

**Martyrs, Saints & Prelates
of
The Syriac Orthodox Church
Volume IV**

Cor-Episcopo K. Mani Rajan, M.Sc., M.Ed., Ph.D.



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Dedicated to the blessed memory of

Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas

(AD 1933 - 1914)

Patriarch of Antioch & All the East

**Martyrs, Saints & Prelates of
The Syriac Orthodox Church
(Volume IV)**

Cor-Episcopo K. Mani Rajan, M.Sc., M.Ed., Ph.D.

First Edition 2016

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SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE
OF ANTIOCH & ALL THE EAST

BAB TOUMA, P.O.BOX 22260
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باب توما - ص.ب. ٢٢٢٦٠
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BY THE GRACE OF GOD
Ignatius Aphrem II
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church

ܩܘܪܝܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܡܐ ܕܩܝܡܐ ܕܩܝܡܐ

No EI 58/16



May 31, 2016

**Apostolic Benediction to our beloved spiritual son Very Reverend Dr
Mani Rajan Corepiscopus Kerala, India.**

Every Christian is called to become a saint. Saint Peter, the chief of the apostles exhorts us that *“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, “You shall be holy for I am holy”. (1 Peter 1: 14-16).*

We are happy that you are writing the fourth volume on saints, martyrs and church fathers who lived a holy life on earth and intercede for us in heaven. Our Church fathers taught us that sainthood is approachable for anybody who does the will of God regardless of any status or ranks. We are all sinners but we should strive to become holy. We congratulate your effort to educate the faithful about the lives of saints and thereby teaching them that sainthood is attainable with the grace and mercy of God. We wish you all the best and we pray that each one who reads your book may make an effort to live a life of holiness.

May the Grace of God be with you. We extend our Apostolic Blessing to you. **ܐܚܘܝܢ ܕܩܝܡܐ ܕܩܝܡܐ ܕܩܝܡܐ**

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Preface

This fourth volume by Cor-Episcopo Mani Rajan brings the number of saints and hierarchs covered up to two hundred. As in the previous three volumes the selection is both ecumenical in spirit and at the same time wide-ranging in both time and space: from the earliest years of the Church and of Syriac tradition comes Addai, one of the Seventy Apostles, while from the present times we find the late Syrian Orthodox Patriarch, Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, who died in 2014. From pre-Christian times it is good that the Jewish martyrs, Shmuni and her seven sons, are included. The Western Christian tradition is represented by such notable figures as St Irenaeus of Lyons and St Silvester, while among the luminaries of the Greek tradition there is St Maximus the Confessor. From the saints specific to the Syriac tradition it is excellent to see St Gabriel of Tur 'Abdin, patron saint of the famous monastery in South-East Turkey. India is naturally not left without representatives. Many of the saints are, of course, shared by all the Christian Churches, such as Sts Cosmas and Damian, and St Zokhe (better known as St Nicholas). Finally, mention should be made here of two little known saints who were husband and wife, St Adrian and St Natalia.

Dr Sebastian Brock,
Oxford GB, 15th May 2016

Acknowledgement

The fourth volume on *Martyrs, Saints & Prelates of the Syriac Orthodox Church* contains fifty short biographies. The earlier volumes, each containing fifty biographies were published in 2007, 2012 and 2013. I was finding it difficult to collect materials on biography of those contained in this volume. It was in the month of July 2015 that I visited my daughter in the UK and had the privilege to visit St. Mary's Church, California, USA in September 2015. These visits provided me opportunities to collect further materials on the Church fathers contained in this volume.

In seeking information contained in this book, my search extended to the British Library, UK. Rev. Fr. George Parathuvayalil, my uncle, accompanied me to different libraries in and around Corona, California, USA. I spent a few hours in libraries in Poole, UK gleaning information to compile this book.

I am deeply indebted to His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, the Patriarch of the Holy Apostolic See of Antioch and Supreme head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church, for blessing this publication. I am grateful to Prof. Sebastian Brock, Former faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford/Wolfson College, UK, for sparing time to write a preface to this volume.

The draft of the manuscript was edited and corrected by Prof. Usha Skaria, Retired faculty member of Vimala College, Thrissur. Prof. Usha also translated a few

biographies which were originally prepared in Malayalam. I am grateful to her for the suggestions and corrections. The manuscript was reviewed by Dr. Annamma Joseph, Head of the Department of English (Retired), Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram.

I am much obliged to JSC Publications, Puthencruz, for taking up the publication of the book. I sincerely thank Mr. Santhosh Joseph, Ettumanoor, for the layout and cover design of the book. The printing was done by M/S Dona Colour Graphs, Kottayam with utmost care.

I earnestly wish and hope that the English speaking diaspora of the Syriac Orthodox Church will find this book useful to understand the life and teachings of our Church fathers.

Cor-episcopo (Dr.) K. Mani Rajan

Kunnamkulam
29 June 2016

Abbreviations Used

c.	- Circa, meaning approximately
d.	- death
ed.	- edition
Ed.	- Editor
Eds.	- Editors
Fr.	- Father (Priest)
H.E.	- His Eminence
H.G.	- His Grace
H.H.	- His Holiness
M. E.	- Malayalam Era
MSS	- Manuscript
n.d	- no date
p.	- Page
pp.	- Pages
Rev.	- Reverend
rev. ed.	- revised edition
St.	- Saint
Sts.	- Saints
Trans.	- Translator(s)
V.	- Very
Vol.	- Volume

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01. St. Simeon, the Aged & Morth Hannah, the Prophetess

(BC ? - BC 4 ?)

Simeon was a citizen of Jerusalem, a righteous and devout man as can be seen from the Gospel according to Luke 2:22 - 38. When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. There was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the

thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” The prayers on the day of the presentation of the Lord to the temple do mention that Simeon was five hundred years old.

There is another tradition that Simeon was a scribe who copied the text - - Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). Simeon changed the text ‘virgin shall conceive’ to ‘woman shall conceive’ assuming the law of nature to be true. However, the next day Simeon saw the text restored to ‘virgin shall conceive.’ He again changed the text as before and was thus destined to see the Son of the virgin and hence the words - - “You may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation.”

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

The feast of Saints Simeon, the Aged and Hannah, the Prophetess is celebrated on the day of presentation of our Lord at the temple (*Ma’ altho*), on 2 February.

02. Joseph of Arimathea

(First Century AD)

Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus in secret for 'fear of Jews'. He was a good and just man. He was a wealthy convert to Christianity (Paul, 2014). He had not taken part in the vote of the Sanhedrin against Jesus. He had prepared a tomb for himself in which Jesus Christ was laid to rest. And what is certainly known about him is in the Gospels.

Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb (Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15: 42-46; John 19:38-42).

Probably Joseph was overwhelmed of his cowardice after the crucifixion, and went to Pontius

Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. It was the custom to throw the bodies of criminals as carrion for animals to devour. But Joseph brought the body before this happened, and took it to the garden he owned, close to the Calvary.

There are other references to Joseph of Arimathea. The apocryphal 'Gospel of Nicodemus' credits him for founding the first Christian community in Lydda (Farmer, 1997). Also, Joseph of Arimathea accompanied St. Philip, the Apostle while preaching the Gospel in Gaul from where he was sent by Apostle Philip to England where he founded a church at Glastonbury (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). The feast of Joseph of Arimathea is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 30 August.

03. St. Longinus, Martyr

(First Century AD)

Longinus (also known as Cassius, unnamed in Gospels) was the centurion who standing by Pontius Pilate's direction with other soldiers beside the cross of our Lord, pierced His side with a lance, and seeing the portents which followed, the darkening of the sun and earthquake, believed in Christ. ". . . one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water" (John 19:34). "When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47).

The name of the centurion, Longinus, is almost certainly derived from the Greek word '*longche*' which means a lance (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Farmer, 1997). The name of the centurion is given as Longinus in the later recensions of 'Gospel of Nichodimus' (also known as Acts of Pilate). The name Longinus is also found in the Acts of Linus (Smith & Wace, 1882). According to tradition, the blood of Christ running down the lance (by which he pierced the side of Lord) touched his eyes and

healed his failing sight (blindness?) due to age or infirmity. This miracle encouraged Longinus to leave the army and become a monk at Caesarea of Cappadocia. He saved many souls by his words and example.

It is believed that Longinus suffered martyrdom after preaching the Gospel for some years in the city where Christ was crucified. The feast of Saint Longinus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 17 July.

04. Morth Shmuni and her seven children

(BC ? - BC 164 ?)

According to the Christian tradition, the seven Maccabee brothers and their mother are honoured as martyrs. In the Mediterranean region, many churches were consecrated in their names where they perform many miracles to this day. Their names are not mentioned in the Old Testament, so their mother was given the Syriac name "Shmuni", and to this day, her children are called the seven sons. Under the emperor Antiochus IV (175-164 BC), they suffered their martyrdom. As a result, this holy family has been entered into the register of Saints of the entire Holy Apostolic Churches. Their martyrdom is described in the second book of Maccabees, Chapter 7 of the Old Testament, as follows:

It came to pass also, that seven brethren with their mother were taken, and compelled by the king against the law to taste swine's flesh, and were tormented with scourges and whips. But one of them that spake first said thus, what wouldest thou ask or learn of us? We are ready to die, rather than to transgress the laws of our fathers. Then the king,

being in a rage, commanded pans and caldrons to be made hot: Which forthwith being heated, he commanded to cut out the tongue of him that spake first, and to cut off the utmost parts of his body, the rest of his brethren and his mother looking on. Now when he was thus maimed in all his members, he commanded him being yet alive to be brought to the fire, and to be fried in the pan: and as the vapors of the pan was for a good space dispersed, they exhorted one another with the mother to die manfully, saying thus, The Lord God looketh upon us, and in truth hath comfort in us, as Moses in his song, which witnessed to their faces, declared, saying, And he shall be comforted in his servants.

So when the first was dead, they brought the second to make him a mocking stock and when they had pulled off the skin of his head with the hair, they asked him, Wilt thou eat, before thou be punished throughout every member of thy body? But he answered in his own language, and said, no. Wherefore he also received the next torment in order, as the former did. And when he was at the last gasp, he said, Thou like a fury takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life.

After him the other brothers were also tormented and mangled to death. But the mother was marvellous above all, and worthy of honourable memory: for when she saw her seven sons slain within the space of one day, she bore it with a good courage, because of the hope that she had in the

Lord. Yea, she exhorted every one of them in her own language, filled with courageous spirits; and stirring up her womanish thoughts with a manly stomach, she said unto them, I cannot tell how ye came into my womb: for I neither gave you breath nor life, neither was it I that formed the members of every one of you; But doubtless the Creator of the world, who formed the generation of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also of his own mercy give you breath and life again, as ye now regard not your own selves for his laws' sake.

Now Antiochus, thinking himself despised, and suspecting it to be a reproachful speech, whilst the youngest was yet alive, did not only exhort him by words, but also assured him with oaths, that he would make him both a rich and a happy man, if he would turn from the laws of his fathers; and that also he would take him for his friend, and trust him with affairs.

But when the young man would in no case hearken unto him, the king called his mother, and exhorted her that she would counsel the young man to save his life. And when he had exhorted her with many words, she promised him that she would counsel her son. But she bowing herself toward him, laughing the cruel tyrant to scorn, spoke in her country language on this manner; O my son, have pity upon me that bore you nine months in my womb, and gave thee such three years, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age, and endured the troubles of education. I beseech

thee, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, and consider that God made them of things that were not; and so was mankind made likewise. Fear not this tormentor, but, being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren. Whiles she was yet speaking these words, the young man said, whom wait ye for? I will not obey the king's commandment: but I will obey the commandment of the law that was given unto our fathers by Moses. And thou, that hast been the author of all mischief against the Hebrews, shall not escape the hands of God. But I, as my brethren, offer up my body and life for the laws of our fathers, beseeching God that he would speedily be merciful unto our nation; and that thou by torments and plagues mayest confess, that he alone is God; And that in me and my brethren the wrath of the Almighty, which is justly brought upon our nation, may cease. Then the king being in a rage, handed him worse than all the rest, and took it grievously that he was mocked. So this man died undefiled, and put his whole trust in the Lord. Last of all after the sons the mother died.

There is a Syrian Orthodox Church in Qaraqosh near Mosul dedicated to Morth Shmuni which is 1500 years old and many miracles have been reported from this church. The feast of Morth Shmuni (Samona), her seven children and their teacher Eliazar is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 8 May and 1 August.

05. St. Evodius, the Patriarch of Antioch

(AD ? - AD 68)

St. Evodius, the successor of St. Peter, the Apostle, was one of the seventy disciples sent out by our Lord to preach (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II). John Chrysostom counts Evodius contemporary with the Apostles and is also known as the first bishop of Antioch ordained by St. Peter. St. Ignatius, the God-Bearer, is the successor of St. Evodius.

Saint Evodius was a pagan who converted to Christianity due to the apostolic work of Saint Peter. According to the Book of Acts, the first communities to receive evangelism were the Jews and pagans of Antioch. The city was opulent and cosmopolitan and there were both Hellenized Jews and pagans influenced by monotheism. The term “Christian” was coined for these Gentile (mainly Syrian and Greek) converts and St. Peter became the bishop of Antioch to lead the church there. Evodius succeeded Peter, the Apostle, as the bishop of

Antioch when Peter left Antioch for Rome, most probably in AD 60. The difficulty in fixing the date of accession of Evodius is described in detail by Smith & Wace (1880). After the martyrdom of St. Peter at Rome in AD 67, Evodius became the Patriarch of the Holy See of Antioch. St. Evodius wrote several compositions. In one of them he writes that the Most Holy Virgin Mary gave birth to the Savior of the world at the age of fifteen.

