

# 1. Sts. Joachim and Hannah

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St. Mary's parents, Joachim and Hannah belonged to the royal race of David. They were a rich as well as a pious couple.

Joseph is referred to as the son of Heli in Luke 3:2. In Matthew 1:16, Jacob is the father of Joseph to whom Mary was betrothed (Abdul Ahad, 1948, p. 56). Joseph is the son of Jacob by birth and he is the son-in-law of Heli. Heli was also known by other names like Joachim, Jonachir, Cleopas, Eliacim and Sadoc (White, 1991).

Hannah, the mother of Mary, was also known by other names, Deena, Ann, Anne and Anna. The meaning of the Hebrew word Hannah is 'blessing'. In their advanced age Joachim and Hannah came from Galilee and settled down in Jerusalem. Hannah was barren and suffered much humiliation because of that. Once her offering to the church was repulsed by the priest due to this reason (Abdul Ahad, 1948). Both husband and wife prayed and fasted before God to bless them with a child.

Books like 'The Gospel of James' and 'Book of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Saviour' record that Joachim and Hannah

were without children and they fasted for forty days (White, 1991).

According to another tradition when Joachim's offering was refused by the priest he was deeply grieved and instead of returning home he went into the mountains to make his plaint with God in solitude. In the mean time Hannah also requested God to take away the curse of infertility and to grant them a child. She promised to dedicate the child to the service of God. An angel appeared before Hannah and said, "God has seen your tears. The fruit of your womb will be called 'the blessed' throughout the world." Joachim also received a similar command.

The daughter given to them by God was called Mariam. In accordance with their vow she was offered to the temple at the age of three. It was customary in those days for Jewish children to live in the children's home under the supervision of priests. She stayed there till the age of thirteen.

After offering Mariam to the temple Joachim died and he was buried in Jerusalem (White, 1991). Soon Hannah also died and she too was buried in Jerusalem. Queen Helen constructed a church where their house had been. The church was converted to a Muslim educational institution in the ninth century. Their tombs were rediscovered on 18 March 1889. Their feast is celebrated on 9 September by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **2. St. Joseph, the Just**

**(BC 81? – AD 15?)**

Joseph, the just was born to Jacob in the house of David in Nazareth (Matthew 1:16, John 1:45). In the gospel of Luke (3:24) he is referred to as the 'son' of Heli because Mariam, the daughter of Heli was betrothed to him (Abdul Ahad, 1948). According to Jewish custom names of women were not included in the genealogy. Joseph's and Mary's grandfather can be seen as the same person, Matthan (Matthew 1:15; Luke 3:24). Heli was also known otherwise as Yuakkim or Yunochir.

Joseph was a carpenter (Matthew 13:55). He had seven sons, (Abdul Ahad, 1948) Jacob, Josah, Simon, Jude (Matthew 13:55) who were called Jesus' brothers (Matthew 12:46; John 7:3). All of them lived with Joseph in Nazareth.

Joseph was just (Matthew 1:19), humble, righteous before God and led a model life. Mary had been dedicated to God and given to the Jerusalem temple. It was customary that children beyond the age of thirteen were not allowed to live in the temple. It was at that point she was betrothed to Joseph. When he came to know about her pregnancy he

decided to leave her but an angel appeared to him in a dream and spoke thus, “Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1:20). Then Joseph woke up from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him and took her as his wife (Matthew 1:24).

There came a decree from Caesar Augustus that the entire world should be taxed. Joseph also went to his own city, Bethlehem (modern Beyt Lahm) to be taxed along with Mary who was great with child. There in a manger the saviour of the world was born. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and asked him to take the child and his mother, to flee to Egypt and to remain there until he was told to move from there (Matthew 2:13). That very night he departed for Egypt setting an ideal example of sacrifice, obedience and submission to the divine will.

When king Herod who sought the life of the child was dead an angel of the Lord again appeared to Joseph and asked him to take the baby and its mother to Israel (Matthew 2:20). And hence he came and settled down in Nazareth. Joseph who was always guided by God and who willingly allowed himself to be led by God is a worthy example for all.

When Jesus was twelve years old his parents took him to Jerusalem to partake in the feast of Passover. That is the last occasion wherein we find Joseph in the gospels (Luke 2: 41-51).It may be

due to this that it is opined that Joseph died when Jesus was fifteen years old (Moothedan, 2001). When Jesus saw his mother and his dear disciple John, standing by his cross he remarked, "Woman, behold thy son!" (John 19: 25-27). In this context it is assumed Joseph had passed away before Jesus started his public ministry (Abdul Ahad, 1948). It is believed that Joseph died on 19 March (Britannica, 2003).

Joseph, who cared for Jesus as a child, hugged and embraced him and taught him carpentry, is fortunate. He who received the tending and ministering of St. Mary is a patron to all. His feast is celebrated on 26 December by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

### **3. St. Jude, the disciple**

**(? – AD 50?)**

Juda Thaddaeus or Labbaeus was one among the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 10:4 he is called Labbaeus whose surname is Thaddaeus. This description is left out by modern translators.

The Greek expression “Juda of James” means the son of James. (Mc Birnie, 2002) The expression became ambiguous. When the name “Judas Yacobos” was translated it was “Judas, the brother of James” in (Luke 6:16) and “Judas, the son of James” in The Acts 1:13. This is translated with exactitude in the Pshitha Bible (Abdul Ahad, 1948). “The son of James” is the correct expression.

To distinguish him from Judas Iscariot the usage “not Judas Iscariot” in John 14:22 is noteworthy. Who really is Judas’ father remains a controversial question. Is he the son of James, Zebedee’s son? (Mc Birnie, 2002) or is he the son of James, the brother of Jesus?

Many historians have recorded that James, the brother of Jesus, was a holy man who led an ascetic life and was probably unmarried. So it is

evident the reference is not to the first bishop of Jerusalem, the apostle and martyr James. Not only that in the epistle of Jude (verse 1) the writer introduces himself as the brother of James. Neither will it be logical to consider him as the son of James, Zebedee's son. Zebedee could not have had a grandson old enough to be the disciple of Jesus. The most suitable deduction will be he was the son of a person named James (Joseph, 2005).

St. Jude had preached the Gospel in Samaria, Mesopotamia and Persia. While in Persia he met Simon, the Zealot and together they spread the word of God (Abdul Ahad, 1948; Mc Birnie, 2002). It is assumed that either he was stoned to death in Yarvada islands (Abdul Ahad, 1948) or he suffered martyrdom in Arathas, near Beirut (Kallarangatt & Puthkulangara, 2001) and he was buried in Beirut (Mc Birnie, 2002). The burial place is believed to be Kara Kelesia. His feast is celebrated on 10 May.

## 4. St. Simon, the Zealot

(? – AD 61?)

St. Simon was one of the most obscure among the disciples of Jesus. Little is recorded of him aside from his name. Simon who hailed from Galilee was the son of Cleophas of the tribe of Aphraem (Abdul Ahad, 1948). To distinguish him from Peter he is called Kananean.

Simon, the disciple is referred to as Simon in Matthew 10:3, Canaanite or Cananean Simon in Mark 3:18 and as Zealot in Luke 6:15 and The Acts of Apostles 1:13. Simon bears the surname, Kananeos or the Kananean, often wrongly interpreted to mean “from Cana”. Kananaios is the Greek transliteration of an Aramaic word, qena na, meaning “the zealot” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1988, Vol.10, p. 821). It thereby ensues that Simon was not from Cana but the term Canaanite is a misinterpretation of the Aramaic word qena na during translation (e.g., Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001). The above mentioned opinions that the description the Canaanite and the zealot are not different cannot be ignored.

Peter was referred to as Simon, the Great and



Simon as Simon, the Less. He was a nationalist and an enthusiast in following the Jewish rituals and customs. He was a member of the Zealots, a Jewish group (Nationalists) that fanatically opposed the Romans prior to AD 70 (Encyclopaedia Americana, 1988; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1988). He earned the name zealot because of this. It is also believed that he was a member of the group that was organised to chase the Romans who invaded Palestine (Mc Birnie, 2002; Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001).

After the Pentecost Simon accompanied Peter to Jerusalem and later to Samaria. The Jews who listened to his speech rose against him, revolted and chased him out of town. An incident that occurred while he stayed with the Christians is cited in *The Contending of the Apostles* (cited in, Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001, p. 343).

Yacob, the son of an eminent person in charge of the Jewish synagogue died. As his disease worsened, one of the believers told the grieving father to allow Simon, a disciple of Jesus, who was present there to pray for him. Simon came there accordingly and he enquired the father whether he believed in the crucified Christ. The father replied he would if his son was raised from death. Then he would accept that Christ who died on the cross was god himself. Simon turned to the east and prayed, "Christ, our Lord, the one who was crucified during the times of Pontius Pilate, please raise this boy from death so that they will believe you are God

and your name will be hallowed and everyone will believe in you.” Then he walked towards the dead boy and spoke, “Rise in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit so that all should believe in Jesus Christ.” Suddenly the dead boy opened his eyes and sat up. Simon asked them to serve him food. The assembled crowd knelt before him and cried, “How can we be saved?” Believe in Christ and you will be saved was his answer.

Simon, the Zealot, preached the Gospel in Aleppo, Mabug, Clovedia. It is believed that his headquarters was in Kuros and he constructed a church there (Abdul Ahad, 1948; Joseph, 2005). He suffered martyrdom by crucifixion along with St. Jude in Persia on 10 May. (Hoever, 1989; Mc Birnie, 2002; Joseph, 2005).

## **5. St. Bartholomew, the disciple**

**(? – AD 62?)**

Bartholomew was born in the town of Kothine in Galilee. There are not enough historical records to affirm whether he belonged to the Ashir tribe or Yissakkar tribe (Abdul Ahad, 1948). His first name was Jesus. To differentiate him from the Master (Joseph, 2005) he accepted the name, Bartholomew which means son of Tolmai (White, 1991).

Bartholomew's name is seen on the list of names of the twelve apostles both in the Gospels (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14) and the Acts of Apostles (1:13). It is strongly believed by historians that the reference to "Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee" (John 21:2) is about Bartholomew (Mc Birnie, 2002; Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001).

It was Philip who met Bartholomew, considered to be Nathaniel and led him to Jesus (John 1: 45-51). Philip and Nathaniel were friends who awaited the coming of Christ. It was at this time Jesus found Philip and asked him to follow him (John 1:43). It was not accidental that he informed the matter to Nathaniel. "We have found

him, of whom Moses in the Law and prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). The traditional belief of the Jews was that nothing good came out of Nazareth because there is no reference to Nazareth in the Old Testament. Philip asked Nathaniel ‘to come and see’ Jesus. The meeting between Jesus and Nathaniel caused the completion of faith and the anticipated waiting (John 1: 47 – 51).

After the Pentecost he preached in Yemen, Arabia, Asia Minor, and Parthia in modern Iran (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1988). He was to be crucified with Philip in Hierapolis, Turkey (Mc Birnie, 2002) but they were saved by an earthquake (Abdul Ahad, 1948). He escaped to Greater Armenia. Later he reached Lycaonia near Caspian Sea. This place was known as Albanopolis or Urbanopolis (Derband, on the west coast of the Caspian Sea). Today it is known by the name Azerbaijan and lies partly in Iran and partly in the Soviet Union (White, 1991; Mc Birnie, 2002).

While he was travelling in Azerbaijan, Astyages the ruler captured him under the influence of the pagans. He was flayed alive and crucified upside down. This horrible event is recorded to have happened on 24 August. The Syrian Church commemorates his martyrdom on 11 June.

## **6. St. James, the disciple, the son of Alphaeus**

**(24 BC? – AD 62?)**

James (Bar Halpphai Simon) son of Alphaeus is the uncle of Jesus (White, 1991). He was born in Capernaum on the west coast of the lake of Galilee (Mc Birnie, 2002). He was a tax collector of Manessa tribe (Abdul Ahad, 1948). His mother Miriam is said to be the sister of St. Mary (Hoever, 1989).

On the scene of the crucifixion are Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, the Less and Joses and Salome (Mark 15:40). Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother's sister Mary, wife of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene (John 19:25). The gospel of Mark refers to James' mother Mariam whereas it is Mariam, wife of Cleopas in John's gospel. Halpphai is the Hebrew name and Cleophas is the Greek version of the same name (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001).

