- Assyrian Aid Society
- Assyrian American National Federation
- Assyrian Christian Compassion Ministry
- Urhai Community Service Center
- Iraqi Christian Relief Council
- Assyrian Foundation of America
- Assyrian National Council of Illinois
- Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation
- Dr. Edison Ishaya
- Dr. John Michael
- Assyrian American Cultural Organization of Arizona

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After the Zoom meeting on March 25, 2022, the Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organization in the United States published an announcement to be read in all parishes of the Assyrian Church of East in the United States to make parishioners aware of the Assyrian-Ukrainian appeal and notified them how to contribute also to the fund.

The first aid package was able to aid over 65 Assyrian families in Ukraine, and was delivered on March 24, 2022, whereas the second aid package was able to reach 154 families in different cities across the country of Ukraine and was received by Mr. Badari on April 28, 2022. All of these funds were distributed to our brothers and sisters displaced in Ukraine.

In closing, I would like to thank the trustees of the Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organization of the United States of America, our parish priests, all of our parishioners, and members of various Assyrian organizations for their support and careful consideration of the delicate situation of their brothers and sisters in Ukraine. I would also like to offer my special thanks to many individuals for their donations to ACERO-US. This distribution of aid would not have been possible without help of Mr. Givargis Badari, who has been working on the ground throughout this entire situation – we truly thank him for his assistance!

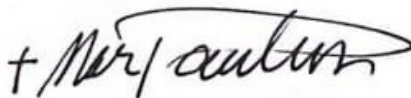
Let us also remember that as long as the conflict remains in Ukraine, the need for aid will continue to increase. Therefore, with the help of the sons and daughters of our Church and all Assyrians of good will, the Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organization will continue to help the displaced Assyrians of Ukraine to the best of our ability.

We request your help as we recall the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians:

*Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Cor. 9:7).*

Finally, let us not forget the power of prayer! Let us all remember those impacted by the war in our daily prayers. May God bring an end to all conflicts and increase His peace and serenity in our world; amen.

By the Grace of God,



+Paulus Benjamin
Bishop of the Eastern United States
Chairman of ACERO-US



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His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch, visits St Hurmizd Assyrian Primary School in Sydney, Australia on 24 May 2022



His Holiness Mar Awa III with His Eminence Mar Meelis Zaia AM, His Grace Mar Benyamin Elya and Sydney's parish priests in Sydney



His Eminence Mor Dionysius John Kawak, the Diocesan Archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church receives His Holiness Mar Awa III along with His Grace Bishop Mar Paulus Benjamin and His Grace Bishop Mar Abris at Mor Aphrem Center in Paramus, New Jersey



Students from our congregation studying at Vellore CMC College with His Lordship Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa in connection with the Holy Qurbana conducted at the chapel in CMC College, Vellore



The 'Karunya Kutta project' (A Project for Poor) inaugurated by Mr. Aby J Ponmaniserry, Secretary of the Central Men's Association of the Chaldean Syrian Church of the East



On the occasion of St. Thomas Day His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan inaugurates the 'Flame of Faith' organised by Mar Narsai Church Men's Association



St. Thomas Church Parishioners with H L Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa on the occasion of the feast of the Day of St. Thomas Apostle on 3 July 2022



'Porusthyanam' Malayalam magazine workers giving birthday gift to His Grace Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan on the occasion of his 82nd birthday at Metropolitan Palace, Thrissur



The Vicar Fr. Jinu Jose, Assistant Vicar Deacon Rajan V L and the faithful with H L Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa after the Holy Qurbana in Mar Hurmizd Church, Goa (Goa Mission Parish) on 31 July 2022



H G Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan and H L Mar Awgin Episcopa plant trees in the compound of the Metropolitan Palace on the occasion of World Environment Day - 2022

ACERO's Relief Work in Assyrian Villages in the North of Iraq in June 2022

6 June 2022 – Erbil, Iraq

ACERO has sponsored youth programmes, college students and distributed food parcels and aid to families facing economic hardship in Assyrian villages in the North of Iraq. These youth initiatives and sponsorships serve over 100 young people living in these villages.