St. Evodius was the bishop of Antioch until AD 68, and he was martyred under Emperor Nero (AD 54 - 68). The feast of St. Evodius, the Patriarch, is celebrated by the Syrian Orthodox Church on 18 January and 6 May.

06. St. Barnabas, the Apostle

(AD ? – c. AD 61)

Although St. Barnabas was not one of the twelve chosen by Lord, he is referred to as an apostle on account of the special commission he received from the Holy Spirit and his apostolic work. He was a Jew of the tribe of Levi, but was born in Cyprus (Farmer, 1997; Walsh, 1985; Paul, 2014). His original name was Joseph, but the apostles changed it to Barnabas (Walsh, 1985).

Barnabas was a close associate of St. Paul. It was Barnabas who took the newly converted Paul to meet the other apostles in Jerusalem. They were sent to Antioch and undertook the first missionary journey that began in Cyprus. It was in the city of Antioch the name 'Christians' was given to the followers of our Lord (Acts 11:26). A little later the flourishing Church of Antioch raised money for the relief of the poor brethren in Judea during a famine. This they sent to the heads of the Church in Jerusalem by the hands of Paul and Barnabas.

Barnabas was sent to Antioch from Jerusalem and when he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all with purpose

of heart they should continue with the Lord. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord (Acts 11:22-24). As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus (Acts 13: 2-4)

As can be seen in Acts 14: 8-19, in Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: "Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good

news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them. Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.

Shortly afterwards a dispute arose in the Church of Antioch with regard to the observance of Jewish rites, some maintaining in opposition to the opinion of St. Paul and St. Barnabas that pagans entering the Church must be circumcised as well as baptized. This led to the calling of a council at Jerusalem in AD 50. St. Paul and St. Barnabas gave a full account of their labours among the Gentiles. The council emphatically declared that Gentile converts were exempt from the obligation to be circumcised.

The Epistle of Barnabas carries his name but its authorship is uncertain. He is said to have been martyred (stoned to death) at Salamis, the Cypriot Port in c. AD 61. Three feast days of St. Barnabas are observed in the Syrian Orthodox Church - - 11 May, 11 June, and 17 December.

07. St. Justin, Martyr

(c. AD 100 – c. AD 165)

Justin was a native of Flavia Neapolis (now Nablus near Sicheem, Palestine) and belonged to a pagan Greek family (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997; Paul, 2014).

Justin had a liberal education and was devoting himself to rhetoric and to reading of poetry and history. And his thirst for knowledge was not satisfied with philosophy. One day he was walking in a field near the sea-shore, perhaps at Ephesus, pondering on Plato's maxims, he found a venerable-looking old man who aroused his interest in Jesus Christ. He urged the young man to pray fervently that the doors of light might be opened to allow him to obtain the knowledge which God alone can give. The old man's words inspired Justin with a desire to study the scriptures and to know more about the Christians (Thurston & Attwater, 1990).

Justin converted to the faith when he was about thirty years old probably at Ephesus or Alexandria. He remained a layman and he said: "It is our duty to make our doctrine known, lest we incur the guilt and the punishment of those who have sinned

through ignorance” (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Paul, 2014). He preached throughout Palestine, Syria and other regions (Paul, 2014). He was the most important Christian apologist of the second century.

The writings of Justin comprise two Apologies and the dialogue with a Jew called Trypho which explain the faith of the Christians, the rite of Baptism and the Eucharist, and the distribution of alms. In Rome, he had a public debate with another philosopher, named Crescens. Justin presented the more convincing argument but his adversary instigated his arrest. He was examined by the prefect of Rome, Rusticus. The important excerpts of the examination are reproduced here (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II, pp. 89-90).

Rusticus: You, then, are a Christian?

Justin: Yes, I am a Christian.

Rusticus: Listen, you who are said to be eloquent and who believes that he has the truth – if I have you beaten and beheaded, do you believe that you will then go up to Heaven?

Justin: If I suffer as you say, I hope to receive the reward of those who keep Christ’s commandments. I know that all who do that will remain in God’s grace even to the consummation of all things.

Rusticus: So you think you will go up to Heaven,
there to receive a reward?

Justin: I don't think it, I know it. I have no doubt
about it whatever.

Rusticus: Very well. Come here and sacrifice to
the gods.

Justin: Nobody in his senses gives up truth for
falsehood.

Rusticus: If you don't do as I tell you, you will be
tortured without mercy.

Justin: We ask nothing better than to suffer for
the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ so to
be saved.

Subsequently, Justin and his companions (five
men and a woman) were scourged and then
beheaded. This was carried out in the reign of
Marcus Aurelius (Thurston & Attwater, 1990;
Farmer, 1997). The feast of Saint Justin is
celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 1 June.

08. St. Hesychius, the Martyr

(AD ? – AD 302 ?)

Hesychius of Durostorum is also known as a martyr of Constantinople as it is probable that the relics of St. Hesychius were taken to Constantinople and claimed to be a local martyr.

Hesychius was a witness when St. Julius of Durostorum in Moesia (the present Silistria in Bulgaria) was being led to execution (Thurston, & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II). Hesychius said to Julius: “I pray, Julius that you may happily complete your sacrifice and receive your crown; and that I may follow you.” Julius embraced Hesychius and replied: “Brother, make haste to come. They have already heard your message.” The execution of St. Hesychius took place soon after that of his friend. The feast of Saint Hesychius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 19 May.

09. St. Nicephorus, the Martyr

(AD ? – AD 260 ?)

Nicephorus, a layman, was a good friend of Sapricius, a priest. They lived in Antioch and their friendship gave into hatred after a few years (Attwater & John, 1996). However, Nicephorus realized the sinfulness of such animosity and resolved to seek reconciliation.

Nicephorus repeatedly deputed some of his friends to go to Sapricius to ask for his forgiveness but without any success. Then, Nicephorus went in person to the house of Sapricius and begged for pardon but did not succeed (Thurston, & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I).

In the year AD 260, persecution against the Christians suddenly began to rage under Valerian and Gallienus. Sapricius was brought before the governor for interrogation. Sapricius testified: “ I am a Christian. I have the honor to be priest. We, Christians acknowledge one Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, who is God: the only true God, who created the heaven and earth. The gods of pagans are devils.” The governor ordered to behead Sapricius. This did not shake the constancy of Sapricius. He said: “My body is in your power, but

you cannot touch my soul of which my Savior Jesus Christ is master.”

Sapricius seemed to receive his sentence cheerfully and was in haste to arrive at the site of execution. Nicephorus ran to meet him and said: “Martyr of Jesus Christ, forgive me my offence.” Sapricius did not reply. Nicephorus waited for him at another street and again asked for forgiveness. Sapricius was more and more hardened and he did not even look at him. The soldiers jeered at Nicephorus for being so anxious for the pardon of a criminal about to die.

At the place of execution, Sapricius was ordered to kneel down that they may behead him. Then Sapricius said: Do not put me to death. I will do as you desire. I am ready to sacrifice (to gods).” Nicephorus exclaimed: “Brother, what are you doing? Do not renounce our master, Jesus Christ. Do not forfeit a crown you have gained by your sufferings.” Nicephorus, weeping bitterly, said to executioners: I am a Christian and I believe in Jesus Christ whom this miserable man has denied. Behold, I am ready to die.” All were greatly astonished and the officers dispatched a lictor to the governor asking what they should do. The governor replied that if Nicephorus persisted in refusing to sacrifice to the gods, he should perish. Accordingly, he was executed. Thus, Nicephorus received martyrdom. The feast of Saint Nicephorus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 9 February.

10. St. Pelagia of Tarsus, Virgin & Martyr

(AD ? – AD 304 ?)

Pelagia is described as the beautiful daughter of pagan parents who wanted to give her in marriage to the son of the Emperor Diocletian. She did not wish to marry and sought the instruction from a Bishop called Clino, who baptized her and gave her holy communion (Thurston, & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II).

On her return it transpired that she was a Christian and her fiancé committed suicide and her mother denounced her to the Emperor. Diocletian instead of punishing her wanted to marry her (Attwater & John, 1996). She refused the request and was steadfast in her faith. She was therefore roasted to death. Her relics were guarded by lions until they were rescued by the Bishop who buried them with honour on a mountain near the city. The feast of Saint Pelagia is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 5 May.

11. Pantaleon, the Martyr

(AD ? – AD 305?)

According to a legend Pantaleon (Greek - *Panteleímon*) was the son of a rich pagan, Eustorgius of Nocomedia, and had been instructed in Christianity by his Christian mother, Eubula (Löffler, 1911). Pantaleon in Greek language means “all compassionate” (Paul, 2014; Farmer, 1997).

He studied medicine and later practised as a doctor in Nocomedia (now Izmit), Turkey. Pantaleon was a court physician to Emperor Galerius Maximianus (Paul, 2014).

Pantaleon abandoned his faith to enjoy worldly pleasures of the royal palace. Fortunately, one of his Christian friends from his former Christian life, Hermolaus, persistently reminded him of the true Christian faith (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). When Emperor Diocletian came to power and started persecution of Christians, Pantaleon realized where his feelings and loyalties lay. He distributed his wealth among the poor, treated the sick without receiving payment, and transformed his life to one of discipline and austerity in imitation of Christ.

Pantaleon was arrested with Hermolaos and two other friends during the persecution of Diocletian which began in AD 303 in Nicomedia. The three men were executed, but the emperor wanted to save Pantaleon, begged him to deny faith, which he refused. He was tortured in six different ways and was finally beheaded in c. AD 305 (Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997; Paul, 2014). When he was beheaded, milk flowed from his veins and the olive tree to which he had been tied burst into fruit. He is the patron saint of physicians and midwives. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Pantaleon on 27 July.

12. St. Adai, the first Bishop of Edessa

(AD ? – AD ?)

Adai, the twin brother of St. Thomas, was the first Bishop of Edessa (Urhoy). In Syriac tradition Adai is referred as one of the seventy-two - - After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go (Luke 10:1). Ecclesiastical tradition attributes their evangelization to the apostle St. Thomas, more particularly to St. Adai, St. Aggai and St. Mari (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Thurston & Attwater, 1990). Most of the biographers have mixed up the details of St. Adai, the brother of St. Thomas, with that of St. Adai, the martyr, of the second century. The story of how Adai, the brother of St. Thomas, came to Urhoy (Edessa) is as follows. Abgar Kings ruled Urhoy during BC 132 - AD 224. Abgar V was in power during AD 22-25 and AD 31-65. (Brook & Taylor, 2001, Vol. I, pp. 155-157)

Abgar V who was the King during the reign of Tiberius Caesar of Rome sent a letter to Jesus. This fact is referred to in the Church History of Eusebius and in the Syriac document known as

the Doctrine (teaching) of Adai. Moreover, the prayers in the middle of the Lent (in the fifty-day Lent) affirm this historical fact. The letter of Abgar V and the reply of Jesus as given in the teaching of Adai are reproduced below (Brock & Taylor, 2001, Vol. II; Aphrem I, 2000).

Letter of King Abgar to Jesus

Abgar the Black to Jesus – “The good Physician who has appeared in the region of Jerusalem, my lord, greeting! I have heard concerning you and your healing, that you are not healing with medicines and herbs. For, by your word, you open the eyes of the blind, you cause the lame to walk, and you cleanse lepers, and the dumb you cause to hear, and spirits and demons and the tormented by your very word you heal; even the dead you raise. And when I heard the wonderful great things, which you do, I decided either that you are God who came down from heaven and have done these things, or you are the Son of God who does all these things. For this reason I have written to beg you to come to me, as I worship you and heal a certain sickness which I have, as I have believed in you. Moreover, I have heard this too, that the Jews are murmuring against you and are persecuting you and even want to crucify you, and are intent on harming you. Now I possess a city, small and beautiful, which is enough for both to live there in quiet.”

The letter was sent by hand of King’s secretary, Hannan. Hannan found our Lord in the house of Gamaliel, “Chief of the Jews” (Thurston & Attwater,

1990) and Jesus replied as follows.

The reply of Jesus to King Abgar

“Blessed are you who, not having seen me, have believed in me, for it is written concerning me that those who see me will not believe in me, and those who do not see me will believe in me. Now concerning what you wrote to me that I should come to you, the matter concerning which I was sent here is henceforth completed, I am going to ascend to my Father who sent me, and when I have ascended to Him *I will send you one of my disciples* who will heal and restore the sickness you have, and everyone who is with you he will convert to eternal life. And your town shall be blessed, and no enemy shall ever have dominion over it again” (also, see, Eusebius Book 1:13).

The syriac document states that Hannan also brought back to Abgar a portrait of Our Lord which he had painted. After the ascension of Jesus Christ, Adai, brother of St. Thomas, was sent to Urhoy as was promised in the reply of Jesus (Aphrem Aboodi, 1966; Aphrem I, 2000). It is believed that St. Thomas sent one of the seventy-two emissaries to the court of Abgar (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). Abgar was healed of leprosy and was baptized by Adai (Abdul Ahad, 1948). King Abgar built a church in Urhoy and was the first King to embrace Christianity. Three feast days of St. Adai are seen in the calendar of the Syrian Orthodox Church. They are - - 28 April, 26 June, and 1 October.