James, the son of Halpphai who is younger than James, the son of Zebadee, is called James, the Less to distinguish him from James, the son of Zebedee, one among the twelve disciples who is

referred to as James, the Great.

James the less is ascertained as the brother of Jesus after a lot of research work (Mc Birnie, 2002). He is the prime prelate, the pillar of Jerusalem community and the first bishop of Jerusalem. He is the son born from the first wife of Just Joseph (Joseph, 2005, p. 21: Abdul Ahad, 1948, p. 217). James, the brother of Jesus is not included among the disciples.

In AD 28 James the Less became a disciple on the day of Pentecost (Abdul Ahad, 1948) and the Holy Spirit came upon him. He preached the Gospel in Gaza, Sur, and Arabia and Egypt. He is believed to have been crucified in Egypt. He is commemorated on 23 October.

## 7. St. Mary Magdalene

(AD? – c. AD 63?)

Mary Magdalene was born in Magdala (Israel) on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee near Tiberias. The root meaning of the word Magdalene is *maudlin* which means tearfully emotional. Miriam is a common name found in the New Testament. Many incidents related to this name, even without reference to the lady from Magdala, have been attributed to Mary Magdalene because of this.

Some people mixed up Mary Magdalene with Miriam and Martha. Interpreters like Oregon claim that the Miriam who applied perfumed oil on Jesus' feet (John 12:3) or the sinner who washed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair as He sat for dinner at Simon's house (Luke 7:37-38) are not Mary Magdalene. The Eastern Church and modern scholars consider these three ladies as different persons.

"The woman who was taken in adultery" (John 8: 1 -11) and the "woman whom He had cleansed of seven devils" (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2) are confirmed references to Mary Magdalene. After her repentance she followed Jesus Christ and His

disciples in His public ministry. She is seen at the foot of the cross as a continuation of her divine view of life (John 19:25; Mark 15:40).

She loved Christ as did His disciples and sometimes even more. She was familiar with the burial place of Christ (Mark 15:47). She had visited His sepulchre to anoint His body with perfumed oil according to the Jewish custom (Mathew 28:1, John 20:1). She was present at the death and entombment of Jesus. Consequently she was blessed and was fortunate to see the resurrected Christ first (Mark 16:9; John 20:16).

After the Pentecost, Mary Magdalene accompanied Mother Mary and St. John to Ephesus (modern Seleuk, Turkey). There she died and was buried (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2001; White, 1991). She is known as the patroness of the repentant sinners. 22 July is celebrated as the feast of Mary Magdalene.



## **8. St. Mathias, the disciple**

**(? – AD 64? )**

St. Mathias was born in Bethlehem in the Ruben tribe (Abdul Ahad, 1948). Eusebius the historian says he is one among the seventy emissaries appointed by Jesus (Hoever, 1989; Mc Birnie, 2002). He was considered as a candidate for discipleship due to his efficient leadership.

He was selected in place of Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. In the upper room of the house of St. Mark, St. Peter announced to the hundred and twenty people who had assembled there the need for selecting a new disciple (The Acts 1: 15-22). Judas had been numbered with them and had obtained a part in the ministry but he betrayed Christ and lost his position; thereby St. Peter explains the quality of the person to be considered in his place.

“Wherefore of these men who have companied with us all the time that Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection”(The Acts 1: 21 – 22).

They nominated two; Joseph called Barsabas who was surnamed Justus and Mathias. They then prayed to the Lord who knows the hearts of all men to show them which of these two must be chosen to take part in the ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell by transgression. Then they cast their lots and the lot fell upon Mathias and he was numbered with the apostles.

St. Mathias preached in Palestine, Cappodocia and Abyssinia (Abdul Ahad, 1948). The disciple Bartholomew, Canaanite Simon, Andrew, Thaddevoos and Mathias played a significant role in evangelising in the Armenian tradition (Mc Birnie, 2002).

There are different opinions about the martyrdom of St. Mathias. One is he was stoned to death by Jews in Jerusalem on 14 May, AD 64 (Abdul Ahad, 1948; McBirnie 2002). Another belief is he suffered martyrdom in Colchis, Ethiopia (?) in Asia Minor (Hoever, 1989; White, 1991).

It is believed that his mortal remains were taken to Rome by Queen Helen (AD 311 - 328?) and later it was interred at Trier, Germany (Mc Birnie, 2002). His feast is celebrated on 30 June. Certain ancient church calendars show the commemorative days on 4 March and 24 August.

## **9. St. Andrew, the disciple**

**(? - c. AD 69?)**

Andrew, the brother of St. Peter was a native of Bethsaida, (John 1:44) on the northern coast of Lake Galilee, twenty five miles east of Nazareth. His father's name was Jonah and mother's name was Joanna (Matthew 16:17; John 1:44). (Mc Birnie, 2002).

Andrew was first a disciple of John, the Baptist. He heard about Jesus from John who proclaimed "Behold the lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). This testimony prompted him to follow Jesus. He told his brother Peter about finding the Messiah and introduced him to Jesus (John 1: 41-42). The first practical approach of Christian evangelisation is exemplified here.

Andrew was given the title 'Protokletos' meaning 'the first called/chosen' (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001). He was unmarried. As he was a disciple of John the Baptist he followed rigid abstinence and an ascetic life. Peter was the elder brother of Andrew. The society of those times gave prime importance to elder brothers and so Peter was the leading disciple. On the list of disciples

Andrew's name comes second (Matthew 10:2; Luke 6: 14) and in some contexts he occupies the fourth place (Mark 3:18; 13:3; The Acts 1: 13).

Andrew was a true Christian who was instrumental in bringing many to the saviour. Just as he brought his brother, Peter to Jesus (John 1: 41-42), it was Andrew who brought the lad who had five loaves and two small fish to Jesus (John 6:8-9).

It is assumed that he travelled in Jordan, Arabia, Phoenicia (modern Lebanon) Osreon (South eastern Turkey) and preached the Gospel among people who spoke Armenian language (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001). Besides that he travelled across Cappodocia, Bithynia, Galatia around the Black sea and went to Acacia (Abdul Ahad, 1948).

He is said to have been martyred by crucifixion as he precipitated the anger of the Roman provincial Governor. When he reached Patras/ Patrae in Achaia/Acaia, he heard the Governor's wife Maxilla (Maximilla) was on her deathbed. As he arrived at their palace he found Aegeates, the Governor with a drawn sword ready to kill himself after the imminent death of his wife. As St. Andrews prayed she recovered and accepted Jesus as her saviour. Her brother-in-law also accepted the Christian belief. The Governor was furious as his brother and wife converted to Christianity and consequently Andrew was imprisoned (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001).

It is recorded that a debate ensued as St.

Andrew spread the true faith and spoke against the worship of idols and during the trial he was condemned to be crucified (Abdul Ahad, 1948; Mc Birnie, 2002). In prison he could influence other prisoners and many repented. The Governor on hearing about this issued orders to crucify him on 28 November AD 69 (62?).

When he saw the cross made of olive wood in the shape of 'X' (St. Andrew's Cross) he hugged it with great happiness. He prayed, "May Jesus who saved me through the cross accept me now by the same cross." He was not nailed but bound to the cross tightly and the cross was made to stand erect. He suffered hunger, thirst and pain for two days in the same posture. Even in the midst of his agony he was preaching the word of God.

Nearly twenty thousand believers gathered at the time of his crucifixion. Aegaeates ordered the soldiers to untie his bonds and to bring him down. But it was in vain as their extended hands soon withered. Half an hour before his ordeal came to an end his face lighted up and his soul departed for its heavenly abode. This occurred on 30 November AD 69 (62?). With the assistance of Maxilla his body was interred in Patrae.

His relics were transferred in AD 357 to the church of the Holy Apostles in Istanbul by Constantius, the son of Emperor Constantine (Hoever, 1989; Mc Birnie, 2002). The Emperor had constructed this church in AD 336-356. St. Andrew's feast is celebrated on 30 November.

## **10. St. Philip, the disciple**

**(AD 3? – AD 89/90)**

Philip was born in Bethsaida (John 1:44; 12:21). He was a fisherman and a friend of Peter. There are no historical records to endorse if he was from Sebluna or Ashir tribe. Philip, the Greek word means friend of horse.

Jesus called him to the Apostolate with the words “Follow me” and he did. The next day he introduced Nathaniel to Jesus (John 1: 43-51). Nathaniel’s acceptance of Christ is the first fruit of Philip’s Christian mission.

Before the miraculous feeding of five thousand people on five barley loaves it was to Philip that Jesus turned to ask, “Whence shall we buy the bread that they may eat?” (John 6: 5-13). It is a proof that he was the caretaker of the community of disciples.

Towards the end of the public ministry of Jesus, some Greeks came up to worship in the feast of the Passover. They approached Philip to express their desire to meet Jesus. (John 12: 20-22) They may have approached him as his name was a common Greek name. It is the Greek name which made him the friend of the heathens.

In his last exhortation Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God and believe also in me. I am the way, the truth and the life. If you had known me you should have known my father also." Philip who did not fully understand the message said unto the Lord, 'Show us the Father and it suffices us' (John 14: 1-14). Jesus then turned to him to say, "Have I been so long with you and yet do you not know me? He that has seen me has seen the Father..." Philip then comprehended the basis of Christian belief that those who see Jesus see God.

Philip preached the Gospel in Samaria (AD 36). Simon the sorcerer who had bewitched the people of Samaria believed Philip speaking on matters concerning the kingdom of God and received baptism from him (The Acts 8:9-12). In Gaza Philip baptised a eunuch who had come to Jerusalem from Ethiopia (The Acts 8: 35-39).

St. Philip had four daughters named Hermione, Carline, Irayis and Yutticane (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001). Some records mention only three daughters (Abdul Ahad, 1948). His wife and children helped him in the work of evangelisation. He suffered martyrdom in AD 90 in his eighty-ninth year in Hierapolis, Turkey (Mc Birnie, 2002). Hierapolis is a town situated six miles from Lavadosia and sixteen miles from Colossia. He was crucified upside down during the reign of Emperor Domitian. He is commemorated on 14 November.

## 11. St. Cleemis of Rome

(AD? – AD 101)

Cleemis was born in Rome as the son of Phasthinis in the family of Flavia (Cayre, 1936; Hoever, 1989; White, 1991). He is distinguished from Cleemis of Alexandria by being referred to as Cleemis of Rome or Pope Cleemis I. He accepted Christianity following the missionary work of apostles St. Peter and St. Paul.

Origen and Iranios believed that it is to Cleemis St. Paul refers to in his letters to the Philippians (4:3) where he speaks of one “whose name is in the book of life”. He was the third metropolitan of Rome after St. Peter (Hoever, 1989). Therthulyan has recorded that Linus (AD 68- 80), Anicleetus (AD 80-92) and Cleemis ( AD 92-101) had been the metropolitans of Rome after St. Peter.

During the reign of Emperor Trajan he was banished to Pontos (Crimea?). He was punished to work in marble quarries (White, 1991). Drinking water was available only after walking a distance of six miles. The miraculous appearance of a spring nearby is attributed to his spiritual powers.



Cleemis could bring many who were working with him to the true faith. As a result an order was issued to drown him in the Black sea. There are two versions of what happened after his death. Some people believe his body was found by his disciple, Phoebus but some others say a burial tomb was built for him by angels under the sea. Historians have recorded that once in a year his tomb is visible at the time of low tide to the pilgrims (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; White, 1991).

The epistle written by Cleemis to the contentious churches of Corinth is an ideal model of encyclical. This epistle is mainly intended to settle disputes and rifts among churches. It contains advice to the churches which have shown disrespect to the traditions and teachings of the apostles as to how to regain by practising noble qualities like obedience and humility the prestige lost due to envy (Cayre, 1936; Wace & Piercy, 1999). The authority of the epistle is evident from the references made by Hegisippus and Irenaeus. It was written after the persecution by Domitian during the period AD 96-98. There are sixty five chapters in this church circular written to the Corinthians. Chapters one to thirty eight exhort the church to regain the good testimony and thirty nine to sixty five deal with the significance of the hierarchy established by God from Prelates, Priests, Deacons and believers and finally with the necessity of obeying the priests ordained by God.