Throughout Holy Week, for the Feast of the Resurrection and the weeks that followed, ACERO hosted children's parties, sponsored college students to support their studies and delivered essential aid packages to families across the villages of Diana, Hawdian and Bedyal.

From its inception, ACERO has always worked closely with parish priests of the Assyrian Church of the East to assist the needy, the vulnerable and our youth living our Assyrian Homeland, Iraq.

This remains true today. Qasha Yonan Yatron, parish priest of the church of Mar Gewargis in Diana has worked with us for many years to carry out this important work. Our thanks go to him and his volunteers for their support, hard work and commitment.

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

(Translated from Malayalam Magazine - June & July 2022)

Synod

The Synod of our Church is held in the month of September 2022 in the city of Erbil, Kurdistan, the headquarters of the Church. All the prelates of the Assyrian Church of the East will participate in the Synod. We have been trying to work together with the successors of Mar Addai II since he passed away. It seems hard to see success now, but I pray that our Synod will be able to find the ways to achieve it. All believers should pray that the coming Synod will be able to create harmony. May God hear our prayers.

Festivals

Our church has given up band sets and firecrackers on Church anniversaries. I have mentioned this before. But some are making efforts to bring it back. But we must not forget that festivals require spiritual rituals. Children love to play band and dance on the road during the Christian festival processions. So there are still a few in our churches who want us to go back to the old style. But we must prove that spiritual celebrations can be done without bands and fireworks. Our Church should be a good example in Christian celebrations. In the name of Saints, during festivals money should be reserved for spiritual blessings and not for band performances and fireworks. Then God will bless us as well as our Church.

Malabar Independent Syrian Church

The Malabar Independent Syrian Church, also known as the Thozhiyur Swathanthra Suriyani Saba, is a Christian Church centered in Kunnamkulam Thrissur. The

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headquarters of the Swatantra Suryani Sabha is located in Thozhiyur, a 10-minutes drive from Kunnankulam. The headquarters of this Church is the place where prelates Kadangot stayed in 1772. Among the Syriac Churches, two small churches are our Chaldean Syriac Church and the Thoziyur Independent Syriac Church. Some marriages also take place between members of these congregations. I was able to participate in the 200th anniversary celebration in 1972 and the 250th anniversary celebration in 2022. In fact, it has been recorded in the recently released history book that my predecessor Marthoma Dharmo also attended one of their events. This book also says that a constitution was made for the Thozhiyoor Church in the month of May 1948. On page 123 of this book says that “Mathews Mar Athanasios Suffragan ‘Metropolitan’ of Marthoma Church”. It is wrong because he was not a Suffragan Metropolitan but was only an Episcopa. I am writing to avoid repeating mistakes in history books. Similarly, on page 133 it is wrong to say “Paulose Mar Paulose Metropolitan of the Chaldean Syrian Church”. He was not a metropolitan but only an Episcopa. When mistakes are made in the history books, unless someone corrects them, they will be mistaken for fact and repeated by others. Repeating mistakes is not okay. I wish all the best to the Thozhiyur Syrian Church.

Thozhyoor Independent Syriac Church has no formal relationship with our Church but there are marriages between the members of these Churches. People are trying to bring ecumenism through marriages, even if they are not brought by bishops.

Mar Addai group in Iraq

When Mar Addai Patriarch of Iraq died, we requested to the Addai group that the two congregations should merge into one without electing a successor from their side. But it was learned that the election was held and the consecration of their new patriarch has been done. This action frustrates the efforts at unity. The idea of unity will succeed if both parties work diligently to end this division which arose in the special situation of 1968. My hope is that if not today, there will be unity tomorrow. I pray that spiritual leaders and bishops will have this perspective. Let us pray that everyone in our Church will have the vision that our Church should grow without division.