13. Hippolytus of Rome, Martyr

(c. AD 170 ? - c. AD 235)

Hippolytus was born about the year AD 170. His birth place is unknown. He was the most learned bishop (priest?) of the Church in Rome (Smith & Wace, 1882). The name Hippolytus means 'loosed horse.' Hippolytus opposed the bishops of Rome, Zephyrinus (AD 198-217) and Callistus (AD 218-222), whom he accused of insufficient zeal against the heresy of Sebellius and excessive leniency to sinners (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III; Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997). Hippolytus alludes to sin as the bloodsucker, and states that it has three daughters - - Impudicity, Murder and Idolatry (Cayre, 1935).

The important works of Hippolytus are - - (a) *Treatise on the Anti-Christ*, probably written in AD 202, (b) *Commentary on the book of Daniel* (the earliest known commentary on Holy Scripture ?), an important source to understand the worship, discipline and customs of Christians of early third-century Rome (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I) and (c) *Philosophoumena*, the most celebrated writing of Hippolytus in which he refuted a number of heretical teachings. This work was discovered at Mount

Athos in 1842 (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I). The details of other writings can also be found in Smith and Wace (1882) and Cayre (1935).

Hippolytus was exiled with Callistus to the pestilent island of Sardinia during the persecution of Maximinus where he died a martyr (Smith & Wace, 1882; Farmer, 1997). The tyrant was torturing Christians by beheading, crucifixion, burning alive and drowning. Though not very certain, it is stated that Hippolytus was brought before the ruler who was then in Ostia. Hippolytus was sentenced to be torn into pieces by wild horses. The holy remains of Hippolytus were buried in the cemetery Via Tiburtina. The feast of Hippolytus of Rome is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 30 January and 10 December.

14. Irenaeus of Sirmium

(AD ? - AD 304)

Irenaeus was a bishop of Sirmium (the capital of Pannonia, an ancient province of Roman Empire, Northern Siberia) who was a martyr at Sirmium under the governor Probus in the Diocletian persecution (Smith & Wace, 1882; Thurston & Attwater, 1990). When called on by Probus to sacrifice to gods he answered: "Whoever sacrifices to the gods will be cast into hell. My duty is to undergo torture rather than deny my God and sacrifice to demons." Later, he was tortured and imprisoned. In the final trial he again refused to sacrifice to gods and said: "If anyone renounces me before men, him will I renounce before my father who is in Heaven."

The final words of Irenaeus were: "Lord Jesus Christ, You consented to suffer for the salvation of the world, let Your heaven open that Your angels may take up the soul of Your servant Irenaeus, who suffers all this for Your name and for the people of the church of Sirmium. I ask and implore your mercy to receive me and strengthen them in your faith" (Farmer, 1997). Then he was sentenced to be beheaded and thrown in the river Siva. The feast of Irenaeus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 6 April.

15. Adrian with his wife Natalia, Martyrs

(AD ? – c. AD 304)

Adrian was a pagan officer at the imperial court of Nicomedia. He was moved by the patient suffering of twenty-three Christians who were being persecuted (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Attwater & John, 1996). Although he was not baptized, he said: “Count me in with these men, for I am also a Christian.” He was at once arrested and imprisoned, and word was brought to his young wife Natalia, who was herself a Christian and to whom he had been married only for thirteen months.

Natalia hurried to the prison and kissed the chains which bound her husband saying: “You are blessed, Adrian, for you have found the riches which your father and mother did not leave you, and which the wealthy themselves have need of in the day when neither father nor mother nor children nor friends nor earthy goods are of any avail.” Natalia arranged for his instruction on faith there. Adrian sent her home promising that he will let her know how things went with him.

Adrian came to know his sentence was at hand, he bribed the gaoler to let him go to take leave of

his wife. As Adrian approached the house, Natalia jumped to the conclusion that Adrian had saved himself by apostasy and shut the door in his face. Adrian explained everything and they embraced each other. Adrian returned to prison with Natalia. Visitors were forbidden but Natalia cropped her hair, put on male clothes, and bribed her way to the gaol. She requested Adrian to pray for her when he was in the glory of heaven so that she might live sinless in the world and soon follow him.

The martyrs were sentenced to have their limbs broken, and Natalia asked that her husband might suffer first and so be spared the trial of seeing the agony of others. Natalia was present at the execution, his bones were crushed with blows; his feet and hands were cut off and so he died. Natalia hid one of the severed hands in her clothes.

The bodies of martyrs were heaped up to be consumed by the fire. A sudden storm of rain put the fire out. Christians of Nicomedia were able to gather together many relics of St. Adrian and his companions. The relics were taken to Argyropolis, on the Bosphorus near Byzantium and were buried there. Natalia had to move to Argyropolis as she was being persecuted by an imperial officer at Nicomedia who wanted to marry her. She travelled to Argyropolis with the relic, the hand of Adrian, her husband. She died in peace at Argyropolis and was buried with the martyrs, among whom she is reckoned. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Adrian and Natalia on 26 August.

16. Sts. Carpos & Papylos, Martyrs

(c. AD 170 ? Or c. AD 250?)

Carpos (Carpus) and Papylos (Pamphilus or Papyrus) were martyrs in Pergamum (Pergamus), Asia Minor (Smith & Wace, 1877; Farmer, 1997). Date of their martyrdom is during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, but some scholars prefer that of Decius. Carpos was a bishop of Gurdos in Lydia (Asia Minor) and Papylos was a deacon of Thyatira (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II; Attwater & John, 1996). Both of them were brought together before the Roman Governor at Pergamus in Asia Minor.

Carpos, when he was asked his name, replied: "My first and noblest name is that of Christian; but if you want to know my worldly name, it is Carpos." The proconsul (Optimus?) invited him to offer sacrifice to idols. Capos replied: "I am a Christian. I worship Christ, the Son of God, who came in these latter times to save us and who had delivered us from the snares of the Devil. I do not sacrifice to idols like these. The gods that have not made heaven and earth shall perish." Capos quoting from the prophet Jeremias declared that the living does not sacrifice to the dead. The magistrate asked:

“Do you think that gods are dead?” The martyr retorted: “They were never even living men that they should die.” Subsequently, Carpos was hung and flayed.

The governor then cross examined Papylos. “Have you any children?” Papylos replied: “Yes, many.” A bystander explained that it was a Christian mode of speech and that he meant that he had children according to the faith. “I have children according to God in every city and province.” The proconsul asked impatiently: “Will you sacrifice or will you not?” Papylos replied: “I have served God from my youth and have never sacrificed to idols. I am a Christian and that is the only answer you will get from me – there is nothing greater or nobler that I could say.” He was also hung up and tortured (scraped with claws).

Both Carpos and Papylos were sentenced to be burnt alive. Papylos was the first to pass this reward. As Carpos was fastened to the stake, he was smiling. A bystander asked him what he was smiling at. He replied: “I saw the glory of God and was glad.” When the flames were consuming he cried aloud: “Blessed art thou Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, because thou hast deigned to give me, a sinner, this part with thee.” The feast of Carpos and Papylos are celebrated on 13 October by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

17. St. Euphemia, Virgin and Martyr

(AD ? - AD 303?)

St. Euphemia was martyred at Chalcedon under the persecution of Emperor Diocletian (under Galerius in AD 307?). Euphemia refused to attend a pagan festival in honour of the god, Ares. She was tortured at the command of the proconsul named Priscus (Smith & Wace, 1880). The torments she underwent were many such as - - one soldier pulled her head back, another one with a mallet beat out her teeth and bruised her mouth, so that her face, hair and clothes were covered with blood (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). The torments are summarized in Roman Martyrology as - - "imprisonment, the stripes, the Wheel, fire, heavy stones, beasts, scourging, sharp nails, and burning pans." Finally she was thrown to wild beasts.

Many miracles happened through the intercession of St. Euphemia. People of all ranks thronged to Chalcedon to receive blessings through her intercession. A great church was constructed at Chalcedon in her name. It was in this church the synod of Chalcedon was held in AD 451. The feast of St. Euphemia is celebrated by the Syrian Orthodox Church on 16 September.

18. Sts. Tharakkos, Prokkos & Andronikkos

(AD ? - AD 304)

Tharakkos (Tarachus), Prokkos (Probus) and Andronikkos (Andronicus) were martyrs at Ensarba (Anazarbus), North Syria, during the persecution of Diocletian and Maximian. Tharakkos was a Roman and was born at Claudiopolis in Isauria. Prokkos was from Thrace and born at Side in Pamphylia. Andronikkos was a patrician of Ephesus (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV).

The three martyrs were apprehended at Pompeiopolis in Cilicia during the persecution under Diocletian and Maximian. They were interrogated at Tarsus, Mopsuestia and Ensarba (Anazarbus), North Syria by Maximus and Demetrius. Important exchanges between them alone are reproduced here for brevity.

Maximus: Consider your grey hairs. I will get you rewarded if you will obey the orders of our masters. Sacrifice to gods, as the emperors themselves do who are masters of the world.

Tharakkos: They are deceived by the Devil in doing so.

Maximus: Break his jaws for saying the emperors are deceived.

Tharakkos: I repeat it. As men, they are deluded.

Maximus: Sacrifice to our gods and leave these subtleties.

Tharakkos: I cannot renounce the law of God.

Then Demetrius the centurion said to him: "Be advised by me; sacrifice and save yourself." But Tharakkos told him to keep his advice to himself, whereupon Maximus ordered that he be taken to prison in chains, and the next person was brought forward.

Maximus: Sacrifice to gods, and enjoy my friendship.

Prokkos: I want nothing of that kind. I was once well off, but I gave up wealth to serve the living God.

Maximus: Strip him and lash him with ox's sinews.

Demetrius the centurion said, whilst they are beating him, "Spare yourself. See how your blood runs in streams."

Prokkos: Do what you will with my body. Your torments are sweet to me.

Maximus: Is your obstinate folly incurable, you foolish fellow?

Prokkos: I am wiser than you are, because I do not worship devils.

Maximus: Turn him and strike him on the belly.

Prokkos: Lord, help thy servant!

Maximus: Ask him at every stroke where his helper is.

Prokkos: He helps me, and will help me; for I take so little notice of your torments that I do not obey you.

Maximus: Look, fool, at your mangled body; the ground is covered with blood.

Prokkos: The more my body suffers for Christ, the more my soul is strengthened.

Thereafter, Maximus ordered to take Prokkos and bring the third person, Andronikkos. He also refused to sacrifice, defied the judge, and ignored the good-natured hints of Demetrius. So he too was remanded to prison. The second trial was held by Maximus at Mopsuestia. Andronikkos draws attention to the fact that the wounds of his previous scourging are perfectly healed.

Maximus: “Rascals! Did I not strictly forbid you to let anyone see them or dress their wounds?”

Pegasus, the jailor replied: “Yet see here! I swear that no one has applied anything whatever to his wounds, or even had

admittance to him. He has been kept in chains in the innermost part of the prison.

Maximus: How comes then that there is nothing to be seen of his wounds?

Pegasus: I do not know.

Andronikkos: Foolish man, the physician our Saviour is powerful. He cures those who worship the Lord and have hope in Him, not by the application of medicines, but by His word alone. Though He dwells in heaven, He is present everywhere. But you know Him not.

Maximus: This silly talk will not help you. Sacrifice or you are a lost man.

Andronikkos: I will not change my answers. I am not a child to be wheedled or frightened.

The third examination was held at Anazarbus. They all were firm in their faith. Therefore, they were tortured and sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts. A public show was ordered at the amphitheatre, which was one mile away from Anazarbus. A bear, a lioness and other animals were loosed on the three Christians, but they all refused to harm them, fawning around them and licking their wounds. Maximus was very furious at this and ordered to behead them. Guards were

put in charge of the bodies of the martyrs. In the night a violent storm of thunder and rain dispersed the guards. The faithful distinguished the three bodies by a miraculous ray of light which streamed on them. They carried them on their backs and kept them in a cave on the neighboring mountain. The Christians of Anazarbus communicated the matter to the church of Iconium and also to the faithful of Pisidia and Pamphylia.

The feast of Tharakkos, Prokkos & Andronikkos of Ensarba (Anazarbus), North Syria, is celebrated on 12 October by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

19. St. Gregory, the Wonder-worker

(c. AD 213? - AD 268)

Gregory was formerly called Theodore and was surnamed '*Thaumaturgus*' (wonder -worker). Gregory was born of parents eminent in rank and pagan in religion at Neo-Caesarea in Pontus (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV; Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997).

Gregory lost his father when he was fourteen years old, but he continued his studies for a career in law. He accompanied his sister who was to join her husband, an official at Caesarea. He had plans to join the law school of Bairut which he changed as a result of his interaction with Origen at Caesarea in Palestine. Thus at the age of twenty Gregory along with his brother Athenodorus became Christians under the influence of Origen and spent five years (AD 233 to 238) under the influence of Origen.

Gregory returned to Pontus as a missionary but he was soon ordained bishop. The charismatic bishop with his great zeal converted the whole population of the city in a few years. The apostolic work of Gregory was carried on in very adverse situations such as war, plague and persecutions

(of Decius which broke out in AD 250).

During the persecution, St. Gregory advised his flock to hide rather than to expose themselves to the danger of losing their faith. Gregory himself withdrew into a desert with his deacon, who was a pagan priest whom he had converted. The persecutors were informed that he was concealed upon a mountain and sent soldiers to apprehend him. They returned, saying that they had seen nothing but two trees; upon which the informer went to the place and finding the bishop and his deacon at their prayers, whom the soldiers had mistaken for two trees, judged their escape to have been miraculous and became a Christian.