Just as God had sent his son, Christ, the

apostles were chosen by Jesus and in turn the first prelates of the Church were appointed by the apostles. Just as Moses had chosen Aharon, the apostles appointed administrators and it is wrong to dismiss them from their positions. (Cayre, 1936). These truths were emphasised in his epistle. It lays stress on the apostolic succession (Douglas, 1978). This epistle was read in churches even after seventy years as espoused by Divannasius of Corinth. There is a *Qurbono Thakso* composed by this Church father (Aphrem I, 2000). He has also written standardised special prayers to be used during the accession of the Patriarchs (Bar Hebraeus, 1974). St. Cleemis is regarded as a martyr and his feast is celebrated on 24 November by the Syrian Church.

## **12. St. Sharbil, the Martyr**

**(? - AD 105?)**

Sharbil was the chief priest of idol worshippers and was respected by everyone. In the fifteenth year of the sovereign reign of Trajan Caesar and in the third year of the reign of King Abgar VII in AD 105 Trajan Caesar commanded the Governors to offer worship and oblations to Gods Nebu and Bel (The Acts of Sharbil).

As the proceedings of the worship were in progress according to the royal command Bishop Barsamya, Tiridath Kassisa and Deacon Shalula approached Sharbil and made an appeal. "You say Nebu and Bel will bring peace and prosperity to the nation. You deceive the people by saying this. Be persuaded by me if you like. Abandon the man-made idols and worship God, the Maker of all things and His Son, Jesus. The Holy Spirit will bless and sanctify all those who worship them. We were taught this by Palut who is acquainted with you. You know that this Palut is the disciple of Adai."

Sharbil listened to them, agreed with them and confessed. Barsamya continued speaking, "There is hope for those who repent and healing

for those who are wounded. The penitent will have shelter and salvation. Jesus can do to you as He has done to the robber on the cross.” Sharbil replied, “You are a skillful physician for the afflicted. As today is the day of the festival, I will come to you tomorrow night.”

Sharbil and his sister Babai came to Barsamya as promised. They confessed the faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and received baptism. They wore garments suitable for Christians. Many men and women and leaders of the town like Nobum (Labu?), Hafsai, Barcalba and Avida followed Sharbil’s footsteps and accepted his belief.

Lysanias, the judge of the country, learning about Sharbil’s conversion, seized him from the church and brought him to court for trial. He told the court, “When I was blind in my consciousness I followed and worshipped what I did not know. But today in as much as the eyes of my mind are opened it is henceforth impossible to worship the carved and sculpted stones and be an objectionable model to others.” The judge persuaded him not to renounce his faith in their gods and threatened to inflict unimaginable tortures on him. Sharbil remained undaunted by all threats.

Sharbil had to suffer extreme persecution following his denial. He was beaten, hung up and the entire body was subjected to tearing by iron combs. A red hot iron was applied to different parts of his body and vinegar and salt sprinkled on the wounds. Undismayed he went on to say, “This is

the kind of death which brings true life for those who affirm their belief in Jesus. He will speak for such before the glorious God.”

Sharbil had to undergo extreme suffering. But he continued to say, “Those who are saved by the Cross cannot worship idols of deceit. The created being cannot be worshipped. Only the Creator can be worshipped.” The final order was to saw him with a wooden saw and to behead him as he nears death. (I give sentence that he be sawn with a saw of wood , and that, when he is near to die, then his head be taken off with the sword of the headsmen).

As per the custom of offering drinks to the murderers he too was offered wine. He did not accept it. Instead he asked for some time to pray. He turned to the east and prayed thus, “Lord Jesus, forgive me for the sins committed against you and for provoking your anger by turning to unholy sacrifice and oblations. Have mercy on me as you have been merciful to the robber. I entered your vineyard at the eleventh hour. Kindly spare me from the last judgement.”

As he was laid on the chopping board and his body began to be sawn his sister collected his blood in a vessel. (Babai spread out her skirt (?) and collected his blood). She said, “May my spirit join you when you reach Christ whom you knowingly believed.” The judge on hearing about it issued orders to kill her on the spot as well. She was also executed in the same place. Their bodies were stolen away and was buried with full respect in

the tomb of Abshelama, the Episcopo's father. The English translation dates this event on 5 *Kanni* on a Friday. St. Sharbil's and Morth Babai's memory is celebrated on 5 September by the Syrian Church. In some places their feasts are celebrated on 27 February and 14 October.

## 13. St. Polycarp of Smyrna

(AD 69 – 155?)

Polycarp was born in Smyrna (Modern Izmir, Turkey) around AD 69. Even though he was born in a non-Christian family he became a disciple of Mor Yuhanon *Evangelistho* and studied Theology. St. Irenaeus and writer Papias became his disciples later on.

He was ordained Episcopo by Mor Yuhanon in his youth itself. In AD 107 when Mor Ignatius Noorono (God bearer) was taken to Rome in chains via Travos (for his martyrdom) he was received by Polycarp Episcopo and other believers. There is a special reference to Polycarp in the writings of Mor Ignatius.

The contents of St. Polycarp's Epistle to Philippians echo the exhortations at the Sacrament of priestly ordination. "Deacons should be kind and compassionate to all. They should guide those who have gone astray and be enthusiastic in serving the widows, the destitute and the poor. They should have a clear conscience before God and men. They must distance themselves from anger, dissidence, greed and unjust activities. Their judgement should

not be harsh keeping in mind the truth that all men have weaknesses.....”

Antonius Pius and Veerus, the Roman emperors brutally persecuted the Christians. The Christians in Smyrna also experienced similar persecutions. Polycarp was incarcerated and was compelled to malign the Lord and to accept their Gods. His answer was, “I had served the Messiah for forty six years without suffering any ill effects. How then can I blaspheme and forsake my king and saviour?”(Aphrem, 1963)

As the persecution continued he was threatened to be thrown to wild animals. Finally orders were issued to burn him at the stake. As logs were heaped in preparation, he removed his clothes and stood amidst the gathered lumber. When the soldiers tried to bind him he stopped them saying he had no intention of running away. He merely wanted to pray for strength to face the ordeal. He prayed thus “I thank and praise the Lord for making me worthy by bringing me to this place and moment. Make me eligible before your blessed eyes to be numbered among your martyrs for eternal life and to share the blood and body of Christ. I praise you for all your blessings.”

At the end of his prayers he was surrounded by a blaze of fire but surprisingly the flames never touched him. The spectators were amazed by this miraculous sight. A fragrance emanated from the fire; the tongues of flame remained like a crescent



round his head leaving him unscathed (Hoever, 1989).

The executioner was ordered to stab him to death. One of the soldiers pierced the sword into his sides drawing blood and then beheaded him. Most of the reference books record this event as having happened during the reign of Antonius Pius Caesar (AD 138 – 161) on 23 February AD 155 (e.g., Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2001; Encarta,2001). But in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History this event is recorded to have happened in AD 167 or AD 168.

His body was cremated to prevent the believers from taking it away. They collected his bones and interred them with great reverence (Abdul Ahad, 1948). His feast is celebrated on 3 December by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **14. St. Babula**

**(AD ? – AD 251)**

St. Babula ascended the throne of Antioch as the Patriarch after the demise of Patriarch Zbino (AD 231- 237). There are no historical records about his birth or childhood.

St. Babula treated everyone equally without partiality and discrimination. The treatment he meted out to King Philipose (AD 244) can substantiate this argument. After the war with Persians, the king came to Antioch on his way to Rome. Even though he desired to attend the Easter Mass, St. Babula did not allow him to enter the church. He was asked to occupy a place along with the nonbaptised sinners. St. Babula told him as he had conspired in the murder of his predecessor, King Gordian III he was not worthy to enter the house of God. He must keep himself away from sin and folly. Unless and until he maintained only one wife who was not a blood relative and lived according to the norms of the church he would have a position only among the penitents (Abdul Ahad, 1948; Aphrem, 1963). He proved through his action that it is noble to obey the heavenly Lord rather than the earthly monarchs.

In AD 249 during the reign of the Roman

king Dokkios Caesar, the military commander Thomrianos commanded him to offer idol worship. St. Babula not only refused but vouched for Jesus Christ and bore witness to him. As a result he was chained and imprisoned. He was bent with old age but he was persecuted severely and finally beheaded. Three young children Barbados aged 12, Abiliyus aged 9 and Arbos aged 7 who had religious training along with him were also martyred. This martyrdom happened on 24 January AD 251.

The mortal remains of St. Babula, who served the church as the Patriarch for fourteen years and who finally became the martyr, were buried in Antioch. A church was also constructed there. In AD 351 the mortal remains were transferred to Daphna near the temple of God Appolian. People used to approach this god for predictions about their future. When Yulianos, the brother of Galos, did not receive any response from this god, the reason was attributed to the proximity of the mortal remains of St. Babula. The king issued orders to bring the remains back to the former place in Antioch (Abdul Ahad, 1948; Aphrem, 1963). The same night in a thunder storm the temple and the gold covered statue of Appolian were consumed by fire. When Patriarch Milithos ascended the throne of Antioch, St. Babula's relics were again removed and interred in a church on the banks of river Aasi (Oranthos). His feast is celebrated on 24 January and 4 September. It is believed that 4 September is commemorated as the day of transferring the relics.

## **15. Mor Divannasios of Alexandria**

**(AD 190? – 265)**

Divannasios was born in an affluent family to non-Christian parents (Smith & Wace, 1877). He was attracted to Christianity and through self-teaching he became a disciple of Origen.

He was ordained a priest in AD 233 (Smith & Wace, 1877). After Heraclius became the metropolitan of Alexandria he served as the Head of a Theological school there (Douglas, 1978). From AD 247 to 265, until his death he served the Church as the Patriarch (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Eusebius, 1980).

He was banished to Kiphra, in Libya (AD 249 -251) following the persecution of Decian (Abdul Ahad, 1948). Later he relocated to Mariyuth and returned to Alexandria during the time of Galleon. He was banished a second time as a part of the persecution of Valerian but came back again in AD 260 (Douglas, 1978).

Mor Divannasios was a prolific writer. He countered the teachings of Sabellius about the Trinity. Experiences during persecution, the unnecessary baptism of heretics when they

returned to the Church are the main contents of his writings (Smith & Wace, 1877; Cross & Livingstone, 1974). He has also written about his master Origen, extolling his virtues after his death (Douglas, 1978).

The idea regarding the persons in the Trinity was discussed profusely by the theologians of the times. The Greek word *Hypostasis* means either essence or nature. The basis of the dispute was whether the term *Hypostasis* was used in the sense of 'essence of divine nature' or 'essence of each divine person'. Some were of the opinion that the division of the divine essence was equivalent to creating separate Gods. Subsequently, the Nicaea Synod discussed this controversy.

According to the Syrian Orthodox faith the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Trinity are equal, eternal and infinite without beginning or end. One is not lesser or greater than the other. The three persons in the one God are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Mor Divannasios was an ardent spokesperson of this teaching.

In AD 264 -265 he was invited to the synod in Antioch to discuss the opinions of Paul of Samosata but he was unable to make it due to ill health. Very soon he died in AD 265 (Douglas, 1978). He is commemorated on 3 October.

## **16. St. Phocas of Sinope**

**(? - AD 303)**

The biography of St. Phocas is a fusion of biographies of three men with the same name. (1) Phocas of Antioch, (2) Phocas the Bishop of Sinope (d. 117), (3) and gardener Phocas of Sinope (d. 303).

Asterius, the Metropolitan of Amasea provided information about gardener Phocas (Wace & Piercy, 1999; Cross & Livingstone, 1974). On his feast day in the church under the name of St. Phocas, Asterius pronounced a panegyric of this martyr. "This church which holds the relics of Phocas is a comfort and care of the afflicted, a healing power for the sick and an unending storehouse for the poor. Through his relics the believers will receive blessings from God. He is the patron saint of sailors and they always sing hymns in his honour." He was a gardener in Paphlagonia where he lived at the gate of the city on the northeastern border of the Black Sea. He tended the garden and distributed fruits to the passersby and talked to them about the word of God.

The honest and hardworking Phocas

accepted Christianity and became a monk. He welcomed and hosted guests, helped and honoured strangers. He divided the produce of his garden among the guests and the poor. He also provided boarding and lodging facilities for travellers. His Christian way of life attracted many to Christianity. He also offered succour to those Christians who suffered persecution.