Unified Mass Controversy in Syro-Malabar Church

(News from the Malayala Manorama on 26th July 2022)

The Vatican has proposed the resignation of the Metropolitan Vicar of the Ernakulam Angamaly Archdiocese, Mar Antony Kariyil, for not implementing the proposal for a **Unified Mass** in the Syro-Malabar Church. On March 19, Kariyil was summoned to New Delhi. The Vatican’s ambassador to India, Archbishop Dr. Giopoldo called Mar Kariyil by phone and asked for his resignation but Mar Kariyil returned without clarifying anything of his position. It was stated in the letter given by the Vatican ambassador on the 19th that the letter of resignation should be handed over before the 26th. After resigning, he should not reside within the archdiocese. Do not attend public events. There were other suggestions also. The letter states that the request for resignation is with the permission of the head of the Eastern Church of Pope Francis. Although the Unified Mass has been implemented in other dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church, the Ernakulam Angamaly Archdiocese has not implemented it.

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The meeting of priests of Ernakulam Angamaly Archdiocese assessed that it is not Mar Kariyil who should resign but Cardinal Mar George Alencheri has to resign. The Archdiocese of Ernakulam has alleged that the Vatican ambassador is trying to help Cardinal Mar George Alencheri to escape from the land fraud cases.

The meeting of priests passed a resolution against the decision of the Vatican. The meeting of the priests has also assessed that the Syro-Malabar Synod and the Vatican have demanded the resignation of Mar Kariyil not to solve the archdiocese's problems. Rather, the decision of synod and Vatican led to darken the future of the Archdiocese and create disunity.

Goa Mission Parish

Patriarchal Administrator His Lordship Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa made his Episcopal visit to Goa on 31 July 2022 in connection with the 10th annual celebration of Goa Mission Parish and offered Holy Qurbana at Panaji. Vicar Rev Jinu Jose and Assistant Vicar Deacon Rajan Vattakuzhy assisted. Devotees from Mumbai parish also attended the Holy service.

In a public meeting arranged after the Holy Qurbana, His Lordship was welcomed wholeheartedly by the parishoners. In his reply speech he made an announcement which was an ambition of the parish for a long time. The announcement was the new name for the Goa Parish "**Mar Hurmizd Church**". Rabban Hurmizd was a famous monk who lived in Mesopotamia, Iraq during the end of 6th and the start of 7th centuries. The new name was received by the parishioners with great joy and applause.

St. Thomas Church Coimbatore

The Parish Feast Day of Coimbatore St. Thomas Church was duly celebrated on 3rd July 2022 on Saint Thomas Day. June 26th was flagged off for the parish festival. On Saturday, the 2nd of July, H L Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa arrived at Coimbatore parish and visited the elderly and offered prayers. Then he visited the construction work of the parish cemetery. Sunday, July 3rd, at 7:30 a.m. Holy Qurbana was offered under the auspices of His Lordship. Vicar B O Timothy and Assistant Vicar Deacon Johnson Ignatius assisted His Lordship.

After the Holy Mass, a devotional procession took place under the auspices of the Vicar. A love feast and a public meeting followed. On this occasion, those who achieved success in Sunday School and General Education were felicitated. His Lordship shared the possibilities of Christian meditation based on the topic of "St. Thomas the Apostle and the Church". The vicar, co-vicar and members of the parish council handed over the gift of the parish to His Lordship. The parish feast concluded with lunch.

The fact that *Thirunal* (Festival), which could not be held for two years in the wake of Covid, was able to be observed on the third day of July 2022 on St. Thomas's Day has caused a lot of hope and spiritual awakening within the faith community.

Mar Thoma Shleha Vishwas Jwala (The flame of faith of St. Thomas)

In connection with the commemoration of Mar Thoma, the apostle of the Indian Church, the “Year of Faith” was celebrated under the leadership of Mar Narsai Church Men’s Association. ‘*Mar Thoma Shleha Vishwas Jwala*’ was inaugurated by H. G. Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan with a special prayer. Each house was given a prayer card along with a candle for one year of prayer.