Saints Basil (AD 329-379) and Gregory of Nyssa (AD 335-394) recounted the miracles done by Saint Gregory, the wonderworker, as learned from their grand-mother, St. Macrina, the Elder. The miracles include altering the course of a river in the name of Christ; he dried up a lake that was a cause of dissension between two brothers; moving a mountain and foretelling of future. Both friends and enemies considered him as Moses.

Shortly before his death Gregory prayed for the remaining unbelievers which were seventeen in number and asked his followers not to arrange any special place for his burial as he lived as a pilgrim in the world claiming nothing for him, so after death he might enjoy the common lot. His body was taken to a Byzantine monastery in Calabria. The feast of St. Gregory is celebrated by the Syrian Orthodox Church on 16 November.

20. St. Mary of Egypt

(AD ? – AD 422?)

Mary was an Egyptian, who left home at the age of twelve and went to live in Alexandria, where she lived the life of a prostitute for seventeen years (Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997).

In the reign of Theodosius the Younger, there lived in Palestine a holy monk and priest named Zosimus. He was serving God for fifty-three years and was directed to leave the monastery for one near Jordan, where he might learn how to advance further on the path of holiness. He found that members of this community on the first Sunday in Lent after Mass used to disperse in the desert to spend their time in solitude and penance until Palm Sunday. It was at that season (c. AD 430?) one day Zosimus after travelling a twenty day's distance from monastery sat down at noon to say Psalms and to rest. Suddenly he noticed a person running away who seemed to be a hermit. Zosimus ran after him to receive his blessing but the person exclaimed: "Father Zosimus, I am a woman; throw your mantle to cover me that you may come near me."

Mary narrated her story that she is a native of Egypt and left home to Alexandria without the consent of her parents (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II). She confessed that she lived the life of prostitute for seventeen years, not for money, but to gratify her lust. At the age of about twenty-eight, she joined (out of curiosity) a group of pilgrims going to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Holy Cross. While travelling with the pilgrims, she continued with her evil ways. Upon their arrival in Jerusalem she tried to enter the church but an invisible force held her back. After two or three ineffectual attempts, she withdrew to a corner of the outer court. Suddenly a full realization of her sinfulness swept over her. She raised her eyes to the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, with tears. Thereafter, she was able to enter the church to venerate the cross. Then, she returned to the icon of St. Mary to give thanks. There she heard a voice which said: "Go over to Jordan and you shall find rest."

Mary bought a few loaves of bread from a baker and enquired the way to Jordan and reached there at the church of St. John, the Baptist, on the bank of the river. She crossed river Jordan into the wilderness and remained there for forty-seven years. She had seen no human being and had lived on edible plants and on dates. She was not able to read and God himself had taught her the mysteries of faith. Mary requested Zosimus not to divulge what she had said. Zosimus promised to

meet her again in Jordan on the Maundy Thursday of the following year to give her holy communion. The next year, on the Maundy Thursday Mary received communion from Zosimus at the appointed meeting place and ate three lentils which Zosimus have offered. She went back walking over the river. But when Zosimus went back into the desert to keep his second appointment Mary was found dead. Zosimus buried the body of Mary with the assistance of a lion seen near her body.

St. Mary of Egypt is depicted in portraits by three loaves of bread which she took with her into the desert. The feast of Saint Mary of Egypt is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 1 April.

21. St. Maximus, the Confessor

(c. AD 580? – AD 662)

Maximus is called ‘the confessor’ because of his labours and sufferings for the true faith. He was born about the year AD 580 at Constantinople (Attwater & John, 1996). When he grew up he excelled in philosophical and theological studies and became principal secretary to the Emperor Heraclius (Farmer, 1997). In about AD 616, he resigned the post (because the Emperor supported the heretical teachings) and became a monk at Chrysopolis (Scutari). Later he was elected abbot of the monastery. During the Persian invasion of AD 626, he took refuge in Alexandria.

On the death of St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in AD 638, Maximus succeeded him. Maximus was a true defender of faith and in AD 653 he was seized from Rome and was taken to Constantinople to put on trial for conspiring against the empire. At one point Maximus testified: “I would rather lose my life than depart from the least point of the faith.” He was sentenced to banishment at the age of seventy-five at Bizya, in Thrace, where he suffered greatly from cold, hunger and neglect.

After some months, the Bishop Theodosius, Bishop of Caesarea in Bithynia, came and met him.

Thereafter, he was shifted to a monastery at Rhegium where he was again offered some honors to accept the heretical teaching (Typos). Maximus remained firm whereupon, his possessions were taken away from him and he was taken to Perberis. Maximus spent six years in great hardship and distress. He along with two other friends was brought back to Constantinople to appear before a tribunal. They were sentenced to be scourged, to be deprived of their tongues and their right hands so that they will neither speak nor write. However, they confessed the true faith by sufferreing. One of the most profound and beautiful works of Maximus is titled - *Four Centuries of Charity*. The feast of Saint Maximus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 21 January.

22. Anthimos, Episcopo of Nicomedia

(AD ? - AD 303)

The persecution under Diocletian and Maximian was waged with particular ferocity at Nicomedia in Bithynia. When the edict was pasted up, it was torn down by a Christian. From that time the faithful could not buy or sell, draw water or grind corn without being called upon to offer incense to gods. Eusebius adds that bishop Anthimos (Anthimus) was beheaded along with several others who were either killed by sword or by fire (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II).

A large number of men and women inspired by divine grace got involved in testifying their faith. They were bound on rafts or planks and were drowned in the sea. The Christian population proved faithful and won the crown of martyrdom. The feast of Anthimos is celebrated on 3 September by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

23. St. Anysia, Martyr

(AD ? - AD 304)

Anysia (Anusia) was a Christian girl. Her parents were wealthy and the wealth that she inherited was distributed among the needy. Governor Dulcitiu carried out cruel persecutions of Christians at Thessalonica (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV).

Christians were forbidden from holding religious assemblies. One day Anysia wanted to attend a meeting of the faithful. As she passed the gate of Cassandra, one of the guards happened to see her and asked her where she was going. The soldier stopped her and asked: "Who are you and where are you going?" She replied: "I am a servant of Jesus Christ and I am going to the Lord's assembly." The soldier said: "I will prevent that and will take you to offer sacrifice to gods. Today we worship the sun." As he spoke he tore off her veil to look at her face. Anysia tried to stop him and struggled with the man. The soldier killed her with a sword.

The feast of Anysia, the martyr, is celebrated on 30 December by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

24. St. Bar Had Beshabo, Deacon & Martyr

(AD ? – c. AD 355?)

The Church in Persia began to undergo one of the most intense persecutions in c. AD 340. In the fifteenth year of persecution, by the command of Sapor Tamsapor, the governor of Adiabene, Barhad-beshaba (Bar Had-besaba), a deacon of the city of Arbela was caught and tormented.

The persecutors shouted at him saying: “Worship fire and water, and eat the blood of beasts, and you shall be set free.” But the deacon replied: “Neither you nor your king nor any manner of suffering shall ever be able to separate me from the love of Jesus; him alone have I served from my childhood to this old age.” Thus he was condemned to be beheaded. Barhad-beshaba stood bound, waiting with joy for the moment to join the company of angels. Aggai, the executioner (an apostate Christian), struck seven times at the martyr's neck but was not able to sever his head from body. Finally, he used the sword to separate the head from the body. Some books give the date of martyrdom as AD 338 instead of AD 355.

The judge set guards to watch over the body of Bar- had-beshaba; but it was carried off in the night and was buried. The feast of Bar- had-beshaba, the martyr, is celebrated on 8 March by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

25. St. John of Egypt, the Abbot

(AD 304? - AD 394)

John was born in the Lower Thebaid at Lycopolis (now, the city of Asyut). He was a carpenter until the age of twenty-five. At the age of twenty-five, he abandoned the world and became a disciple of an aged anchorite. He submitted himself to the anchorite for about twelve years in obedience and self-surrender. After the death of the anchorite, John has been visiting several monasteries for four to five years and finally settled on the top of a steep hill near Lycopolis.

On the top of the hill, he made three little cells - a bedroom, a workroom cum living room, and an oratory. He constructed walls with only a little window through which he received the necessities of life and spoke to those who visited him. He spent five days in prayer and meditation and on Saturdays and Sundays accepted only male visitors for instructions and spiritual advice.

John never ate until sunset and he ate only dried fruits and vegetables. At first and even until he became inured to it, he suffered severely because he would not eat anything that had been cooked by

fire, but he continued this diet from fortieth year until he was ninety (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I).

St. John founded no community, but was regarded as father by all the ascetics of the neighbourhood. St. John was famous for his prophesies, his miracles and his power of reading the thoughts and of discovering the secret sins of those who visited him (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I; Attwater & John, 1996). The oil blessed by him cured the sick and the blind. He was twice consulted by the Emperor Theodosius I, once in AD 388 (in the war against Maximus) and in AD 392 (in the war with Eugenius). Palladius, the monastic historian, who visited St. John before his death has recorded a detailed account of his journey and reception.

St. John foreseeing his end commanded that nobody should come near him for three days. At the end of the period he died peacefully at the age of about ninety when he was on knees at prayer. The cell which he had occupied was discovered in Asyut in 1901. The feast of St. John of Egypt is celebrated on 14 January along with all monks and ascetics of deserts and mountains of Egypt.

26. St. Agnes, Virgin & Martyr

(c. AD 291 ? – c. AD 304)

Saint Agnes is one of the most famous martyrs. Agnes refused to consider marriage because of her dedication to God. The edict of Diocletian was published in March in the year AD 303. She resisted all threats and assaults on her chastity. She was endowed with masculine courage, and was even eager to suffer torment and death (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). She was threatened with terrible fires, iron hooks, and other instruments of torture but was cheerful in the presence of executioners. She was then dragged before the idols and was commanded to offer incense which she refused (Smith & Wace, 1877).

Seeing that the measures were ineffectual, the governor said he would send her to a house of prostitution. Agnes replied: "You may, stain your sword with my blood, but you will never be able to profane my body, consecrated to God." One man attempting to be very rude to her was struck by a flash of lightning and was left blind. The terrified companions took him to Agnes who was singing praises to Christ, her protector. Agnes by prayer restored his sight.

Finally, Agnes was beheaded (stabbed in the throat, a common Roman form of execution) at Rome (Attwater & John, 1996). She was only twelve or thirteen when she was martyred. Agnes was buried in the cemetery on the Via Nomentana, where a church was built in her honour in c. AD 350 (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Farmer, 1997). The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Agnes on 21 January.

27. St. Ammon (Amus) of Nitria

(c. AD 288 ? - c. AD 350)

St. Ammon was the first Egyptian father to establish a monastery in Nitria. Nitria, now called Wady Natrun, is about seventy miles south-east from Alexandria. It has been described as “a poisonous marsh overgrown with weeds, full of reptiles and blood-sucking flies. . . . The hermits chose it because it was even worse than desert” (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV).

Palladius visited Nitria fifty years after the time of St. Ammon and noted the following: On the mountain live some five thousand men with different modes of life, each living in accordance with his own powers and wishes, so that it is allowed to live alone or with another or with a number of others. There are some six hundred anchorites. There are seven bakeries in the mountain, which serve the needs of these men. In the mountain of Nitria there is a great church by which stand three palm trees, each with a whip suspended from it. One is intended for the solitaries who transgress, one for robbers, if any pass that way, and one for chance comers. All who transgress and are judged worthy of blows are tied to the palm tree and receive on

back the appointed number of strikes and are then released. At the ninth hour of the day it is possible to stand and hear psalmody from each habitation.

Relatives (uncle?) of Ammon forced him to matrimony when he was twenty-two years old. Ammon read to his wife what St. Paul wrote in commendation of the state of virginity, by which she was persuaded to consent to their living together in perpetual continence. They thus lived eighteen years under the same roof as brother and sister (Smith & Wace, 1877). He was severe in his mortifications to inure and prepare his body to bear the austerity of the desert. He spent the day in hard labour in tilling the land and agriculture. He ate food such as vegetables and fruits and retired to prayer in which he spent a great part of the night. Later on Ammon spent his time alone in Nitria and his wife assembled in her house a number of religious women, who were visited and directed by Ammon once every six months.

Saint Ammon lived in great austerity. He took only one meal a day; this he extended to two to four days. A miracle happened when Ammon was crossing a river with his disciple, Theodore. The river was overflowing as they came to cross it. Ammon was too shy to undress to swim across the river, while he stood trying to make up his mind, he suddenly found himself on the other side of the river. Theodore seeing Ammon on the other side asked how he got there. Ammon confessed the

miracle and made Theodore promise that he would not tell it to anybody.

Saint Ammon died at the age of sixty-two years. The feast of Saint Ammon is celebrated on 29 April by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

28. St. Apollonia, the Martyr

(AD ? – AD 245?)

During a riot against Christians, the Alexandrian mob dragged many Christians from their houses and killed them, while their property was looted. Apollonia, an aged deaconess, was one among them who was killed (Farmer, 1997; Attwater & John, 1996; Paul, 2014). A bonfire was made and her tormentors threatened to burn her alive if she did not renounce her faith. She uttered a short prayer and walked into the flames, and was consumed.