The reign of Emperor Diocletian witnessed dreadful persecution of Christians. Galerius, an officer of lower rank prompted these persecutions. The Cathedral of Nicodaemia was destroyed on 24 February, AD 303. There was a proclamation to destroy churches, to burn holy books and to demote those who did not give up Christian belief (Eusebius, 1985). Subsequently an order was issued to imprison metropolitans, priests and other believers and to subject them to brutal torture.

Phocas accepted and spread Christianity during this calamitous time and consequently a death sentence was pronounced on him. A battalion of Roman soldiers was deputed for this purpose. Those who came in search of him reached his one room hut. Phocas received them and promised to help them find the person they sought. When the soldiers slept he dug his own grave in the garden. He spent the night in prayers as a preparation for the coming death.

The next day when the soldiers enquired about Phocas he revealed his identity and said, “I

am Phocas. I am the person you are searching for.” The soldiers were touched and replied, “How can we kill a man who had shown so much mercy to us? We will inform the authorities that the search had been fruitless.” Phocas was but determined and said, “The greatest pleasure and achievement is to become a martyr for one’s own faith.” They were amazed by his words and followed him to the grave. They decapitated him and buried him there.

Many pilgrims visited his tomb seeking intercession after listening to Asterius’ description of him. The believers of Sinope constructed a church there. His relics were later transferred to Constantinople with great celebration during the time of Mor Ivanios, the gold mouthed (AD 347-407). Mor Gregorius of Naziansus (AD 330-390) also witnessed to him and stated that he was a true disciple of Jesus (Wace & Piercy, 1999).

The Phocas of Sinope is mainly known as the patron saint of sailors though contextual evidences are not available. There was a custom prevalent among seafarers honouring St. Phocas (Wace & Piercy, 1999). They kept aside a portion of their food for Phocas. One of the sailors used to take this share and pay the cost to the Captain. When they came to port the money was distributed among the poor as a token of gratitude to their benefactor for the safe voyage. The feast of the monk and gardener is celebrated on 1 June.



## 17. St. Pelagia

(AD 290? – 305)

There are at least three persons mentioned under the name of Pelagia on the martyrs' list. They are (1) the prostitute St. Pelagia (feast 29 August), the martyr of Tharsus- St. Pelagia (feast 5 May) and martyr of Antioch - St. Pelagia (feast 8 October). It is also opined that the Pelagia in Tharsus and Antioch are the same person ([www. catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org)).

The legend of St. Pelagia in Antioch who was a courtesan, celebrated actor and dancer is famous. Influenced by St. Nonnus, she repented, gave up her lurid life and became an ascetic in Jerusalem. There she led a hermit's life on a hill top near Mount Olive and attained sainthood. Her feast is celebrated on 29 August.

St. Pelagia, the Antiochian saint was born at the end of the third century (AD 290?). She was a student in St. Lucian's School (Abdul Ahad, 1948; White, 1991). It was a time of terrible persecution of Christians. Naked women were hung upside down, their legs were tied to two branches of trees pulled together and then flung apart so that their bodies were torn into two and pregnant ladies were sliced

open. These were some of the atrocious crimes perpetrated against Christians (Abdul Ahad, 1948).

When Maximinius upon the orders of Emperor Diocletian gave leadership to the brutal persecutions, Pelagia was only fifteen years old (AD 305). Soldiers came to her house while she was alone at home. She took leave of the soldiers to go upstairs and change her dress. Thereupon she chose death by a leap from the house top (to the sea?) rather than suffer dishonour from the soldiers. The Prelates of the Church St. Abros and St. Ivanios (John Chrysostom) have extolled her attempts to protect her chastity (Hoever, 1989). The feast of this saint is celebrated on 8 October.

## **18. St. Osthathios The Patriarch of Antioch**

**(AD ? – AD 337)**

St. Osthathios was born in Saied in Pamphelia. He was ordained bishop for Aleppo, Syria. Later he acceded to the throne of Antioch as its Patriarch (Cayre, 1935).

Mor Ostathios presided over the Nicea council, made the introductory speech and opposed the heresies of Arius, a rationalist priest. His arguments were, 'the Son was a created being and not equal to the Father in essence' (A history of the Church, 1846; Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1958).

Under the patronage of Emperor Constantine it was decided to convene a council at Ancyra to settle the disputes in Church rising out of the heresies of Arius. It was later shifted to Nicaea in Bithynia (now Iznik in Turkey). It was well attended by three hundred and eighteen bishops. The Synod was in session from May to July. On 13 June AD 325 the Nicene Creed was approved (Fuller, 1655; Cayre, 1935). The Council rejected the heretical claim that there was a time without the son who is a mere creation and cannot equal the Father in

essence. The Council stressed the belief that both the Father and the Son are equal and that He was not a created being.

After the Nicea Council Mor Osthathios took stringent measures against Arius and maintained true faith in the Church. The Church historian, Eusebius (AD 265-340) who had attended the Council later turned against Osthathios. The Emperor who favoured Eusebius banished Mor Osthathios to Trajanopolis where he died in AD 337 (Cayre, 1935).

A large majority in the church followed his teachings even after his expatriation and death. The followers of Arius took over the control of the throne of Antioch and appointed Patriarchs during AD 330 - 360. In AD 360 Mor Milithios, the protector of true faith, acceded to the throne. Gradually, the power of Arius' associates weakened and true faith was restored in the Church.

The many books and interpretations written by Mor Osthathios are lost to posterity. Interpretations of the Psalms, Wisdom of Solomon, two Qurbono *Thakso* and eight books against the heretical teachings of Arius are all that remain.

The relics of Mor Osthathios were transferred to Antioch from Trajanopolis at the end of the fifth century. His feast is celebrated on 5 June by the Church.

## **19. Eusebius of Caesarea, The Church Historian**

**(AD 263/264 – 339/40)**

Eusebius, well known as the Church Historian, was born in Caesarea, Palestine in AD 263 (Cayre, 1935; Chediath, 2006). He grew up under the protection and care of priest Dorotheus.

He was tutored by an eminent priest Pamphilus and he in turn helped his mentor a lot in his writing endeavours (Abdul Ahad, 1948). Pamphilus inherited the books in the library of Oregon (Encyclopaedia Americana, 1988). Eusebius who was well read on these books composed seven books on the subject of Church History. Eusebius grew in eminence mainly due to his discipleship under Pamphilus (Wace & Piercy, 1999).

During the period of religious persecution Pamphilus' house offered shelter to students as well as martyrs. He was imprisoned during the period of persecution of Diocletian Galerius (AD 303-311). In the seventh year of persecution on 6 February AD 310 Pamphilus suffered martyrdom (Encyclopaedia Americana, 1988; Chediath, 2006).

Eusebius had great respect and regard

for Pamphilus. As a mark of his respect for his teacher he took pride in introducing himself as Eusebius Pamphilus, the spiritual son Pamphilus (Eusebius,1985; Chediath, 2006). Metropolitan Agapius had ordained him a priest (Cayre,1935).

Eusebius had escaped to Tyre and then to Egypt after the martyrdom of Pamphilus but was imprisoned. In AD 311 Galerius made a proclamation consoling Christians. Eusebius by this time had started replying the allegations made against Christians by Heroclus. He could also complete and perfect the composition of the first eight books of Church History.

He assumed responsibility as the Metropolitan of Caesarea in AD 313 and the administrative work did not impede his scholarly pursuits. Caesarea did not have the same status of the Apostolic Sees of Antioch, Rome and Alexandria but there was no one to match the scholarship and writing skill of Eusebius. He was the trusted advisor of the Emperor Constantine (Nelson's Encyclopaedia, 1913). He was a noted ecclesiastical personality in the first part of the fourth century. Among the prelates of the Church he was but next to Origen in scholarship and in doing research.

Eusebius had a significant role in the Synod at Nicaea (Wace & Piercy, 1999). Even though he had signed the agreement following the Synod decisions he did not approve them. He asked explanations for three phrases in the Nicea Creed: (1) of the substance of the Father, (2) begotten

not made, (3) of the same substance. He did not wholeheartedly support Arius but it is believed he had shown a preference for Seblianism (God was manifested in progressive modes) (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1988).

His greatest contribution is the composition of the Church History. The content deals with events from the beginning till the end of AD 324. More than being a complete and consecutive record of history it is a huge collection of historical events. In addition he has also written Chronicles, Martyrs of Palestine, Books on the Doctrines of the Church, Bible Commentary and philosophical books (Eusebius, 1985; Chediath, 2006). There are also critics who say his theological opinions are stained and opportunistic (Nelson's Encyclopaedia, 1913).

An improved version of the Church History which was completed in AD 317 was republished in AD 324. The events that had happened in the first three centuries are authoritatively narrated (Cayre, 1935). Many latter day historians depended on his work for reference.

Bishop Eusebius was an influential person who enjoyed popular support. It was he who made the felicitation speech at the anniversary of the ascension ceremony of the Emperor Constantine. When the Emperor died on 22 May AD 337 he had the honour of delivering the funeral speech.

He died two years after the death of the Emperor in AD 339 (Encyclopaedia Americana, 1988). The Church Historian and Metropolitan

of Caesarea for twenty five years is included, on the list, among the Syrian martyrs and those who vouched for true faith (Wace & Piercy, 1999). His memory is celebrated on 29 February.



## **20. St. Pachomius**

**(AD c. 290? - 346?)**

Pachomius was one of the pioneers in the organisation of hermits into groups and to write down rules for them. He was born in Thebaid, Egypt in AD 290 (292?). He was inducted into the Emperor's army (White, 1991) at the age of 20 and while serving as a soldier he was attracted by the behaviour and noble actions of the local Christians (Aphrem, 1963). It made a lasting impression on his mind. When the army was disbanded he returned to Khenoboskion and joined a church to learn the primary lessons of Christianity.

After his baptism he followed the venerable old ascetic, Palaemon. The ascetics of that order spent their day time making baskets and other utensils out of bamboo and reeds. During the nights they read psalms and immersed themselves in prayers by keeping vigil. Their products were sold once in a week and the money was used to buy bread and the rest of the money was distributed among the poor.

One day as Pachomius was walking along the banks of river Nile he heard a voice that told

him to build a dwelling for the hermits and he and Palaemon on the instruction of an angel constructed a monastery in AD 318 and started living there (Hoever,1989). Palaemon later left him to lead a solitary life.

According to the directives given by the angel on a bronze plate Pachomius codified rules for monastic life (Chediath, 1993). He set apart special timings for prayer and handicraft work. The ascetics were expected to wear a headgear and maintain silence and quietude (Aphrem, 1963).

The first person to join his monastic group was his own brother, John (Aphrem, 1963; White, 1991). Hundreds followed him and he constructed six more dayro (monasteries) in Thebaid. From AD 336 he had been living mainly in Pabau (White, 1991).

He also constructed a church for the benefit of poor shepherds. The ascetics in his group were not ordained priests. St. Athanasios visited him in AD 333 because of his zealous defence of orthodoxy against Arianism (White, 1991).

When his dear disciple Thevodoros fell ill the inmates of the monastery informed him about it and requested his prayers. He replied, "I am praying for him but it is worthier to bear the pain and other difficulties with patience and fortitude" (Aphrem, 1963).

Pachomius who had a special gift for prophecy was blessed with healing powers too. A

nunnery for his sister Maria was constructed on the opposite bank of river Nile (White, 1991; Chediath, 1993). St. Baselios had implemented the rules codified by Pachomius (Hoever, 1989).

Egypt was in the grip of an epidemic in AD 348 and many members of the Dayro died. Pachomius was also a victim of this pandemic and died in AD 346 (Aphrem, 1963) as recorded in many reference books (Hoever, 1989). Before his death he assembled all the inmates of the monastery and reminded them about the rules of ascetic life especially the oath of obedience in order to strengthen their faith. His feast is celebrated on 9 May.

## **21. St. Paul of Thebaid**

**(AD 234 – 347)**

Christian monasticism first evolved in Egypt. Paul, born in Thebes in AD 234 has a primary place among the early monks. He is known as Paul of Thebes or Thebaid. Thebes was the first capital of Egypt.

He was born in a rich and aristocratic Christian family. He could acquire a good education and proficiency in Greek and Latin languages. His parents died when he was fifteen (Aphrem Paulose, 1963).

Caesar Decian and Valerius let loose a slew of persecutions against Christians during the period AD 245 – 51. When Paul's brother-in-law tried to murder him to appropriate his wealth he ran away to the desert (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). After travelling a long distance he found a cave wherein he stayed.