Challenges Facing the Church

Only through deep faith in Christ can the Church overcome the challenges it faces today, H L Mar Awgin Episcopa said. His Lordship was speaking at the inauguration of the seminar organized by Men’s Association Central Committee and the Mar Mari Shleha Church, Kuriachira Men’s Association on the theme ‘Challenges faced by the Holy Church through the centuries’ at the Memorial Day of Mar Thoma Shleha.

Priests Rev. Fr. Jose Vengassery and Rev. Fr. Vinod Thimothy presented the challenges faced by the Holy Church in different eras in the seminar. General Secretary Mr. Abi J Ponmanisery and Mr. Stanley John delivered speeches.

Karunya Kutta Project (A Project for Poor)

The Karunya Kutta Project (A Project for Poor) under the auspices of MACE was inaugurated by Mr. Aby J Ponmanisery, Secretary of the Central Men’s Association, after the Holy Qurbana on Sunday, June 19, 2018, in West Fort Mar Awgin Thuvana Parish. Parish Vicar Rev Fr Justin Neelankavil, Board Member Jose Thazhatha, Kaikars and Joint Secretary Dixon Joseph Vallupara were present. It was explained in the meeting that this is an initiative to provide clothes and other things to the needed people in the parish and in the general society.

Ordination of a Priest in Pattikadu

His Lordship Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa elevated Deacon Thimotheus Joy to the rank of priest during the Holy Qurbana at Mar Thomashliha Church, Pattikadu on Sunday, May 15, 2022. On the occasion, parish vicar Fr. K.R. Inasu and Fr. A.C. Anthony co-hosted.

The members of the Board of Central Trustees, Members of the Central MACE, Parish Council Members and Chennai Parish Vicars felicitated Fr. Thimotheus Joy who was elevated to the rank of priest.

Holy Qurbana in English

On the 13th of August 2022, the second Saturday at 7:00 a.m., the English Holy Qurbana will be celebrated by His Lordship Mar Awgin Kuriakose Episcopa. It was

the second anniversary of the English Holy Mass offered at Marth Mariam Valiyapally, Thrissur.

From the month of September 2022, there will be an English Holy Mass on every second Sunday in the Marth Mariam Big Church Thrissur.

Environment Day

Environment Day is celebrated on June 5 every year to ensure the protection of the earth we live on and to create awareness among people about environmental issues. Planting trees is one of the easiest and best ways to care for the environment. A healthy ecosystem reduces the risk of disease in humans as well as the animal and offers a better life. Nature has given us many beautiful things. So it is the duty of humans to protect them. One day is not enough for that. We have a great goal of protecting the environment for a lifetime.

The message for Environment Day 2022 is 'One and Only Earth'. Today we are participating in global efforts to protect and restore our Earth. Let's not stop our activities at planting trees or reciting the Environment Day pledge, but let's try to find solutions to the problems facing the entire planet.

Our earth is facing three types of environmental crisis today. Unbearable heat for people and nature. Millions of species are threatened with extinction today due to habitat destruction. Pollution is increasing. One solution is to make our society more eco-friendly and in harmony with nature. Time for nature conservation is overdue. So let's join hands for one earth. We can take back nature as we move fast on the path of development, forgetting about the ecosystem. Biodiversity loss and climate change are major problems facing humans in this century. Overexploitation and pollution of natural resources are the results of human consumer culture. Let's try to be a generation that raises its voice to teach about natural values without destroying the environment.

Women's Youth Association of Kuriyachira Marmari Shleha Church donated fruit trees to the church on the occasion of Environment Day. It was inaugurated by H G Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan by giving a felicitation to former Indian football captain John Paul Ancheri. Rev. Fr. Cyril Anthony, Vicar of Valiyapalli, Assistant vicar Deacon V V Joseph and Kaikaran Sojan John were present.