Mor Dionysius who was the bishop of Alexandria at that time wrote to Fabius, Patriarch of Antioch (AD 251 - 254), an account of the persecution of Christians by the heathen populace of Alexandria in the last year of the reign of the Emperor Philip (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). The details are as follows: "They seized aged virgin Apollonia, broke all her teeth with blows on her jaws, and piling up a bonfire before the city, threatened to burn her alive if she refused to recite with them their blasphemous sayings. But she asked for a brief delay (as if to consider the proposal) and without flinching leapt

into the fire and was consumed” (Farmer, 1997, p. 29).

Most of the books referred to have given the date of martyrdom as AD 249 (Smith & Wace, 1877; Farmer, 1997; Attwater & John, 1996; Paul, 2014). However, the date of martyrdom recorded in the calendar of the Syrian Orthodox Church is AD 245 (Rajan, 2004) since this persecution is dated prior to that of Decius (AD 247-249). The feast of St. Apollonia is celebrated on 8 February in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

29. Sts. Cosmas & Damian, Martyrs

(AD ? – AD 306 ?)

Saints Cosmas (Cosme) and Damian (Dumiana) were twin brothers. They were born in Arabia (Thurston & Attwater, 1990) and they studied the sciences in Syria and became eminent in their skills in medicine. They treated patients without taking any reward (Paul, 2014). Those who benefited from their treatment should believe in Christ was claimed as their reward (Smith & Wace, 1887).

They lived at Aegeae on the bay of Alexandretta in Cilicia. When prosecution began to rage they were imprisoned by the order of Lysias, governor of Cilicia. They were persecuted and it is recorded that while they were hanging on crosses the mob stoned them, and the stones flew backwards and hit the tormentors; similarly, the arrows of archers who were brought up to shoot at them turned in the air and scattered the bowmen. After various torments they were beheaded for the faith. Their bodies were carried to Syria and buried at Cyrrhus.

Many miracles of healing were ascribed to them after their death. Emperor Justinian I recovered

from a serious illness and he had high regard for the relics of Cosmas and Damian. Three brothers of Cosmas and Damian, Anthimus, Leontius and Euprepus are also said to have been martyred with them (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). Cosmas and Damian are the patron saints of doctors. The popular feast days of these saints recorded in the Syrian orthodox calendar are 6 April, 17 June, 1 July and 12 October.

30. St. Daniel, the Stylite

(c. AD 409 ? – c. AD 493 ?)

Daniel, the stylite (pillar ascetic) is the most famous of the disciples of Simon, the Stylite (Rajan, 2007). He was born of devout parents at Maratha, near Samosata in Mesopotomia (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Attwater, 1996; Farmer, 1997). He was a child of promise, dedicated to God before his birth. Daniel left home at the age of twelve and joined a nearby monastery. The Abbot of the monastery going on a journey to Antioch took Daniel with him and passing by Telanissur they visited Simon, the stylite. Farmer (1997) has recorded that Daniel inherited both his cloak and way of life after the death of Simon, the stylite in AD 459 (Smith & Wace, 1877; Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Farmer, 1997).

Inspired by the visit, he took up his position on a pillar four miles north of Constantinople. Daniel offered the following prayer before he began life on the pillar: "I yield Thee glory, Jesus Christ my God, for all the blessings which Thou hast heaped upon me, and for the grace which Thou hast given me that I should embrace this manner of life. But Thou knowest that ascending this pillar, I lean on Thee

alone, and that to Thee alone I look for the happy issue of my undertaking. Accept, then, my object; strengthen me that I finish this painful course; give me grace to end it in holiness” (Smith & Wace, 1877, p. 786).

Daniel with friends’ help set himself up on a pillar overlooking Bosphorus, a few miles from the city. He almost froze to death one night and after which the Emperor built him a better shelter on the pillar; which consisted of two pillars fastened together with iron bars, whereon masonry was placed, on the top of which was fixed a covered shelter and railing (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). The country was subject to high winds, and very severe frosts, but this did not deter him from leaving his pillar.

Daniel, against his wishes, was ordained priest by Patriarch Gennadius, who read the prayers beneath the pillar and then climbed the ladder to lay hands on him and give communion. He preached regularly in the afternoon, his theme frequently being the love of God and of one’s neighbor, especially shown in almsgiving, as well as ‘the everlasting condemnation which is the lot of the sinners’ (Farmer, 1997, p. 128).

He lived on this pillar for thirty-three years and died at the age of eighty-four. He left his pillar only once in c. AD 476 to rebuke Emperor Basiliscus who protected heretics, especially the Euthychians. He was often consulted by the emperors Leo I and Zeno and by the Patriarchs of Constantinople, and

people flocked to him, bringing their sick to be anointed and prayed over (Attwater, 1996). By continually standing his feet were covered with sores and ulcers. Euphemius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, gave him the viaticum and soon afterwards he died in c. AD 493. The body was buried at the chapel at the foot of his column (Farmer, 1997).

Daniel wrote the following in his will: “Hold fast humility, practice obedience, exercise hospitality, keep the fasts, observe the vigils, love poverty, and above all maintain charity, which is the commandment; keep closely bound all that regards piety, avoid the tares of heretics. Never separate from the Church, your mother; if you do these things your righteousness shall be perfect (Smith & Wace, 1877, p. 786; Farmer, 1997, p. 128). The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Daniel, the Stylite, on 11 December.

31. St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons

(c. AD 130 – AD 202)

Irenaeus was born probably around the year AD 130 in Smyrna (near Ephesus, Western Turkey), Asia Minor (Smith & Wace, 1882). He was well versed in Holy Scripture, Greek philosophy and literature. He had the rare privilege of sitting at the feet of men who had known the Apostles or their immediate disciples. Of these the one who influenced him during his youth was St. Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna (AD 55 – 155?). Irenaeus is one of the most important theologians of the second century.

St. Irenaeus was a priest at Lugdunum in the church of Lyons. In the year c. AD 177 he was sent to Rome with a peace making mission by his bishop Pothinus to Pope St. Eusebius (Paul, 2014). Irenaeus returned to Lyons in c. AD 178 and by that time St. Pothinus, Bishop of Lyons, was martyred and several others were persecuted under Marcus Aurelius. Irenaeus became the bishop of Lyons in the same or the following year (Smith & Wace, 1882).

Apart from the evangelization of the neighbouring lands, Irenaeus had to deal with Gnosticism which

was wide spread in Gual. The Gnostics were Docetists. This word comes from the Greek word meaning “to seem.” They taught that Christ did not really have a material body, but only seemed to have one. It was an appearance, so that he could communicate with men, but was not really there. (If holograms had been known then, they would certainly have said that the supposed body of Jesus was a hologram). They went on to say that Jesus was not really born, and did not really suffer or die, but merely appeared to do so. It was in opposition to early Gnostic teachers that the Apostle John wrote that anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of anti-Christ (1 John 4:1-3).

He could produce treatise on doctrines of the Church based on teachings of Apostles and the text of Holy Scriptures to counter the heretic viewpoints of Gnosticism. He wrote the ‘rule of faith’ that encompasses all ‘the riches of Christian truth’ (Paul, 2014). There was another dispute regarding the date of Easter between Pope and a group of Christians in Asia Minor in which Irenaeus acted as a mediator to settle the issue (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). His principal work is the *Refutation of Heresies*, a defense of Orthodox Christianity against its Gnostic rivals. A shorter work is his *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, a brief summary of Christian teaching, largely concerned with Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. A detailed discussion about his writings

against heresies can be found in Smith and Wace (1882).

Irenaeus was perhaps the first to speak of the Church as “Catholic” (universal). In using this term, he contrasted the over-all church with the single local congregation, so that one spoke of the Church in Ephesus, but also of the Catholic Church, of which the Churches in Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, Antioch, etc. were local branches or chapters.

Irenaeus, the noted theologian, who emphasized the Canon of Scriptures, the Episcopate and the tradition of Church died at Lyons (Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997). The date of death of Irenaeus is usually assigned around the year AD 202 (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). Irenaeus was entombed at the church of St. John in Lyons. The feast of Irenaeus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 21 December.

32. St. Hilarion, Abbot

(AD 291 ? – AD 371)

St. Hilarion was born in the village called Tabatha, to the south of Gaza. His parents sent him to study at Alexandria where he came to know about Christian faith and was baptized when he was about fifteen (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Walsh, 1985).

Hilarion visited St. Antony of Egypt (AD 251-356) and stayed with him for two months. Later he retired into the desert seven miles from Majuma, towards Egypt in c. AD 306/7 (Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997). His clothing consisted of a sackcloth shirt, and a leather tunic which St. Antony gave him, and an ordinary short cloak. His food was fifteen figs a day, which he never took till sunset (Smith & Wace, 1882). His occupation was tilling the earth and in imitation of the Egyptian monk, making baskets, whereby providing for the necessities of life. Hilarion spent twenty years in the wilderness.

During his first years he had no shelter other than woven reeds and rushes. Afterwards he built a cell which was four feet broad and five feet in height. It resembled a tomb rather than a house. St. Hilarion had a revelation in AD 356 of the death of St. Antony when he was sixty-five years old.

(Thus we can reckon his birth to be around AD 291). He set out to St. Antony's mountain and found two cells to which St. Antony often retired to avoid visitors. He and two of the disciples of St. Antony wanted to see the place where St. Antony was buried. The disciples said that St. Antony had given strict injunction that his grave should be concealed. Hilarion returned to Aphroditopolis (Atfiah) where he spent his time in abstinence and silence (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). It had not rained there for three years, ever since the death of St. Antony and people considering Hilarion as the successor of St. Antony requested him to pray for rain. The saint lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, and immediately there was a downpour.

He had performed many miracles; a barren woman of Eleutheropolis brought forth a son by the intercession of St. Hilarion. He was very popular in that place as many labourers and herdsmen who were stung by serpents and insects were cured by anointing their wounds with oil which he had blessed. He moved out to Sicily and later to Epidaurus (on the Dalmatian coast) with his disciple Hesychius. To be in seclusion, finally he fled to Cyprus and settled at a place two miles from Paphos. St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (c. AD 315 – 402), visited Hilarion in his last days of illness. Hilarion died at the age of eighty and was buried near Paphos. Later his relics were transferred to Majuma. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Hilarion on 21 October.

33. St. Cyril of Jerusalem

(c. AD 315 ? – AD 386)

St. Cyril was born about the year c. AD 315 in Jerusalem and was educated there (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). He was ordained priest by St. Maximus, bishop of Jerusalem. Cyril had a sister who was the mother of Gelasius, bishop of Caesarea. He was probably ordained deacon by Macarius in c. AD 335 and priest by his successor Maximus in c. AD 345 (Smith & Wace, 1877).

Priest Cyril was entrusted with the instruction of the Catechumens and those who had received Baptism. He is remembered for his *Catecheses*, eighteen instructional addresses given to the candidates for baptism during Lent, and five given to the newly baptized after Easter (Attwater & John, 1996). The lectures to catechumens were given at the Constantine's basilica of the Holy Cross (erected on Calvary by St. Helena), usually called the Martyrion, and to the newly baptized at the church of Resurrection. In these lectures there were allusions to the discovery of the cross and about the proximity of the rock which closed the Holy Sepulchre.

Cyril became bishop in c. AD 349 (Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997). In the first year of the episcopate of St. Cyril, on 7 May (AD 351?) a rare atmospheric phenomenon appeared over the city of Jerusalem about which he wrote to Emperor Constantine (Smith & Wace, 1877; Thurston & Attwater, 1990). The letter says: "On the nones of May, about the third hour, a great luminous cross appeared in the heavens, just over the Golgotha, reaching as far as the holy Mount of Olives, seen not by one or two persons, but clearly and evidently by the whole city. This is not, as might be thought, a fancy-bred and transient appearance: but continued several hours together, visible to our eyes and brighter than the Sun. The whole city, penetrated alike with awe and with joy at this portent, ran immediately to the church, all with one voice giving praise to our Lord Jesus Christ" (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). The excitement caused by the miraculous manifestation (parhelion) resulted in the conversion of many Jews and Gentiles to Christianity (Smith & Wace, 1877).

Cyril became bishop at a time when there were troubles arising from Arianism. The Orthodox concept of the Holy Trinity – the threefold godhead of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit was being challenged by Arians. Cyril was an ardent supporter of Meletius, Patriarch of Antioch (d. AD 381), who defined the Son as of the same substance as the Father; "three persons are conceived in the mind, but we speak as if addressing one" (Smith & Wace,

1882). Added to the controversy, there were disagreements between St. Cyril and Acacius, the metropolitan of Caesarea about the primacy of the throne of Jerusalem. This resulted in the exile of Bishop Cyril in AD 357 by the Arian Emperor Valens. Cyril made his way first to Antioch and then to Tarsus where he was supported by Bishop Silvanus. Later he was recalled in AD 359 and later was banished two times.

Some authors insist that Bishop Cyril was afraid of the word '*homo ousios*' (Father and Son of the same essence) earlier. However, St. Cyril fully consented to the conclusions of the Council of Constantinople (AD 381) endorsing the concept of the Trinity (Paul, 2014). In the second ecumenical synod St. Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem, took his place with the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch (Thurston & Attwater, 1990).

St. Cyril is considered as a doctor of the Church. He died at the age of about seventy after being bishop for 35 years, of which 16 years were spent in exile (Farmer, 1997). The feast of St. Cyril is celebrated on 17 March by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

34. St. Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra

(AD ? – AD 342)

Nicholaus (Mor Zokhe) was born as the son of Epiphanius and Joanna. They lived in the city of Pataca (Patara), Lycia, Turkey (south-western Asia Minor), where they occupied a high status. It is recorded that as soon as he was born he stood up and glorified God (Smith & Wace, 1887; Paul, 2014).