He lived by eating dates, drinking water from a nearby spring and wearing clothes made of palm leaves. In his fifty third year a raven started bringing him half a loaf of bread. This miraculous

event continued for the next sixty years.

In AD 347 God in a dream revealed to St. Antony of Egypt (AD 251 – 356) that there is an old monk in the desert and asked him to meet this monk. He woke up from sleep and walked across the desert between the River Nile and the Red Sea, supporting himself on his walking stick. At the end of the long journey he found the cave and its grey-haired occupant (Aphrem Paulose, 1963).

St. Paul asked St. Antony about the activities of human beings. He wondered if there were still kings and authorities who drove men towards evil worship (Irmanos, 2008). This meeting took place when St. Paul was hundred and thirteen years old. The raven brought a full loaf for them as they were talking. St. Paulo remarked “Brother, see how much God is concerned about us.”

They prayed hard after having their food. He then said “I will die soon. You are sent here to conduct my burial service. My body must be covered in the shroud entrusted to you by Athanasius” (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

St. Antony departed to a Dayoro which involved three days’ travel to obtain this shroud given by Athanasius. When he returned he found St. Paul on his knees praying. St. Antony also joined him in this silent prayer. After some time he realised St. Paul had passed away while at his prayers (Irmanos, 2008).

As he wondered how to arrange the burial

two lionesses came and started digging the grave (Aphrem Paulose, 1963). St. Antony glorified God and said “Even the dumb animals behave appropriately to satisfy the needs of those chosen by God.” Thus St. Antony buried the first solitary saint according to proper rites. He died on 10 January. In the ancient times, the eight days (Octave of Epiphany) following Epiphany or the baptism of Jesus on 6 January were considered as feast days. To avoid intermingling the two festivals St. Paul’s feast is celebrated on 15 January ([www.stpaulin the desert. com](http://www.stpaulinthe desert.com)). The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 15 January.

## **22. St. Yulios of Rome**

**(AD 290? – 352)**

Yulios, the bishop of Rome, was born in Rome (Nelson's Encyclopaedia, 1913). There are no references to his parents or childhood in any of the reference books.

He was consecrated bishop on 6 February AD 337 after the demise of the Roman Patriarch, St. Mark (Smith & Wace, 1882). There was chaos in the church atmosphere after the Nicaea Synod. Both sides, the associates of Arius who refused to accept Christ as God incarnate and the other side which went by the decisions of the Nicaea Synod tried their best to impress upon Emperor Constantine that they are right (Hoever, 1989; Encarta, 2005). Arius who spread defamation against St. Athanasios (AD 295-373) of Alexandria died due to brain haemorrhage in AD 336 (Poulet & Raemers, 1956).

In AD 337 on the day of the Pentecost when Emperor Constantine died, his three sons Constantine, Constantius, and Constans divided the empire and became rulers in their respective regions. The eldest son Constantine II brought back

and enthroned Athanasios who had been deposed. Then Eusebius of the Arius faction in Nicomedia raised an issue over the enthronement without convening a synod. He also accused Athanasios of selling grains for personal use which rightfully belonged to the congregation of Alexandria. He sent a representative to Mor Yulios with these allegations. The bishops of Egypt sent delegates to Rome supporting Athanasios (Smith & Wace, 1882, pp. 526 – 527). A date was fixed (in December) for convening a synod in Rome in AD 340 but Eusebius not only disagreed with that but also prevented the diplomatic mission from proceeding to Rome.

In August AD 341 a Dedication Council gathered in Antioch on the interest of Eusebius and the council confirmed the decisions of the Trier council against Athanasios. Mor Yulios countered it by calling a Synod in November AD 341 of more than fifty metropolitans and dismissed all allegations against Athanasios and announced the decision to accept him. He is known in history as the protector of Athanasios. When the deposition was renewed a second time Mor Yulios offered him sanctuary (Douglas, 1978, p. 555; *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1988).

Mor Yulios was the Patriarch of Rome from AD 337 to AD 352. This Holy Father constructed two churches in Rome, one in the name of the twelve apostles and the other in the name of St. Mary (*Encyclopaedia Americana*, 1988). The epistles he wrote to the church of Antioch and the



church of Alexandria are still prevalent (Nelson's Encyclopaedia, 1913). He also regularised a Holy *Qurbano Thakso* in which the prayer anticipating the second coming of Christ is remarkable. He departed for the heavenly abode on 12 April AD 352

## **23. St. Augen of Clysma**

**(? – AD 363)**

Christian monasticism originated in Egypt. St. Antony (AD 251 – 356) and St. Athanasius (AD 295 – 373) who had spent two years with him are prominent among them.

Monks started leading a community life by the end of the third century. The important centres of their monasteries were Pispir on the east of Egypt, Nitrean Valley on the western island of River Nile and Thebaid. Regulations were codified for the community life of the monks during the period of St. Pachomius (AD 292 – 346).

Men from various foreign nations joined the Egyptian Dayoro. Among them were those from Greece, Rome, Cappadocia, and Syria. Augen of Clysma was engaged in helping the poor for nearly twenty five years. He gathered oysters from the bottom of the sea and distributed them among the poor. He then approached the noble monk Pachomius and started the life of a monk (Chediath, 2006).

He established many monasteries in Syria after becoming a monk. He is known as the father

of Syrian Monasticism. It is believed that he started the tradition of monasteries in Persia as well. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 23 January and 21 April.

## **24. St. Aphrahat, the Ascetic**

**(AD 280? – AD 364?)**

Aphrahat was born in AD 280 on the Syrian border of Persia. He is referred to as Aphrahat in Syrian letters and Aphraates in Latin books. Historical books refer to him as 'the Hermit of Antioch.' Though he was born into a pagan family he accepted Christianity and later became a monk (Aphrem I, 2000).

There are dissenting opinions among historians about his Episcopal name and positions. Some historians say he was consecrated metropolitan under the name Yacoub and he was sometimes identified as the bishop of the monastery of Mor Mathai Dayoro of Mosul (Cayre, 1936; Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1958). There is also the opinion that he was known as Yacoub either at the time of his baptism or on consecration as a metropolitan (Wace & Piercy, 1999). Patriarch St. Aphrem I states there is no evidence to suggest he had been a metropolitan and that Mor Mathai Dayora had not been established during his time (Aphrem I, 2000).

Aphrahat who was otherwise known as 'the Sage of Persia' later shifted to Edessa, famous for

its strong Christian heritage. In AD 360 he retired to Antioch. He never asked for bread, cooked food, or clothes from anyone. He ate nothing but some vegetables and a small piece of bread after sunset (Theodoret, 1990). He spoke publicly against the heresies of Arius. He replied in similes to those who engaged him in arguments.

Once a servant of Emperor Valence insulted and threatened Aphrahat and even made attempts on his life. This servant had an untimely death which made the Emperor believe in and praise Aphrahat's God. On another occasion he gave blessed water to a race horse that had fallen sick. The horse was cured. Many blessings have been received due to the intercession of monk Aphrahat. His life and miracles are dealt with in the book titled 'Pearls of Syria' (Theodoret, 1990).

During the reign of Sappor II (AD 340? – 380?) persecution against Christians was dire. When the Roman Emperor Suthoranthinos recognised Christians they received the protection of the Roman Empire. The Roman Emperor dispatched a letter to Sappor II about the upkeep and safety of Christians. The Christians who spoke the Persian language used Syriac as their language of worship which caused suspicion among the Persian kings (O' Leary, 2002).

All historians comment on the twenty three Expositions and speeches of Aphrahat. They deal with faith, prayers of repentance, fasting, the divinity

of Christ and the resurrection. He gives a lot of importance to monastic life and celibacy (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). The above mentioned letters refer to all the sacraments (Cayre, 1936).

In all his teachings he stressed the fact that Jesus was the son of God and Peter was the chief priest designated to lead the sheep of the Church established by Jesus. The first ten letters were written in AD 337, the next twelve in AD 344 and the final letters in AD 345 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

A letter written during the final phase speaks against the Jewish Sabbath and the ceremony of circumcision. The last letter highlights the few just people who survived the persecution of Sappor II and how they saved the folk from total destruction. The articles of Aphrahat come under study in the book 'Aphraatus and Jews' by Frank Gavin and published by Gorgias Press. The memory of this saint is celebrated on 7 April by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **25. Mor Athanasius the Patriarch of Alexandria**

**(AD 295? – 373)**

Athanasius was born in AD 295 to wealthy Christian parents. He studied Greek Mythology and Theology (Quasten, 1960; Douglas, 1978; Hoever, 1989). He lived some years with St. Antony in the deserts spending time in prayers and meditation. He has also written the biography of the saint. St. Antony had given him a sheep skin and a blanket he had used (Athanasius of Alexandria, 1932).

He was ordained a deacon in AD 319 by Patriarch Alexander and he served him as his secretary. Later generations came to know about his life and works from his own letters, from the orations of Gregory of Nazianzus (Oration 21) and a descriptive Coptic book (Quasten, 1960). Gregory of Nazianzus has described him as 'The Pillar of the Church'. He was also known by the term 'Father of Orthodox Faith' (White, 1991). The famous work 'On the Incarnation of God' written by him at the age of twenty is a strong reply to the heresy of Arius (Douglas, 1978). The manuscript of this book is preserved in a Library in Jerusalem (Aphrem I, 2000).

Arius, an old priest in Alexandria, taught that Jesus was not fully divine but he was only similar to God and was created at the beginning of creation (Aphrem, 1963). His claim was that the Father and the Son were made of like essence or being but not the same essence or being. These ideas were conveyed through melodious songs which attracted many people who took his side.

To put an end to the dissidence in the Church, Emperor Constantine employed bishop Osios (of Corduba, Spain) but it was in vain. In AD 325 the Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea put Arius on trial and denounced him. The council confirmed the error of his teaching. The primary opponent was deacon Athanasius who worked as the secretary of Patriarch Alexander in this council (White, 1991). The Patriarch's speeches highlighted the talents and fame of the deacon (Moothedan, 2001). The bulls/decrees and articles of the Patriarch clearly carry a mark of his scholarship (Cardinal Newman, 1890).

Upon the demise of Patriarch Alexander in AD 328 (Quasten, 1960; Douglas, 1978) Athanasius who was only thirty three at that time ascended the throne. The history of Christianity in the fourth century is mainly the history of Mor Athanasius. There were many allegations against him and he was banished five times. There were even attempts on his life. Once the Arius faction severed the arm of a dead man to be presented as a proof that it was the right arm of Episcopo Arsanios who was



murdered by Athanasius. Their allegations were proved baseless when Arsanius himself was presented before them (Aphrem, 1963).

In AD 335 the Synod at Tyre excommunicated him. Two years later (on 23 November AD 337) he returned to the diocese (Quasten, 1960). Again in AD 339, a synod with the connivance of Eusebius, the bishop of Nicomedia, banished him. He was given sanctuary by Mor Yulios, the bishop of Rome. The Synod convened at Rome in AD 341 exonerated him from all the alleged crimes. The Serdica synod in AD 343 re-established him in his ecclesiastical rights and declared him as the lawful Patriarch of Alexandria.

He did not return to Egypt until the death of Gregory of Cappadocia in AD 345. Emperor Constans who died in AD 350 had always offered him security. Constantius the next Emperor turned against Athanasius and nominated Bishop George of Cappadocia to the throne of Alexandria. Mor Athanasius who had to abdicate the throne spent his time with the ascetics of Egypt. The books he wrote during this period (AD 355-361), 'Apology to Constantius', 'Apology for his flight', 'The letter to the Monks', 'The History of Arians' show remarkable depth of theological understanding. The manuscripts of fifteen bulls issued by him on the Easter festival are preserved in the British Museum (Aphrem I, 2000).

Constantius died in AD 361. Bishop George who had annexed power was murdered. The

atmosphere was congenial for Mor Athanasius to return on 22 February AD 362. He was banished again twice, the last occasion was in AD 365. In his Easter letter in AD 367 there is a command over reading twenty seven books of the New Testament in church. He had strictly enjoined “Nothing should be added on or anything should be taken away from these” (Comfort, 1992, p. 74).