New Metropolitans for the Malankara Orthodox Church

Seven new Metropolitans were consecrated in the Orthodox Church after 12 years at the Eliya Cathedral, Kottayam. The ordination services were organised by the Supreme Patriarch of the Orthodox Church His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Mathews III Catholica Bava along with other metropolitans. Representatives of the Armenian and Russian Orthodox churches also attended the service.

In 2010, during the reign of Didymos I Catholica Bava, the last time Metropolitans were enthroned in the Malankara Church. Then, for the first time after 12 years, the ordination of superiors is taking place in the church. With this, the total number of Metropolitans of the Orthodox Church has increased to 31. New metropolitans have been appointed to the vacant see of Mavelikkara, Chengannur, Kottayam, Idukki, Kunnankulam, Malabar and South West America.

Who is “Surraai”

Rev. Fr. Justin Neelankavil MTh. (Continuation of the previous issue)

We should also understand what the famous historian Michael Geddes had written about the old Malabar Christians.

1. They do not worship idols.
2. Priests are allowed to marry.
3. Does not believe in purgatory after death.
4. The concept of trans-Substantiation was not found in the Holy Qurbana.
5. Marriage was not a sacrament

If we compare the tradition of Malabar Christians of the early centuries with the rituals and practices of the 15th and 16th centuries and the same of the 21st century we can discern that the only Church that still preserves these Apostolic practices in India is The Church of the East, and they are “Surraai”.

Let us find out the origin of the Malayalam name “Surraai”. Syriac speakers are called Athoraya in their homeland. As the majority of Syromalabar Christians had the practice of pronouncing the Syriac ‘sa’ instead of ‘thsa’, Athoraya gradually became Asoraya and then dropped the ‘a’ and became Soraya. Gradually this became Surraai as a personified form. So Surraai means those who speak the language of the Lord. It goes without saying that only those who know the Lord’s language can understand him. In the book written by Paramakal Thoma Kathanaar in 1796, it is precisely said that “the Christians in India at that time were called the Chaldean Syrians of Malankara”.

Few people argue that many of the Persian fathers (forefathers of Church of the East) who came to India were submissive to Western supremacy. But it is a wrong allegation. It is well known that the Persian fathers came to India by sea route. Everybody also knew that the entire authority of the sea route was vested in the Western Powers in those days. These authorities will decide where to go and what authority to accept. It is indisputable that if one does not yield to their wishes one will die. And by their authority they can also forge documents in their favour as a proof of submission. At one time the Church of the East were labeled Nestorians. The charge was that the Church had adopted the Antiochian school of thought. When we were branded Nestorians, we did not reject it even though Nestorius was not a member of our Church. Because our forefathers knew 1400 years ago that Nestorius was blameless.

Have you heard of Genghis Khan, the famous emperor of the Mongol Empire? One of his nephews was Sorghaghtani Beki. She was a member of the Church of the East. She was very intelligent and pious. She was strong enough to raise a Patriarch (Mar Yabbalaha) from the Mongol Empire. The above names will not be familiar to many people. Those who have studied English literature must have studied Coleridge’s poem Kubla Khan. Sorghaghtani Beki is Kubla Khan’s mother. We can proudly say that we are the children of whatever ecclesiastical ideology Sorghaghtani believed in (I would like to call it ecclesiastical ideology). Nestorius was branded a heretic and banished because of that ideology. It is important for us to understand what that ideology is.

We know Prophet Muhammad. Khadija was one of his wives. Khadijah was originally intended to marry a priest of the Church of the East. That marriage never took place. The priest’s name was Warqa Ibn Naufal. This one name is enough for Muslims to recognize our Church. It is another matter that he later converted to Islam. It was Nestorian monks who imparted knowledge to Islam.

Now let us understand what is the basic ideology of the Church.

To be continued.....



ACERO distributing food parcels and aid to families facing economic hardship in Assyrian villages in the North of Iraq – June 2022



The Diocese of Victoria and New Zealand youth meet with His Holiness Mar
Awa III accompanied by His Grace Bishop Mar Benyamin Elya and His
Grace Bishop Mar Abris Yokhanan on 11 May 2022