Nicholaus observed the canonical fasts on Wednesdays and Fridays, even when an infant, by abstaining on those days from sucking his mother's breasts. When he grew up he adopted the ascetic way of life, and went on a pilgrimage to Palestine to visit the holy places. Subsequently, he performed miracles which made him a favorite patron of sailors (Smith & Wace, 1887; Paul, 2014). He had the gift of predicting weather and once healed a sailor who had fallen off the mast.

Abbot Nicholaus was chosen the Archbishop of Moora (Myra), Lycia and became well known for his extraordinary piety and zeal. He suffered imprisonment for the faith, and made a glorious confession during the latter part of the persecution

of Diocletian. He is said to have been a participant at the Council of Nicea in AD 325. He is described as a strong opponent of Arius and occupied a pivotal place in the council.

Saint Nicholas died in AD 342 and was buried in his own cathedral in Myra. His popularity in England is very great and several churches were dedicated to his name. The Emperor Justinian built a church in his honour at Constantinople, about the year AD 430 (Butler, 1866). His relics were later transferred to Bari in Apulia (Italy) in 1095 (Paul, 2014) and is often referred to as Nicholas of Bari. The feast of Nicholas is celebrated on 6 December.

35. Pamphilus of Caesarea, the Martyr

(c. AD 240 – AD 309)

Pamphilus (Pampile) was a native of Phoenicia (Berytus?). His parents were very wealthy. He renounced all his worldly prospects and surrendered his property for the aid of the needy. He accepted a life of self-denial and strict study. After completing his primary education in Phoenicia, he proceeded to Alexandria for his theological studies under Pierius, the head of the Alexandrian School. After his return he settled in Caesarea where he was ordained a priest under the episcopate of Agapius.

Pamphilus was very fond of literature on Holy Scriptures and collected every manuscript to establish a library. The library sustained damages during the persecution of Diocletian which was repaired by Acacius and Euzoius, the successors of Eusebius. The library had valuable collections such as the Hebrew text of the Gospel of St. Mathew (Smith & Wace, 1887).

Pamphilus was a close associate of Eusebius, the Church historian. Although not certain,

Nicephorus Callistus indicate that Pamphilus is Eusebius' uncle. The writings of Pamphilus, the biblical scholar, are totally lost. What is available is reconstructed from the work of Eusebius and those of Jerome and Photius.

Pamphilus was imprisoned (along with eleven of his companions) for two years (AD 307-309) by Urbanus, the governor of the city, during the persecution of Diocletian. He was later crowned with martyrdom on 16 February AD 309 (Attwater & John, 1996). The feast of Pamphilus is celebrated on 16 February in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

36. Alexander, the Patriarch of Alexandria

(AD ? – AD 326?)

Alexander, the successor of Achillas in the see of Alexandria, was enthroned in the year AD 313 (Smith & Wace, 1877). He is chiefly celebrated for his determined resistance against the heresy of Arius. Alexander was a man of apostolic doctrine and life, charitable to the poor, and full of faith, zeal and fervour.

Arius, an Alexandrian parish priest of the church of Baucalis (one of the oldest and most important churches of Alexandria), propagated that Son of God could not be co-eternal with His Father; that He must therefore have come into existence at a very remote period, by the creative fiat of the Father, so that it might be truly said of Him that “once He was not;” that, therefore, He must be regarded as external to the Divine essence, and only a creature, although of all creatures the most ancient and august (Smith & Wace, 1877, p. 79).

Alexander with sound arguments sought to bring Arius back to the true faith in writing and in formal meetings but was not successful. Arius was obstinate and his followers grew in number.

Alexander summoned Arius to appear in an assembly of clergy and later excommunicated him in AD 320. Arius moved to Palestine and his representation of case made a favourable impression on several bishops. Some of them such as Athanasius of Anazorbus, a Cician bishop, and George, an Alexandrian presbyter, wrote to Alexander: "Son once 'was not' just as Isaiah 'was not' before he was born of Amos. Arius stationed at Nicomedia as he could secure the support of Eusebius, the bishop of the city.

Eusebius of Nicomedia who had strong influence over Emperor Constantine persuaded him to write a letter to Alexander and Arius, in which the controversy was treated as logomachy, and the disputants were blamed for disturbing the peace of the Christian community. Hosius of Cordova, a prelate of very high position was entrusted the duty to hand over the letter to Alexander and to inquire into the matters that troubled the Egyptian Church. These culminated in the General Council held in Nicea in AD 325. The heresy of Arius was emphatically and finally condemned in the first ecumenical council.

Emperor Constantine banished Arius and a few others to Illyricum. Athanasius, the successor to Alexander, had recorded that Alexander died five months after the council of Nicea which can be reckoned as AD 326 (Smith & Wace, 1877). However, Thurston & Attwater (1990) suggest that

Alexander died two years after his return to Alexandria having named St. Athanasius as his successor. St. Athanasius makes mention of the tradition that Gospels should not be read in a sitting posture. The feast of Alexander is celebrated on 26 February.

37. St. Silvester I, Patriarch of Rome

(AD ? – AD 335)

St. Silvester I succeeded St. Miltiades in AD 314, soon after the Edict of Milan which granted freedom to Christianity. He was the son of a Roman named Rufinus (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). Emperor Constantine upon his conversion to Christianity received baptism at the hands of Silvester, whereupon, in gratitude endowed the Church with the provinces of Italy. There are arguments that Emperor Constantine remained a catechumen until he was in his death-bed and was baptized after the death of St. Silvester.

Silvester is also referred to as the first Pope after the Church emerged from the catacombs. It is during his episcopacy the ecumenical council met in June AD 325 at Nicea in Bithynia. St. Silvester had sent two delegates (Vitus and Vincentius) to the council (Smith & Wace, 1887; Cross & Livingstone, 1974). Emperor Constantine gave the palace of Lateran to Silvester where the Lateran basilica as the cathedral church of Rome was established. Constantine conferred primacy

of Rome over all other bishops and temporal dominion over Italy. In AD 330 Emperor shifted his capital from Rome to Byzantium. Emperor built the first church of St. Peter at Vatican. Silvester built a church at the cemetery of Priscilla where he himself was buried in AD 335.

The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Silvester (Sylvester) on 2 January.

38. St. Callistus, Episcopo of Rome

(AD ? – AD 222)

Callistus was a slave of a Christian master named Carpophorus in Rome (Farmer, 1997). According to Hippolytus, Callistus was involved in some financial operations of a bank and later sentenced to hard labour in the Sardinian quarries (mines?). He was released with other Christians through the intervention of Marcia, mistress of Emperor Commodus. After his release Zephyrinus ordained him a deacon in c. AD 199 (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997). Deacon Callistus became Pope's friend and counsellor.

Pope Zephyrinus put him in charge of the Christian cemetery on the Appian Way where most of the previous bishops of Rome were buried. Callistus was very able and was chosen to succeed Pope Zephyrinus in AD 217? (Smith & Wace, 1877). Bishop Callistus had a short and controversial reign on account of his mediation between two parties with rival theories of incarnation. Callistus was accused of laxity for readmitting into communion those who had done public penance for murder, adultery and fornication (Thurston & Attwater, 1990).

There were other allegations that he recognized marriages between free women and slaves, contrary to Roman civil law. Although very little is known of Callistus, other than what is noted by his rivals, he is believed to be a firm upholder of true doctrine and good discipline.

Although there is no record of official persecution at that time he was probably killed in AD 222 by a rioting mob (or being thrown down a well?). The feast of St. Callistus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 9 April.

39. St. Abraham Kidunay

(c. AD 296 - c. AD 366)

Abraham Kidunay was born to a wealthy family near Edessa in Mesopotamia in about AD 296. Abraham contrary to the wishes of his parents to get married ran away to be a monk. When his parents died, he inherited their riches, but he commissioned a friend to distribute all his goods to the poor. He retained a cloak, a goatskin garment, a bowl for food and drink, and a rush mat on which he slept (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Farmer, 1997). He lived in a cell with only a small opening for food. Abraham regarded each day as his last.

Not far from Abraham's cell there was a town called Beth-Kiduna whose citizens were idolators. They resisted with violence all efforts to evangelize them. This was a source of constant grief to the bishop of Edessa. The bishop of Edessa asked Abraham to leave the hermitage (against his will) and ordained him priest and sent him to preach the gospel to the people in Beth-Kiduna. He had built a church in the town and preached the gospel to which the citizens were not willing to listen. Hence, he returned during the night and went again

on the next day. They stoned him and left him half-dead. Upon recovering consciousness he again returned, and though constantly insulted, ill-treated, and sometimes attacked with sticks and stones, he continued for three years to preach without any apparent result.

Suddenly there was a break-through, the patience of Abraham convinced them of his holiness, and they listened to the message and were baptized. He continued to instruct them on the principles of faith, of Christian justice and of charity for a year and then retired to his hermitage. It is from his success in Kiduna that he became known as Kidunay (Kidunaia or Kiduniya).

Abraham led a life of penance for fifty years and lived to the age of seventy. At the news of his last illness, the whole countryside flocked to receive his benediction and after his death each one sought to procure a fragment of his clothing. The feast of St. Abraham Kduniya (Kidunay) is celebrated on 24 October in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

40. St. Gabriel, the Bishop of Thur' abdeen

(AD 594 – AD 668?)

Several ascetics lived in Mesopotamia (Bes'nahrin) from the fourth to eighth century. Gabriel is one the brightest stars among those ascetics. He was born in Besqusthan in AD 594. He was selected to be a deacon in the church of his village (JSC, 2014). His parents wanted to get him married which he refused.

One night Gabriel left his home and met Geevarghese, chief of a monastery. Geevarghese accepted him in his monastery and later adorned him with vestments of an ascetic. He slept only for two hours and spent time in prayer and meditation. He used to wear an iron plate and covered it with raiment of goat's leather. During his stay (for seven years) in the monastery his parents visited him and were sad seeing his rituals. However, Gabriel was happy that he was offering his life a pleasing sacrifice to God.

Gabriel wanted to go to a distant place so that his parents and relatives may not visit him frequently. The head of the monastery agreed to his request

and he left the monastery and joined the ascetic, Shem'voon. After a few years, Gabriel was elevated to the rank of the chief of the monastery. Mor Gabriel had instructed that all inmates of the monastery must sit together to eat and no one should bring any food items to the table. Two of the inmates who disregarded the instruction and brought salad and other food items died at the dining table.

The intercession of Gabriel was well known while he was alive. Once, a man from Arabia came to the monastery when Gabriel was the chief of the monastery. The man came with a lot of slaves, camels, and other belongings. He entrusted one thousand gold coins to Yoohanon, an elderly inmate of the monastery. The man was traveling to the North and told Yoohanon to hand over the coins to him if he returns alive or to the one who will come with a note from him. (The coins were buried in a place known to Yoohanon and the man).

After three years the man came back to the monastery, but Yoohanon was dead two years ago. Yoohanon's disciple was called and interrogated about the gold coins. But, the disciple was not aware of the gold coins; he was tortured and the matter came to Gabriel. Gabriel said: "We will ask the departed Yoohanon." They all went to the tomb of Yoohanon and Gabriel prayed to save the Yoohanon's innocent disciple. A voice was heard saying: "It is where it was buried." The man wanted

to open the tomb and see whether it is the Yoohanon whom he had met. The tomb was opened, the cloth that covered the body was removed; the man kissed the body and confessed that the God of Christians is the true God. The man collected the coins and distributed a part of it among his servants. The rest of his possessions were given to the monastery and he received baptism and took the name of Yoohanon. He also became a monk in the monastery.

In AD 634 (at the age of forty) Gabriel was elected to succeed Mor Daniel, the metropolitan of Thur'abdeen. Gabriel was ordained bishop by Patriarch Mor Athanasius (?). (Patriarch Athanasius I Gammolo was the Patriarch of Antioch from AD 595 to AD 631). Mor Gabriel set out to visit Jaseera where he was received graciously by the ruler of the Island Jaseera. The ruler extended all help to Christians.

Intercession of Gabriel gave life to Singoon (Yacoub), the son of a widow. A similar miracle happened in the village of Oolin where a young man was called to life. He performed several miracles during his life. Knowing that his time to depart was at hand, Mor Gabriel called all his disciples and advised them about the ascetic practices and departed for his heavenly abode at the age of seventy-four in AD 668(?).

In AD 775, ninety-five inmates of the monastery of Thur'abdeen died of an epidemic (plague?).

About thirty monks died on a single night. The body of Saint Gabriel was taken out of the tomb and put out in the church for the intercession and they could survive from the epidemic. On another occasion, the right hand of Saint Gabriel was cut and taken to the town, Hah and inhabitants were saved from the epidemic plague. The feast of Saint Gabriel is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 23 December and 1 May.

41. St. Alexander of Constantinople

(AD 244? – c. AD 340)

Patriarch Alexander was seventy-three years old when he was elected to the Holy See of Constantinople (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). Alexander was in office for twenty-three years during the heresy of Arius. In one of the conferences of theologians and philosophers, while one of them was speaking, Alexander exclaimed: “In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to be silent.” The man’s tongue was paralyzed and by this divine manifestation of power, the Christian cause made more impression than the most solid arguments.