His episcopate lasted for forty five years till AD 373. Of these he had spent seventeen years in hiding, in deserts and in foreign countries. In spite of all the trials he succeeded in transferring true faith to the next generation. He died on 2 May AD 373.

## **26. St. Aphrem, the Syrian**

**(c. AD. 306 – 373)**

The great poet saint, Mor Aphrem of the Syriac Orthodox Church was born in c. AD. 306 in Nisbis. His father belonged to a Christian family in Nisbis and his mother was from Amid (Aphrem, 1990).

The description of some historians that Aphrem later converted to Christianity is baseless because in his authentic writings he says "I was born in the way of truth." In another *memre* it is recorded 'My Lord, from infancy till old age I have borne your yoke. I have pleasantly discharged my duties without laziness or indolence' (Aphrem, 1963).

Mor Aphrem was tutored by the holy and virtuous bishop of Nisbis, MorYacoub (Smith & Wace, 1880). He was only twenty two years (nineteen?) old when he accompanied the bishop to the Synod in Nicaea where the heresies of Arius were refuted.

There are two varying opinions about the ordination of Aphrem as a deacon in AD. 338. Some claim that he received his deaconship

from Mor Basil of Caesarea; meanwhile many others affirm it was from his own tutor Mor Yacoub (Britannica, 2001). Many scholarly historians state that he met Mor Basil only once as a visitor.

In AD. 337 after the death of Emperor Constantine I, the Persian King Shapur II conquered Nisibis. With the blessing of his teacher Aphrem climbed up a fort in the city. His fervent prayers from there brought in a swarm of insects which penetrated the enemy battallion. The Persian army scattered and fled (Aphrem, 2001).

He had been a teacher in the Nisbis monastery for thirty eight years. After the death of his mentor, Mor Yacoub and the Persian occupation of Nisibis he withdrew to Amid and later on to Urahoy (Edessa). He contributed a lot for the development and to the building up of the reputation of the school at Urahoy.

Mor Aphrem wrote several polemical works refuting the heresies of Bardaissan and Marcion (Britannica, 2001). Bardaissan presented his arguments in verse form to the students. Aphrem also composed verses contradicting the heretical views. Though in the ecclesiastical hierarchy he was only a deacon, he was respected as a Doctor (*Malphono*) of the Universal Syrian Church.

Mor Aphrem who was otherwise known as “the harp of the Holy Ghost” (Douglas, 1978) was an expert in expressing a vista of meanings through brief and selected words. His unique skill took the

reader to heights of repentance, dedication and worship. He was rightfully called “the prophet of the Syrians” and the “the custodian of knowledge.”

Mor Aphrem wrote a wide variety of hymns, sermons in verse and prose biblical exegeses. He has composed nearly thirty lakh lines in various *memre* and *madraso* (Britannica, 2001). His biblical commentaries on Genesis and Exodus are widely acclaimed. The indivisible divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, the Church, the Apostles, Martyrs, lent, virginity, the sacraments, the baptism of Jesus Christ (*Dehno*), the resurrection, the special features of the Universal Church are some of the other subjects he dealt with (Aphrem, 1963; Aphrem, 2000).

He led a simple and frugal life, sleeping on the floor and feeding on leafy vegetables and barley. He drank only water. Assuming that he would not live to see the next day he kept night vigil praying throughout.

Mor Aphrem departed to his heavenly abode in AD 373 (376?) on 9 June. His body was interred as per his own instructions. “I am unholy who don’t deserve to be buried in a holy place. So do not bury me inside the church as I do not deserve that glory” (Aphrem, 2001). He is commemorated on the first Saturday of the Great lent (Fifty days’ lent).

## **27. St. Macrina**

**(AD 327 – 380)**

Macrina was born in AD 327. Her father was a well known lawyer and orator in Pontus. Her mother, Emmelia, was the daughter of a martyr of the time of Maximian persecution. Basil and Emmelia had five sons and five daughters (Quasten, 1960; Smith & Wace 1877; Wace & Piercy, 1999).

Macrina was the eldest among the ten children. Three of her brothers were Metropolitans [Mor Baselius of Caeserea (AD 329 – 397), Mor Gregorius of Nyssa (AD 335 – 394) and Mor Peter of Sebasthia]. Other than these three brothers one died in childhood and the second brother died when he was twenty seven years old. Her four sisters got married and entered family life. Macrina alone became a nun. She was also called Thekla at home (Lowther Clarke, 1916).

The family was very affluent and as their vast property spread over different provinces they had to pay taxes to three Governors.

Macrina was an expert in weaving woollen clothes. When she was only twelve years old she was betrothed to a young boy who was related to

her. The boy died and her father tried to persuade her to get married to another. But she disagreed. Her argument was just as there was only one birth and one death, there was only one marriage too. The man who was bonded to the bride in marriage was not dead but kept apart (Lowther Clarke, 1916).

Her father died in AD 349 and Macrina continued living with her mother. She spoke thus of Macrina, "I carried my children in my womb for a definite period but Macrina has been carrying me always."

Macrina's brother Basil (Mor Baselius the Great of Caesarea) returned from Athens after his higher education in AD 355. In the mean time Macrina had led her mother to a new phase of life, freed their slaves and treated them on an equal basis.

Her second brother, Naucratus was a person of exceptional talents. He chose a life of solitude and poverty. He started living a life of solitude on the banks of River Iris flowing through Pontus. He also took care of some old people who lived in abject poverty. He considered the period of his youth as a travel towards the divine destination and lived obeying his mother's commands. He had an untimely and sudden death in AD 357. Macrina was a source of courage to her mother, stood by her and consoled her in the adverse times. Her words offered relief and enabled her mother to live by counting her blessings and God given happy

moments instead of lamenting over the loss. Both mother and daughter spent their days in doing acts of benevolence. Her youngest brother Peter influenced her profusely. Emmelia died in AD 373 in the presence of Macrina and Peter. She was buried in the church of the Forty Martyrs.

In AD 370 Basil was consecrated the Bishop of Caesarea. He ordained his brother Peter a priest in AD 371. Baselius died eight years later in AD 379. It came as a crushing blow for Macrina.

Mor Gregory of Nyssa, another brother of Macrina visited her in AD 380 after attending a Synod at Antioch. She had high fever and was almost at death's door but she was lying on the floor on a wooden board covered with sackcloth. Though exhausted she raised herself on her elbows to show her respect to her brother. She prayed 'Oh, God you have granted me this favour by sending your servant to visit your handmaid.' On hearing about the death of their brother Mor Basil, Mor Gregory burst out crying. Seeing the grief of her brother she scolded him 'You should not mourn for those who departed to Christ like one without hope.' Her words disclosed the enigmatic divine purpose concealed in disasters. Mor Gregory retired to rest after a lengthy conversation with his sister.

When Mor Gregory visited her again she recalled events of their childhood, parents etc. Their paternal grandparents were Christians and hence their wealth was confiscated for confessing



in Christ. Gregory talked about his exile by Emperor Valens on account of faith, disputes in the Church and persecution. Macrina asked him 'Are you unaware of the divine blessing? Will you atone for the ingratitude of your soul? Have you compared your position with that of your parents? Your father was greatly esteemed throughout Pontus. But you are renowned everywhere, even beyond Pontus. Don't you see the benevolence of God in all this? Do you recognise the contribution of your parents' prayers?'

Then she prayed 'I have fought a good battle, completed my race and protected faith.' Then she closed her eyes as in natural sleep but she soon slipped off to eternal sleep. The nuns wept over their loss. They said 'The light of our eyes is extinguished. The soul that guided us has departed from us.' Mor Gregory tried to console them 'Remember her commands and training. She taught us to weep only at the time of prayer... Let us turn our lamentation into singing psalms in the same strain.'

Vestiana, a widow and an inmate of the nunnery dressed holy Macrina in white attire and made preparations for her funeral. Lampadia, a nun, declared she knew Macrina's wishes in the matter of her burial. She never cared for any special preparation (Lowther Clarke, 1916). She had neither procured nor stored any clothes for the purpose (Wace & Piercy, 1999). Mor Gregory enquired whether they had any proper attire for

a fitting funeral. Lampadia replied other than the dress she was wearing and a pair of old slippers there were only a cloak and a head covering. There was nothing stored away in the bedroom or anywhere else. Macrina had only one storehouse for her wealth. That was in heaven. There she had stored all, nothing was left on earth.

The funeral preparations being over, an all night vigil was kept. A stream of visitors arrived. The funeral procession started the next morning with the ladies and nuns on one side, the monks and men on the other side reciting psalms. Bishop Araxius of Iborra came along with a group of priests to attend her funeral. She was buried in the tomb of her parents near the church of Forty Martyrs.

A blind daughter of a soldier gained sight through the intercession prayers of Macrina even during her life time. Many sick were healed and evil spirits exorcised after praying to her. Her feast is celebrated on 19 July by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **28. St. Gregory of Nazianzus**

**(c. AD 329/330 – 389/ 90)**

Gregory was born in Arianzus near Cappadocia town in 329/330 AD. Nonna, his mother who was a Christian converted her non- Christian, husband to Christianity (Cayre, 1935; Britannica Encyclopaedia, 2001). Subsequently he entered Church and had been the bishop of Nazianzus for forty five years. (Nelson's Encyclopaedia, 1913; White, 1991; Encarta Encyclopaedia, 2004).

Gregory, who belonged to the group of prelates like Mor Baselios of Cappadocia (329 - 379) & Mor Gregorios of Niza (335 – 394), was also referred to as 'Gregory, the Theologian'. His higher education was done in Alexandria and Athens. Mor Baselios was a fellow student of Gregory in the University of Athens during AD 350 - 52. He worked as a teacher in Rhetoric for many years before returning to Nazianzus in AD 358. The next two years were spent with Mor Baselios in solitary life in Pontos (Hoever, 1989; White, 1991).

He was baptised by his own father in AD 360 (Encarta Encyclopaedia, 2004). He received Christian education and training from his mother

from childhood (Cayre, 1935). He was ordained a priest by his father in AD 362 and started rendering help to his father (Ferguson & Wright, 1988). In AD 372 Gregory was consecrated the Bishop of Sasima, a small town (Nelson's Encyclopaedia, 1913) by Mor Baselios. He disliked the lack of independence imposed by administrative responsibilities. Moreover he preferred a solitary life which reduced his interest in being elevated to the rank of a bishop.

After the death of his father in AD 374 he had to take up the responsibility of the Nazianzus congregation. In AD 378 - 379 he was appointed the Archbishop of Isthambul and continued in that position till AD 381 (Nelson's Encyclopaedia, 1913; Hoefer, 1989; Encarta Encyclopaedia, 2004). Jerome was his disciple during the period, AD 379 – 382 (Britannica Encyclopaedia, 2004).

He spent a few years combating Arianism. The five speeches delivered by him in the church of Anastasia countering the heresy and defending the doctrine of the Trinity are famous (Douglas, 1978). "The Father is the begetter and emitter, the Son is the begotten and the Holy Spirit is the emission. The begetting of the Son and the Procession of the Spirit are beyond time, so all three are co-eternal. While the Father may be greater than the Son in the sense that he is the cause, he is not greater by nature, for the two are of the same nature. The names, Father and the Son make known to us an intimate relation within the Godhead" (Ferguson &

Wright, 1988, p. 281).

He spoke thus of the preparation of priests when he was a young priest: "We must begin by purifying ourselves before purifying others; we must be instructed to be able to instruct, become light to illuminate, draw close to God to bring Him close to others, be sanctified to sanctify, lead by the hand and counsel prudently. I know whose ministers we are, where we find ourselves and to where we strive. I know God's greatness and man's weakness, but also his potential. Who then is the priest? He is the defender of truth, who stands with angels, gives glory with archangels, causes sacrifices to rise to the altar on high, shares Christ's priesthood, refashions creation, restores it in God's image, recreates it for the world on high and..." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, p. 305). He has composed more than two hundred articles and poems.

He had a diminutive appearance. The wrinkled face and grey moustache, attributes of constant prayers and fasting, added to his ugliness. Though he was not renowned as an efficient administrator his power of oratory was laudable. St. Gregorios who wanted to keep himself away from quarrels and arguments was a kind and selfless person who practised simplicity in his dress and way of life.

Due to the strong protest of the Arian mob and to avoid dissidence he resigned his position in AD

381 and retired to his native place, Arianzus. He spent his time in prayer and fasting until he expired on 25 January AD 389/390. This Holy Father's memory is celebrated on 25 January by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **29. St. Ambrose**

**(AD 340 – 397)**

Ambrose was born in Trier (now in Germany) to Christian parents in AD 340. His father, the Roman Governor of France, died early in his childhood (Hoever, 1989). He embarked on a career in Law and when he was practising as a lawyer in Rome (in AD 370) he was appointed as the Governor to Liguria, Amelia in Northern Italy (Hoever, 1989; Encarta, 2005).

In AD 374 Auxentius Episcopo of Arian faction died (Aphrem, 1963). The church committee was convened to elect a new Episcopo. A noisy quarrel and vehement argument ensued between Arius supporters and those against them. Governor Ambrose was called upon to mediate and settle the dispute amicably. In the midst of his speech a child called out that Ambrose should be the next Episcopo which was unanimously endorsed by the gathering. Though reluctant he had to go by the majority opinion and was compelled to accept the position. He received baptism on 7 December AD 374 in his thirty fourth year (Moothedan, 2001) and in eight days step by step he was duly consecrated the next bishop (Aphrem, 1963). As a religious head

he adopted an ascetic life and apportioned his entire wealth to the Church and to the poor.

The politician turned church man immediately turned his attention to his great responsibilities. Ambrose studied holy books, letters of prelates, theology and asceticism and wrote profusely on these subjects. The most important among his theological works are a book on Christian moral law '*De Officiis Ministrorum*' and another book he wrote for his sister St. Mercelena, "*De Virginibus*" (White, 1991). Being a strong spokesman against Arianism he was known as the "Hammer of Arianism".

Ambrose battled boldly to preserve the independence of the Church from the state. He was an affable Governor and the common people were impressed by his compassionate attitude and intelligence. Once in an argument with Emperor Auxensius, Ambrose told him "The Emperor is a member of the Church; he is never above it" (Moothedan, 2001). He also restrained the kings from occupying positions in Church along with the Church prelates. "The royal robes belong to a king but they are not those of a priest. So it is not right for the kings in their royal attire to occupy the same place with the priests". In those days the kings were allowed to enter the sacrificial altar along with the priests (Chediath, 1998, p. 251). The Church enjoyed the patronage and support of the kings in the fourth century and in return they were allowed these privileges.



In AD 390 Emperor Theodosius ordered the massacre of seven thousand people in Thessalonica. Ambrose had forbidden this Emperor from entering the church. He asked the Emperor, "Who are you? Only God has supreme power over the world. Who do you make yourself by issuing orders without discretion for a massacre? Do you have power like God's who only has authority over lives?" (Aphrem, 1963). The chastisement led the Emperor to repentance and he decided to frame laws according to the direction given by Ambrose. Accordingly if a man commits a sin equivalent to murder he should be given one month's reprieve before the facts are proved against him.

St. Ambrose's speeches helped a lot to lead St. Augustine to repentance. It was he who baptised St. Augustine in AD 387. St. Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, died on 4 April AD 397 after serving the church for twenty three years (Aphrem, 1963). His feast is celebrated on 7 December (the day of his baptism).

## **30. Mor Yacoub M'fasqo**

**(AD? - AD 421/422)**

Yacoub who was a Persian (Yacoub M'fasquo or Jacob, the dismembered) lived in the town of Lophoth with his parents. The king of the country, Guharon, had great appreciation for Yacoub. On knowing that he was a Christian the king tried to dissuade him from following his belief by tempting him with gifts. This caused Yacoub to turn away from God.

Yacoub's parents appealed to him through a letter not to give up the true faith, Christianity. There upon, he repented and returned to the Christian belief. After the death of King Guharon his son, Yasadagarad was informed about his change of heart and the new king questioned him about it. He informed the king, "Our Saviour has promised a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God" (John 16:2). Your feeling that you respect God is itself a folly.

The king was furious listening to him and ordered his ministers to decide a punishment for him. This was the verdict, "He should not be killed all of a sudden. First his fingers, toes, then his

hands, legs and hip should be severed. He should be beheaded after being dismembered thus". Many believers were grieved to hear this verdict. They prayed," Oh God the mighty, strengthen him, this servant of yours to escape from this trial with success."

Yacoub requested some time for prayer before the callous punishment was implemented. He knelt down turning towards the east and prayed,"Oh God, please listen to this weak servant. Strengthen me at this moment.....Bless me to be a friend and comforter to those who love you and receive persecution in your name".

The executioners chopped off his fingers and toes. He kept on praying even while enduring severe pain."I will praise God till my last breath". Finally he was decapitated. Believers carried off his body and buried it by reciting Psalm 51. This martyr's memory is celebrated on 27 November.

## **31. St. Rabula of Edessa**

**(AD 350 ? – 435)**

Rabula was born in a wealthy family of Kenneshrin village (Chalkis near Aleppo, Syria). His father was a pagan priest and mother was a Christian. He learned Greek and Syriac, got married in his youth and led a family life (Aphrem, 1963).

Once while listening to an evangelical talk in Mor Abraham Dayaro in Kenneshrin he felt a desire to listen to and study the word of God. Later he learned Theology from Mor Eusebius of Smishath and Aakkak Episcopo of Aleppo. When he returned to Kennishrin he lived away from his family and made his wife and children lead an ascetic life (Chedyath, 1987). He freed his slaves and shared his riches with the poor in Kenneshrin, Aleppo and Edessa and joined Mor Abraham Dayaro.

He was ordained a priest in AD 388 and in AD 411 after the death of Bishop Diogenes of Urhoy (Edessa) Rabula was ordained as the successor by the Patriarch of Antioch.

The literary legacy of St. Rabula is small in bulk. It comprises rules for the ascetics, rules for the children of the covenant, rules about services in the

Church, a few *madraso*, *sugeetho* and *bovootho*.

It was customary for Rabula to stay at Mor Abraham Dayaro every year fasting and meditating for spiritual rejuvenation. He took part in the synod of Ephesus in AD 431. He passed away on 7 August AD 435. His feast is celebrated by the Church on 8 August.

## **32. St. Coorilos (Cyril)**

### **The Patriarch of Alexandria**

**(AD 376 - 444)**

St. Coorilos was born in 376 AD in Alexandria (Egypt). He was consecrated bishop by his uncle (father's brother?). On 17 October, AD 412 he became the Patriarch of Alexandria (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Moothedan, 2001).

St. Coorilos presided over the Council of Ephesus convened by Emperor Theodosyus II. The Council which commenced on 22 June, 431 AD was attended by one hundred and fifty-nine bishops (A history of the church, 1846; Cayre, 1935). St. Coorilos is referred to as Cyril of Alexandria in most of the reference books.

Nestorius who ascended as the Patriarch of Constantinople in AD 421 started spreading heresies about Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. According to him Mary was mother only to the humanness of Christ who earned His divinity only after His birth (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Hoever, 1989). Nestorius also indoctrinated that it was wrong to address Mary as the mother of God; instead she should be called only as the mother of Christ.

The Council of Ephesus analysed the heresies of Nestor and declared that "in Jesus Christ the God head and man head have converged into one unity" and that Mary was the mother of God. The profound interpretations of St. Coorilos earned him the title, "the Doctor of Incarnation" (White, 1991).

St. Coorilos is described in the fifth diptych of the Holy Qurbono, as one who proved clearly the incarnation of Jesus Christ and as the tower of honesty. The glorious saint is also described as one who revealed the humanhood of the Word. He had learned theology from many eminent scholars but he encouraged instruction from none other than the very ancient teachers. It was a strong edict practised by him.

The protector of True faith, St. Coorilos, had to face much harassment from the disciples of Nestor as he opposed his dissenting views. St. Coorilos is presented as a quarrel monger by some historians but his stand was always clear, "peace is desirable but it should not be at the cost of faith" (Cayre, 1935).

He has written theological interpretations of the Books of St. Luke and St. John. He also countered the opinions of Nestor in a book titled, "The true faith about the Incarnation of Christ." He died on 27 June, AD 444. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Coorilos on 27 June.

## **33. St. Dioscorus**

**(AD? – 454)**

No details are available about Dioscorus' birth, parents or education. He served as Archdeacon to his predecessor, St. Coorilos (Cyril) (Smith & Wace, 1887). He attended the Ephesus Synod (The Encyclopaedia Americana, 1988). After the demise of St. Coorilos he was consecrated the Patriarch of Alexandria in AD 444 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

There was a dispute between Euthyches, the dayro head and his Episcopo, Flabianos of Constantinople about Christology (Aphrem, 1963). Euthyches was punished by the Synod of Constantinople in AD 448 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2001). In the light of this event Emperor Theodosius II with the approval of Pope Leo I convened a synod in AD 449. The philosophy of Euthyches' Christology as written in the Encyclopaedia Americana is like this – Euthyches, an ardent anti-Nestorian, denied the orthodox teaching by asserting that “human nature of Christ was absorbed by the divine” an error usually called ‘monophysitism.’

Dioscorus presided over the second Synod convened at St. Mary's church in Ephesus on 8 August AD 449. It was attended by one hundred and fifty bishops (Smith & Wace, 1877). The heresy that Jesus born of Mary possessed two natures



after the miraculous union, was condemned by this synod. This synod decided not to move away from the decision reached by all other universal synods. Dioscorus faced many tribulations as he refused to divert from the teachings of ancient Church fathers about Christology.

There was a schism following the decision of the AD 449 synod, among the members of dayro, prelates and administrators about the dual nature of Christ. As this dispute reached its height Emperor Theodosius died on 28 July AD 450 without leaving an heir. His sister Pulcheria was a nun. The prelates of the Nestorian congregation who desired the support of the rulers allowed her to marry. She married Marcian and ascended the throne as the queen.

Marcian who supported the dual nature of Christ recalled Nestor when he came to power. He shouted victoriously, "Mary, will you be called the mother of God again?" Immediately he fell from the vehicle in which he was travelling and met with death (Aphrem, 1963).

There was disagreement between Pope Leo I and Alexandrian Patriarch, Mor Dioscorus. The letter sent through the delegates of Pope Leo I was not allowed to be read by the president Mor Diyascorus. He justified his decision by stating the Pope's letter contained indications about taking the side of Nestor which might have led to his suspension. In order to avoid that contingency the

letter was not allowed to be read (Aphrem, 1963).

Heated arguments resulted in the second synod of Ephesus. Pope Leo I called it the 'Robber Synod' (Encarta, 2001). His feeling that the Roman throne was insulted initiated many quarrels and led to the Chalcedon Synod.

Mor Dioscorus had to face a trial in the Chalcedon Synod in the church of the martyr, Ophemia. He said Falbiyanos of Constantinople was banished because he believed Christ had two natures after attaining the human form. He possessed letters of Church fathers like Mor Athanasius, Gregory and Coorilos to prove that Jesus who attained the human form after the union has only one nature and it was wrong to say he had dual nature. He knew he too might be banished like those fathers but he was not ready to give up their teaching (Aphrem, 1963).

The Chalcedon synod suspended Mor Dioscorus and he was compelled by Yuhanon, the Marcian's commander, to sign the decisions of the synod. The saint refused "Even if my hand is severed and blood flows over the paper I will not sign it." Then according to the orders of Marcian he was banished to Gangra (now Cankri, Turkey) and he passed away on 4 September AD 454 when he was there (The Encyclopaedia Americana, 1988). He is remembered in the fifth diptych and his memory is celebrated on 4 September.

## **34. St. Abhai, the Martyr**

**(AD 345? – 455?)**

Historical facts about St. Abhai, the metropolitan, are not available. In the Syrian Orthodox Church calendar he is given the attribute Mahirsabor but the details of the qualifications are not evident. The available information about this saint who is remembered in the fifth diptych is presented here so that it will be transferred to the next generation.

Abhai was born in a village Raksan in Mardin, Turkey in the middle of the fourth century BC (Philip Joseph, 1969). He joined a dayro and constructed one on the top of the Karkar hill. This dayro is known as Abhai's Dayro or the Monastery of Ladders. He divided his wealth and property among the poor. He was ordained a priest by Christopher, the bishop of Mardin.

In AD 1185 the Patriarch Michael Rabo, the Great, improved and regularised the history of Mor Abhai (Aphrem I, 2000). During the reign of King Theodosius, bones of so many people considered to be saints were preserved. On Abhai's advice it was decided to examine their authenticity. All these

bones were put in fire. Many were consumed by fire but some remained glowing. They were duly preserved with all respect and many believers received blessings from them (Joseph, 2005).