After the Nicene Synod, Arius, the heretic, took refuge under Emperor Constantine. In AD 336 the emperor promulgated an order by which the aged Alexander, Patriarch of Constantinople, was asked to accept (receive into communion) the heretic Arius (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). On receiving the order the Patriarch knelt before the altar and prayed, “O Lord, take my life before I see Arius entering this church” (Aphrem, 1963, pp. 82-83). At the above-mentioned difficult times, St. James (Yacoub) of Nisbis (d. AD 338) requested the faithful to observe fasting for seven days. Arius fixed a time to enter

the church. Several supporters of Arius assembled at the church compound. Before he could enter the church Arius was overcome with a sudden illness and died of pain in his stomach.

It was natural that many Christians considered this as a divine intervention at the intercession of Patriarch Alexander. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Alexander on 30 August.

42. Mor Ahathulla Bava

(AD ? – AD 1653)

The holy fathers who came to Malankara had to overcome and survive many hardships and challenges and many had to even sacrifice their lives in order to maintain and sustain the true faith. Among them prime importance goes to Ahathulla Bava. The Bava was sent from Antioch to Malankara due to persistent letters from Thoma, the Arch Deacon who had led the Syrian Church in those times. He reported the persecution suffered by his folks.

Ahathulla Bava arrived in Malankara in AD 1653. Malankara Church was then under the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church after the Diamper Synod in AD 1599. The Portuguese bishops with the support of the Portuguese military force had appointed sentries in all possible places where the bishops from the Middle East churches could land.

Mor Ahathulla Bava who was sent to his spiritual children in Malankara arrived in Surat in AD 1653. Having received information from the Portuguese the Goa administrator captured him and incarcerated him at Mylapore.

Deacon Chengayil Itty from Chengannoor and Deacon Kizhakkedath Kurian from Kuravilangadu who were on a pilgrimage to St. Thomas church in Mylapore met Bava quite accidentally. They exchanged information and the Bava sent an encyclical (*kalpana*) through them. It stated that he would arrive in Malankara and would consecrate Thoma, the Arch Deacon as metropolitan and in case he was withheld by the Portuguese, except ecclesiastical powers like ordination of priests and consecration of bishops, all administrative matters should be carried out by Thoma, the Arch Deacon.

The ship carrying the Bava from Mylapore to the persecution centre in Goa docked at Cochin. Hordes of Syrian Christians getting a wind of it informed the Archdeacon and he along with priests and twenty five thousand faithful arrived at the Cochin Fort to free their holy father. There were only three hundred soldiers guarding the fort at that time. Alarmed on seeing the huge crowd they pulled back the moat bridge and positioned the cannon towards them. Helpless in rescuing the Bava they approached the king of Cochin and presented their supplication.

The King summoned the person in charge of the fort and issued an order to release the spiritual father of the Syrians who was kept in captivity. Somehow or other the Portuguese wielded their influence. That night itself they drowned the Bava by tying a millstone round his neck. The woeful

Syrians when they knew about the dastardly act decided to sever all relations with the Roman Catholic Church. The oath taken on behalf of this at Mattanchery is the historically famous “Pledge of the slanting cross” (*Koonan Kurishu Sathyam*). The feast of Mor Ahathulla is celebrated on 16 January.

43. Babylas, Patriarch of Antioch, the Martyr

(AD ? – AD 251)

Babylas, Patriarch of Antioch, succeeded Zebinus (Zbina AD 231-237) in the year AD 237. Babylas (Babulas) is the most celebrated bishop of Antioch after St. Ignatius. Babylas was a good shepherd who continually took care of the widows and orphans who lived in his Patriarchate.

During this time, the governor of Antioch was a pagan named Numerian who hated all followers of Christ. Once, Numerian decided to go to a Christian church in Antioch and to make fun there. The Holy Patriarch Babylas met him at the gate and refused his entry into the church. The enraged governor sent soldiers to arrest Saint Babylas. At that time there were three young orphans living in the house of the Patriarch. They were also arrested and tortured to renounce Christ. Governor demanded Babylas to make a public apology for obstructing his entry into the church. Bablas instead told him to give up his sinful way of life. The governor ordered to persecute all the four. In Apostle Paul's letter to Romans he says: For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor

principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

According to Eusebius, Babylas died a martyr during the persecution of Decius in prison; however, John Chrysostom states he was beheaded (Thurston & Attwater, 1990) along with three of his disciples, viz., Urbanus, Prilidianus and Epolonius (Farmer, 1997). According to John Chrysostom, in AD 244, Babylas refused the entry of Emperor Philip, the Arabian, into the church until he had done penance for the murder of his predecessor Gordian.

The mortal remains of Patriarch Babylas were entombed at Antioch in AD 251. In AD 351 Caesar Gallus removed it to a church at Daphne to counteract the influence of a shrine of Appolo. In AD 362 Julian, the Apostate, ordered to remove the relics back to Antioch. The following evening the temple of Appolo was destroyed by lightning. A little later the relics were transferred to Orontes by bishop Meletius (Meletius was buried next to St. Babylas).

There are several feast days of St. Babylas as the dates of relics were transferred to different places. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Babylas along with his three disciples on 23 September. The other popular feast day of Babylas is 24 January.

44. Moran Ignatius Zakka I, the Patriarch of Antioch

(AD 1933 – 2014)

Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I was the 122nd successor of St. Peter in the Apostolic See of Antioch. He was born on 21 April 1933 in Mosul, Iraq in the Iwas family. His parents named him Senaherib in memory of the ancient Syrian ruler, father of St. Behnam. Senaherib was the fourth son among seven children.

Basheer Iwas, father of Senaherib, who had graduated from the University in Istanbul, was a professor in the Military Engineering College. After a few years of teaching, Basheer moved to Iraq and started a wood-working factory. Young Senaherib lost his father, when he was ten-years old and his mother when he was twelve years of age. The loss of his parents made a deep impact on Senaherib and after deep contemplation he felt the calling of God and decided to pursue a life dedicated to the Lord.

At the age of thirteen, in 1946, Senaherib became a student at St. Ephrem Monastery while doing his secular studies at the Holy Virgin Mary's

and the St. Thomas' Syrian Orthodox church School, in Mosul. At the seminary, he was called Zakka, and on 28 November 1948 he was ordained a *korooyo* by H. E. Mor Athanasius Touma Kasseer and on 8 February 1953 he was ordained *afodyaknoh* by H. E. Mor Gregorius Paulos Behnam. On 6 June 1954, Zakka was ordained Ramban by His Grace Mor Gregorius Paulos Behnam.

After graduation Ramban Zakka taught Syriac and the Holy Bible at St. Ephrem Monastery, Mosul. At that time, he was appointed secretary to the Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum. On 18 December 1955 he was promoted to the rank of full deacon by H. E. Mor Divanasius Jirges Behnam. In 1957, Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem I left for his heavenly abode and Mor Ignatius Yaqub III succeeded him.

On 17 November 1957, Patriarch Yaqub III ordained Zakka as a priest and he was appointed the secretary to Patriarch Yaqub III. From 1960 to 1962, Ramban Zakka studied Pastoral Theology and Oriental Languages at General Theological Seminary and also completed Masters Degree in English at New York University.

In 1962 and 1963, Patriarch Yaqub III delegated Ramban Zakka as observer at Second Vatican Council in Rome. On 17 November 1963, exactly six years after becoming a priest, he was ordained Bishop by Patriarch Yaqub III by name Mor Severios for the Diocese of Mosul. On 1 September 1964,

Mor Severios Zakka discovered the holy relics of St. Thomas in the walls of the St. Thomas Cathedral, Mosul. A portion of the relics of St. Thomas, the Apostle, was given to Malankara in 1965 when Catholicos Mor Augen I paid a visit to the Patriarchate. A small portion was again presented to Mulanthuruthy Marthoman church in 1994.

In 1964 Mor Severios Zakka accompanied Patriarch Yaqub III as his secretary on his visit to India to consecrate the new Catholicose Baselios Augen. In 1969, Patriarch Yaqub III appointed Bishop Severios Zakka as Archbishop of Baghdad and Basra, then of Middle Europe and Scandinavian countries in 1976 and of Australia in 1978.

In October 1971, Archbishop Mor Severios Zakka accompanied Patriarch Yaqub III on his visit to Pope John Paul VI at Vatican, when the first common declaration with the Roman Catholic Church was signed. Mor Servarios Zakka has represented the Patriarch at various meetings with the Roman Catholic Church. The Patriarch was a great believer in ecumenical movement and reconciliation. On 23 June 1984, Patriarch Zakka I and Pope John Paul signed the historic agreement for Communion, bringing an end to the 1500 year old unfortunate division between the Roman Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch which occurred in the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD.

Mor Severios Zakka was an honorary member

of the Pro-Oriente, Vienna. He was a member of the Academy of Iraq culture. He was elected to the central committee of the WCC in 1975. His Holiness was the president of WCC during the period 1995 to 2006.

Patriarch Yaqub III left for his heavenly abode on 25 June 1980. On 14 September 1980 Mor Severios Zakka I was enthroned as the 122nd Patriarch of Antioch and All the East in which Catholicos His Beatitude Mor Baselios Paulose II was the chief celebrant.

In 1982 Patriarch Zakka made his first visit to India to partake in the Golden Jubilee feast of his predecessor St. Elias III and travelled extensively throughout the State of Kerala. Patriarch Zakka I visited Malankara again in 2000, 2004 and in 2008. On 26 July 2002, Patriarch Zakka I consecrated Mor Divannasios Thomas Catholicos of India by name Basilius Thomas I.

St. George Cathedral at Bab Touma, Damascus and the Patriarchal headquarters had many limitations in space. Keeping in view, the expansion, in 1996, Patriarch Zakka I established St. Ephrem Seminary at Ma'raat Sydnaya, Syria with chapel, synod hall and other facilities. His Holiness has ordained more than fifty bishops during the patriarchal reign. Some of the major literary works of His Holiness are - - *Doctrine of Incarnation and Salvation, The Seven Sacraments, Yacoub III: Life and Apostolic Visit to Middle East and Latin America, Apostolic Visit of Yacoub III to*

North America, Mor Aphrem, the Syrian, Mor Jacob of Edessa, Mor Dionysius Talmahari, Story of Seven Sleepers – a perspective from the Syriac Sources, Syrian Orthodox Church through the Ages, Syriac Literature in the sixth century, Position and Role of Women in the Church, Religious Virtues and Family Welfare.

Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I ruled as the Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church for a long period of thirty-three and a half years which exactly matches the length of our Lord's ministry on earth. Since 2013, the violence in Iraq and Syria grieved the Patriarch, especially the loss of life and property of the faithful in Syria, the abduction of bishops and the destruction of ancient Aramaic villages of Maloula and Sadad.

Patriarch Zakka was called to his heavenly abode during the great lent, on 21 March 2014 while His Holiness was in Kiel, Germany following a cardiac arrest. On 23 March his body was taken to the monastery of Mor Ya'qub of Sarug in Warburg, Germany. On 25 March the body was shifted to Beiruth, Lebanon and on 27 March to the Patriarchal St. George Cathedral at Bab Touma, Damascus, Syria. On 28 March the body was entombed at the St. Peter's and St. Paul's Cathedral, Ma'rrat Saydanaya, Syria, in the place prepared by His Holiness the Late Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. The feast of Patriarch Moran Zakka I is celebrated on 21 March.

45. Dionysius of Milan

(AD ? - c. AD 360 ?)

Dionysius succeeded Protasius in AD 351 as metropolitan of Milan. He upheld the cause of St. Athanasius of Alexandria (d. AD 373), when most of the bishops turned against him. In AD 355, a synod was held in Milan by the Arian Emperor Constantius to pronounce the condemnation of St. Athanasius. Almost all prelates were overawed to sign the decree of condemnation, but Dionysius refused to sign the decree (Smith & Wace, 1877; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II).

Subsequently, Dionysius was banished and he retired to Cappodocia, where he died and was buried about the year AD 360. The year of death is given as AD 374 in some other sources (e.g., Smith & Wace, 1877). The mortal remains of Dionysius were transferred to Milan by St. Basil (d. AD 379). The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Dionysius on 25 May.

46. Mor Anthrayose, Kallada

(AD ? – AD 1692)

Anthrayose Bava arrived in Kerala in AD 1678 from Thur'abdeen along with three brothers. He is considered to be a saint mainly on the basis of his devout and pious life. One of the brothers who accompanied him was a Ramban. Mulanthuruthy church received them enabling them to spend many years there. Later on, due to some adverse circumstances he and the brothers had to leave Mulanthuruthy. They arrived in Kallada after travelling through Piravam, Manarcad and Puthenkavu. Anthrayose Bava passed away on 2 March 1692 and his mortal remains were buried in Kallada church. After his demise the brothers set out on a journey to the northern parts of Kerala. The Ramban along with them died at Chennithala and was buried there. The faithful believers considered his tomb a holy place.

The remaining two brothers returned to Mulanthuruthy after visiting Kuravilangadu and staying at Srambikkal adjacent to the church building. One of them named Joseph married from Palasana family and settled down on the northern side of the western market. Two sons were born to

them. One married into the Kattumangadu family (where wild mangoes grow in plenty) and the other settled down with Thanangattil (Thanangukadu) family. Most families in Mulanthuruthy can trace their roots back to these two families.

It is considered a heavenly benediction that these zealously religious Bavas who were laid to rest in St. George Malabar Independent church, Thozhiyoor (Anjoor) and Mor Gregorius Chathuruthil otherwise known as Kochuthirumeni all hailed from this ancient family. The ancient and reputed Kattumangadu family has many priests and cultural leaders who can trace their lineage back to this ancient family tree.

There is a legend connected with the travels of Anthrayose Bava. A family in a central Travancore village who did not hold him in high respects served him jackfruit on his visit. They provided him cotton to wipe his hands clean. The Bava unaware of the consequences used the cotton and struggled when his hands became messy and sticky. The members of the family made fun of him and he was embarrassed and sad as he left them. Later on many in their family contracted the fatal venereal disease and it was passed down to many generations. While staying at Manarcad church he ordained a priest from Vettikunnel family and they still remember his blessing with gratitude. The feast of Mor Anthrayose is celebrated on 2 March.

47. Mor Philexinose Yoohanon

(AD 1941 - 2015)

John Jacob was ordained Deacon on 26 February 1964 by H. G. Mor Philexinose Paulose (Later H. B. Catholicos Mor Baselius Paulose II). Deacon John was ordained Kassiso on 30 May 1969 by H. B. Catholicos Baselius Augen I. Rev. Fr. John Jacob was ordained Rambachen on 31 August 1985 by H. G. Mor Themotheos Yacoub at St. Mary's Simhasana church, Pampady. Very Rev. Ramban Yoohanon was ordained Metropolitan on 12 September 1985 by H. B. Catholicos Baselius Paulose II at St. Mary's Cathedral, Meenangadi and was appointed as successor to Late Mor Philexinose Samuel.

Fr. John Jacob, Elappanal took his G.S.T. (1964-69) from Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam; S.T.M. from Theological Seminary, New York; Th.D. from Logos Graduate School of Theology, New York; D.D. from Orlando International Seminary, Florida. He had secured Hindi Bhooshan and Hindi Praveen. He has also completed Clinical Pastoral Education from New York. He was honored with D. D. (1985) by the Florida International Seminary, Orlando.

As a priest Fr. Jacob John served in many churches in Kerala and abroad. Late H. E. Mor Athanatius Yeshue Samuel, the then Patriarchal Vicar for USA and Canada, appointed him for the services in USA. He organised and served churches in Staten Island, Manhattan, Philadelphia, Chicago, Dallas, Houston and Augusta during 1977 - 1985.

He was instrumental in the overall development of the diocese for the two- and- a- half decades since his enthronement as Metropolitan of Malabar diocese in 1985. He took initiatives in establishing Mor Elias Orphanage - *Snehabhavan*, Old-age home - *Karunabhavan*, St. Peter's and St. Paul's Higher Secondary School and St. Gregorius B.Ed. College at Meenangadi.

His Grace has served the Church in various capacities such as Metropolitan Trustee of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Secretary of the Local Episcopal Synod, President of the Morth Mariam Vanitha Samajam, Patron of the St. Paul's Mission to mention a few.

In 2008 the Malabar diocese was divided and a diocese based in Kozhikode was formed for which a new metropolitan was ordained. Since then His Grace Mor Philoxenos Yoochanon remained as the Metropolitan of Malabar diocese. In 2009 His Grace's health deteriorated due to continuous illness. In August 2009, His Grace officially sent a letter to His Holiness the Patriarch requesting

permission to relinquish the duty of administering the diocese since he was on treatment. Subsequently the Malankara Episcopal Synod also formally approved the resignation of His Grace from the diocesan administration of Malabar and Simhasana churches in that region. Since 2009 His Grace was leading a retired life at Meenangadi.

His Grace breathed his last at 9.00 a.m. on 30 December 2015 at a hospital at Kalppatta, Wayanad. The mortal remains were brought to St. Mary's Simhasana church, Pampady and entombed there on 1 January 2016.

48. Mor Athanasius Aphrem Barsoum, Archbishop of Beirut

(AD 1932 - 2016)

His Eminence Mor Athanasius Aphrem Barsoum was born on 1 October 1932 in Homs, Syria. He studied in Qamishly until 1945 and moved to the Seminary in Mosul. He graduated from there in 1952 and moved back to Homs. He was the first secretary of the Late Lamented Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum from 1952 to 1957. He was then appointed as head of the Syriac School in Aleppo for 5 years (1957-1961).

His Eminence was ordained a *Qoruyo* in 1946 in Qamishly by the Late Lamented Archbishop Mor Eusthatheos Kuryakos Tannourji, and an *Aphodiaqno* in Homs in 1952 by the Late Lamented Mor Philexinose Paulose of India. Mor Philexinose Paulose was ordained bishop on 19 October 1952 at Homs, Syria by of the Late Lamented Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum.

He became a monk on 11 April 1954 by the hands of the Late Lamented Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum. On 12 December 1954, he was ordained a deacon in Aleppo by the Late Lamented

Mor Dionysius Gergess Kass Behnam, and a priest by the Late Lamented Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum in Homs on 4 March 1956.

In 1961, Very Rev. Ramban Aphrem Paulos was appointed as the Delegate of the Holy See of Antioch to Inida to succeed Mor Yulios Elias Qoro, as the then delegate was finding it difficult to discharge duties due to old age. Very Rev. Ramban spent about three years at the tomb of St. Elias III from 1962-64 and was a teacher at Mor Ignatius Dyro, Manjinikkara. Rambachen was impleaded in place of Mor Yulios Elias, on behalf of the Patriarch in the Arthat Simhasana church case and he was later substituted by Very Rev. Ramban Aphrem Aboodi (later Mor Themotheos Aphrem Aboodi Metropolitan).

On 12 December 1965, he was consecrated Archbishop of Lebanon by the Late Lamented Patriarch Mor Ignatius Yacoub III. The Archbishop visited Manjinikkara in 1977 and laid the foundation stone of the building on the eastern side on 3 March 1977. He served in Lebanon for 43 years until he retired in 2008 as the Archbishop of Beirut. In Beirut, he served the church in good and bad times. He remained in his archdiocese despite the severe conditions and insecurity due to the war in Lebanon from 1975 to 1990.

He authored 16 books in Syriac and Arabic; he wrote many poems and songs that are widely popular in the Syriac world. Two books written by

Mor Athanasius were published in Malayalam, “ *Velli Nakshathrangal*” (*The Silver Stars*), & “*Malankara Sandharshichu Bharicha Sheemakkaraya Pithakkanmar*” (*Suryoyo Fathers who visited and shepherded Malankara*). His Eminence served the Church as the Patriarchal Counsellor and also participated in numerous conferences and assemblies. He is one of the founders of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) where he represented the Syriac Orthodox Church for more than 25 years.

The Golden Jubilee of the Episcopal ordination (1965-2015) of Mor Athanasius Aphrem Barsoum was celebrated on 3 January 2016 at Mor Aphrem Church, Rhode Island, USA and His Holiness the Patriarch Aprhem II honored His Eminence with a pectoral icon. His Eminence left for heavenly abode on 14 January 2016 and was entombed at Mor Aphrem Church, Rhode Island, USA on 19 January 2016. The feast of Mor Athanasius Aphrem Barsoum is celebrated on 14 January.

49. Mor Gregorius Geevarghese, Vayaliparambil

(AD 1899 - AD1966)

Geevarghese (Thomas Varghese) was born on 17 July 1899 as the son of Vayaliparabil Payanadathu Thoma and Sosamma. He had one brother and sister. As a young boy, in 1910, he caught the attention of H.H. 'Abded Aloho II, the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, who visited the ancient Mor Sabor and Afroth Syrian Orthodox Church, Akaparambu for the consecration of Mor Athanasius Paulose Pynadath. In a private audience with the boy's parents, the Patriarch requested them to consider sending him to the Patriarchate in Mardin (Turkey) to prepare for priesthood.

After his English School Leaving Certificate, Geevarghese completed the intermediate and Bachelor of Arts degree at the Union Christian College, Aluva. In 1944, he completed Licentiate in Teaching from Meston Training College, Chennai. He also studied at the Mor Ignatius Monastery, Manjinikkara. One of his companions at the monastery was Dayroyo Abdul Ahad, a native of Mosul, Iraq, who later became the Patriarch Mor Ya'qub III.

During his study in UC College, an inmate was stabbed to death in his hostel room. The room remained vacant since no student had the courage to stay there. The principal announced that anyone willing to occupy that room could stay for free. Geevarghese volunteered and stayed in that room throughout his education saving the hostel rent for his charitable activities (<http://sor.cua.edu/>).

After graduating from UC College he was ordained *Korooya* on 2 April 1931 by Mor Athanasios, Valiya Thirumeni of Alwaye. On completion of his seminary studies he was ordained deacon by Mor Julius Elias, the delegate on 16 November 1934 and *Kassisso* in 1936 by Valiya Thirumeni. Soon after receiving these titles he was on a missionary tour to Singapore, Kolalampur, Malakka, Ceylon and Candy.

In 1939, Fr. Geevarghese founded a chapel at Koratty near the Leprosy Hospital for leprosy patients who were socially neglected and isolated. His Grace also deposited a special fund as a perpetual annuity for the remuneration of the priest in charge of chapel. In 1945, he started publishing a fortnightly church journal in Malayalam called "*Sabha Chandrika*". He founded the Bethlehem convent at Kizhakkambalam. He also took initiative to organize and empower the Women's Association of the Church.

On 26th June, 1946, Fr. Geevarghese, along with Dayroyo 'Abdul Ahad (later Patriarch Ya'qub

III), Fr. Yacob Thakadiyil of Chingavanam and Mulayirikal Paulose Ramban (later bishop of Cochin diocese entombed at Kunnamkulam Simhasana church) left for Jerusalem and Syria. On arrival at St. Mark's Monastery, Jerusalem, he laid a marble epitaph in Syriac for three Syrian Orthodox priests from Kerala who were buried at the monastery - - Fr. Mattai of Vadakara church (d.1927); Pulikottil Ramban Yacob of Kunnamkulam Simhasana church (d. 1927) and Deacon Gewargis of Mattancherry (d. 1929).

On 4 August 1946, Fr. Geevarghese was consecrated bishop by H.H. Patriarch Mor Ignatius Afrem I Barsaum, at Homs, Syria with the name Gregorios for the Ankamali diocese (along with Very Rev. Mulayirikkal Paulose Ramban by name Severios). Bishop Gregorius Geevarhese travelled as a pilgrim throughout the holy places in Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Israel, and Turkey. He published a detailed book on his pilgrimage. He records in the book that the learned Patriarch Afrem I Barsaum told him that Apostle St. Thomas preached the gospel in Mosul, Baghdad, Basra and Persia before his visit to India (in AD 52). The Patriarch also stated that St. Thomas was followed by the Syriac bishop of Basra, Daweed Episcopa a fact which no Western historians have recorded.

Mor Gregorios expanded his diocese by constructing forty new churches across the diocese. He renovated the Aluva Thikunnath Seminary and implemented schemes for its

financial self-reliance by planting rubber and coconut trees. Mor Gregorius built many educational institutions such as Mar Athanasious Engineering College and Mar Athanasious Arts College at Kothamangalam and served as the chairman of the Mar Athanasious College Association. His inheritance went towards the construction of St. George's church and Mar Athanasious High School at Nedumbassery.

Thirumeni proved his mark as a writer by publishing books titled -- the *Biography of Omallur Bava (Biography of St. Elias III)*, *Sheema yatra ((Visit to Holy land)*, *Adyapaka Sahayi (Teacher's guide)*, *Chodyotharam 7 Parts (Question-Answers in 7 parts)*, *Kumbasarakramam (Order of confession)*, *Papiyude Ashupatri (Hospital of sinner)*, *Papiyude Snehithan (Friend of sinner)*, *Biography of St. Joseph etc.*

In 1958, as a senior bishop of the Church, he was instrumental in achieving peace in the church after years of schism and ensuing litigation. His Grace passed away returning from a foreign tour on 6th Nov 1966. His mortal remains lay at Aluva Trikkunnath Seminary along with the mortal remains of his predecessor Mor Athanasius Pynadath.

Mor Gregorios envisaged a truly Universal Syrian Church united under the Holy Throne of Antioch and All the East, transcending geo-political boundaries. His death anniversary is celebrated by the Syrian Orthodox Church on 6 November.

50. Pantaenus of Alexandria

(AD 120 ? - AD 214 ?)

Pantaenus was born in Athens, AD 120, and died in Alexandria, AD 213. He was Greek by nationality. He was a priest of the Church in Alexandria by vocation. First, a Stoic, then a Pythagorean, he became a Christian some time before AD 186. He was appointed the chief instructor of the Alexandrian school by Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria (Dionysius The Areopagite, 1899).

His education according to Eusebius was in the Stoic school. Pantaenus was the head of the school in Alexandria and Clement was probably in-charge when Pantaenus went to India.

Pantaenus (Panthenose) was a priest and a zealous evangelist and undertook his missionary work in the East travelling as far as India (Smith & Wace, 1887). Eusebius has recorded that St. Bartholomew had already preached the word of God in these places and had left a copy of the Gospel according to St. Matthew in Hebrew characters. Jerome adds that Pantaenus brought back this copy to Alexandria.

Pantaenus is distinguished as an expositor of the 'Word of God.' Once certain philosophers asked him: "In what manner Christians suppose God to know things that are?" He replied: Neither does He know things sensible sensibly nor things intelligible intellectually. For it is not possible that He, Who is above all things, should comprehend things being, after things being but we affirm that He knows things being" ... Almighty God knows things being, since by willing He made all things being."

The feast of Pantaenus is celebrated on 7 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

“It takes no more vitality to go with the stream of inclination than with any other stream; but to go against, as saint does, demands immense vitality”

F. J. Sheed.

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