Even though he was a friend of King Theodosius II, details about his life are not recorded by historians. His name is not on the list of the metropolitans in Nicaea (Aphraem I, 2000). Mor James of Sarug composed a poem eulogising St. Abhai.

Mor Abhai served the Church for thirty-two years. It is assumed that either he died in his hundred and tenth year (Joseph Kulathramannil, 1992) or suffered martyrdom. He was acclaimed as a saint even while living and many people received blessings and healing through his intercession. His feast is celebrated on 1 October.

## **35. Mor Yuhanon Bar Afthunia**

**(AD 483 – 538)**

Yuhanon, born as the fifth (fourth?) son of Afthunia, was a person of distinction in the monastery of Edessa. He was born in AD 483 in Edessa. His father died a few days before his birth and there after he grew up under the care of his mother Afthunia.

As he attended church regularly he learnt the prayers and rites of the holy services very early. His mother had a cherished desire to dedicate him to God. With that purpose he was taken to the monastery in the name of St. Thomas in Seleuk near Antioch at the early age of fifteen. The monastery normally granted admission only to the youth. Afthunia had met the then Patriarch Bladius (488 – 498?) to get a letter of recommendation to seek his admission.

When Afthunia conveyed her request to the gateman at the door of the monastery, she was called before the Superior who was nearly a hundred years old. The recommendation letter was handed over to him. The partially blind Superior moved his palm over young Yuhanon's face and remarked he was under age to be lawfully admitted

there. The mother pleaded, "Father, I could not wait till the child attained the age of maturity lest my offering should be tainted by the world. Let a mother's desire for the goodness of her son compensate whatever other inadequacies he may have. Just as child Simon was accepted by priest Eli, kindly accept my son also." The Superior was unmoved as he was unwilling to change the existing laws made by the ancestors. She was asked to bring the boy back when hair grows on his face.

As it was getting late to make the return journey, the mother and the son retreated to the church in the monastery. The travel weary son fell asleep but the mother prayed relentlessly throughout the night. That night the Superior saw in his dream St. Thomas who advocated to him to admit Yuhanon who definitely would do well for the monastery. He did not wait for the morning to dawn to admit Yuhanon in the monastery.

Yuhanon was appointed as assistant to the gatekeeper. After seven years he received the priestly garments at the age of twenty two. He was then apprenticed as a carpenter. He was a keen participant in the religious life, reciting prayers, reading the holy books and helping other inmates. He used to receive sixty gold dinars as a share of paternal property every year which he readily gave away to the poor and the needy. His fervent prayer was, he should not be tempted to retain money with him when there were hungry and suffering people around him.

Other seminarians were at times jealous of

him but he never fell short of the strict observance of his devotion or routine work. He was compelled later on in his priestly life to take up the leadership of the monastery and thereby he earned the love and respect of the fellow members.

Even during the reign of Justin I (AD 521), a period of persecution, he managed the administration of monastery work wisely and patiently. Many were healed by his devout prayers. Following by the Chalcedonian persecution another monastery was established on the banks of Euphrates in Kenneshrin. It is known as “the Monastery of Bar Afthunia” or the “Kenneshrin Monastery.” Many Patriarchs, Episcopos and scholars have emerged from there.

Mor Yuhanon’s regular fasting, prayers, vigils and travels made him sick. Before he died, the aged Alexandros was appointed in his place. Even in his unhealthy condition he used to pray for others and many were healed. This saint passed away on 8 November AD 538.

He has written many books. The interpretation of the Songs of Solomon, five *madrasso* on the miracles of Christ, a “*sugeeso*” used during the rites of “washing of the feet”, nine *madrasso* on the redemptive birth, resurrection, three *madrasso* on Severios of Antioch (AD 512- 538), a *madrasso* used at the time of the burial service are some of them. The great saint is commemorated on 8 November by the Church.

## **36. Mor Ahudemme**

**(? – AD 575)**

Mor Ahudemme, the pride of the Eastern Church was a philosopher and a theologian. His wisdom, purity of life and intense belief in the true faith are praiseworthy.

He was born in Balad. He was consecrated a bishop for the diocese of Barbaya situated between Nisybin and Sinchar in AD 559. Mor Yacoub Burdaeus (AD 505 – 578) entrusted him with the responsibility of the churches in the eastern region. He could bring many Arab nomads to Christianity. Many churches and two monasteries were built for them. God blessed him to work miracles in places where he rendered missionary service (Aphrem I, 2000).

A queen was converted to Christianity due to the missionary work of Mor Ahudemme. This provoked King Khosrau I Anushirwan who imprisoned Mor Ahudemme and he received martyrdom on 2 August AD 575. His mortal remains were transferred to Qronta, opposite to Tigris, and were buried there.

Mor Ahudemme is counted as the first Metropolitan of the East after the confiscation of the Church by the Nestorians in AD 484. He has



written books on subjects like creation of man, man-  
the finest of creations, free will, spirit etc (Aphrem  
I, 2000; Brock & Witakowski, 2001). His memory  
is celebrated on 2 August.

## 37. Mor Marutha The Maphrian of Tigris

(c.AD 569 – AD 649)

Mor Marutha was born in Sharsak, a village in Bethnehudra in Mosul around 569 AD His father, the village headman, was a religious person and very affluent.

After his primary education he joined 'Sardas' monastery which had about seventy members. The Abbot Mor Gausi was well known as a person with miraculous powers while living and even after his death. Mor Marutha obtained his priestly ordination from this monastery. He moved to Mor Sakkai monastery near Kallunikya town to pursue theological studies as well as the study of Greek and Syriac.

He spent ten years there under the tutorship of *malphono* Theodorus and studied scholarly books of Mor Gregorious Thevologus. Mor Marutha who was a seeker of knowledge became the disciple of Thoma, the blind in Urhoy (Edessa) and attained dexterity in composition of literary works and calligraphy from Shemavoon Shubdia and Mor Aaho. Subsequently he became a teacher of Theology and interpretation of the books of the

Prelates in the church in Mor Mathai monastery.

In AD 628 he was ordained *Maphrian* of Tigris by Mor Athanasius I Gammolo (AD 595-631), the Patriarch of Antioch. Salukis I Nikkettar (321 -281 BC) had established Tigris, a Greek town (Salukia-Greek name) as the Eastern capital. It is situated on the north-eastern side of river Tigris.

The twelve dioceses under the administration of the *Maphrian* of Tigris were Ba-Arbaya, Barman, Me-Al-Thaya, Arzoon , Gemel, Marga, Sheegor, Karma, Kurdu island, Banuhadra, Phirshabur and Sarsaun. The Nineva diocese was under the administration of the bishop of Mor Mathai Monastery. When people of Urhoy migrated to Persia at the time of war three more dioceses came under his governance. They were Azarbajan, Kursan, and Afganistan.

Mor Marutha constructed churches and established monasteries. He also wrote books. The litany used while blessing the water for Epiphany, the biography of Mor Ahudema, the bishop of Tigris (d. 575), interpretation of The Gospel, The Holy *Qurbono Thakso*, speeches for some feasts are included in this. It is recorded in the writings of Bar Sleebi (d. 1171) that the Nineva lent, (the three days' lent) was put into force by Mor Marutha.

Mor Marutha passed away in AD 649 in his eightieth year after having served the Syrian Church for twenty years. His remains were interred in the church which he had constructed. His feast is celebrated on 1 May.

## **38. Mor Yacoub of Edessa**

**(AD 633? – 708)**

Yacoub the son of Isahac was born in AD 633 in Ayndaba village, Antioch (Aphrem I, 2000). He became a monk in Kennishrin Dayoro in his youth. He learned Greek under the tutorship of Severus Sabukht. His further studies were done in Economics at Alexandria and he studied Hebrew at Edessa.

He was ordained a deacon in AD 672 and later ordained a priest. In AD 684, Patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius II consecrated him as the Metropolitan of Edessa (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). Mor Yacub was strict in matters regarding religion and dismissed those who ignored or disobeyed the rules of the monastery. Some of Mor Yacoub's rules meant for the priests have been published (Chediyath, 1987).

He was furious when advised by other metropolitans to compromise with those who disobeyed the rules. He burned the books of rules and gave up the administrative work and retreated to Kesum or Kaisum Dayoro (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Aphrem I, 2000). He worked for eleven

years as a Greek teacher in Yusebenna Dayoro. Following an argument regarding the interpretation of the Bible he again retreated to Tell Ada Dayoro where he stayed for nine years. As he was a scholar in Greek and Hebrew languages he could compose a reference book on the ancient books of law.

Metropolitan Habib who had assumed responsibilities of Edessa after the withdrawal of Mor Yacoub expired in AD 707. Mor Yacoub became the Metropolitan of Edessa once again after twenty three years. But he passed away after a short period on 5 June AD 708.

Though a man of quick temper he led a saintly life. He was a man of strong determination. Many historians record that had he not given up the administration of the diocese the Church would have lost his many other valuable contributions. Patriarch Aphrem I has published a list of his books along with their brief contents (Aphrem I, 2000).

Mor yacoub is well known as a grammarian, poet, translator, historian, commentator, law maker, philosopher and theologian. His letters (providing answers to doubts) constitute a store house of wisdom.

It was Mor Yacoub who used the Greek vowels in Syriac (Douglas, 1978). He translated many works of Patriarch Severius. Grammar books on Syriac and interpretations of the prelates make Mor Yacoub's proficiency unequalled. The copy of his translated version of the Book of Kings

is preserved in Paris Library (Aphrem I, 2000). He has also written a continuation of the church history of Eusebius until the year AD 692. (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). The feast of Mor Yacoub is celebrated on 5 June.

## **39. Mor Baselios Yeldho Maphrian**

**(1593? – 1685)**

Yeldho was born in the famous Hadhai family in Karakosh village near Mosul, Iraq. Karakosh village was earlier known by the names Bakudaida or Kooded. At a very young age he joined Mor Bahnam Monastery near Kooded.

In 1662, Patriarch Esau II (Quamsheh) consecrated Ramban Yeldho as a Maphrian. Mor Mathai Dayoro in Mosul town was his head quarters. The Governor of Mosul incarcerated Yeldho Bava along with Very Rev. Rambans Geevarghese and Isaac over matters regarding the renovation work done in Mor Mathai Dayoro and they were made to pay a huge amount as fine.

In 1677 Geevarghese Ramban was consecrated Metropolitan under the name Mor Dioscorus by Yeldho Bava for the Jaseera diocese. Soon he was installed as the successor of Mor Yeldho Maphriano by Patriarch Abdul Masiha I. In 1684 the Patriarch consecrated the holy chrism in Saffron (Kurkhuma) Dayoro and spoke about the necessity of metropolitans going to Malankara. Mor Yeldho Bava who attended this holy function

volunteered for the service despite his old age (91 years).

Mor Yeldho proceeded to his head quarters to make preparations for the journey (Aphrem, 1964; Varghese, 1998; Kurian Corepiscopo, 2003). He was accompanied by his brother Jamma, two monks from Mor Bahanam Dayoro, Jocko and Mathai and Mor Ivanios Hidayathulla Episcopa. Of these five only three, Mor Yeldho Maphriano, the Episcopa and Ramban Mathai arrived at Malankara. He was one of the illustrious Syrian fathers who came down to guide the Malankara Church in turbulent times.

The saintly Bava and his associates who started from Basra in 1685 arrived at Tellicherry. Fearing persecution from the Portuguese they went to Pallivasal incognito. There must have been other travellers in their journey towards Pallivasal. There are several stories of miracles that happened during the saint's hazardous trip to Kothamangalam. They encountered a tiger on the way ready to pounce. When the Bava raised his cross and prayed the tiger ran away. When they reached Pallivasal his fellow travellers chose to stay near the present power house which was the usual place of halting. The Bava suggested it was better to shift their camp to a farther area. They did accordingly. During midnight there was a heavy downpour and in the ensuing flood many people along with those who put up camp in the first mentioned place were washed away. The next day he offered Qurbono in



Pallivasal. Many people opine that the place gained the name Pallivasal because the Holy Father had stayed there.

They reached Kozhipalli after traversing a forest. He enquired a Chakkala Nair tending cattle if there was a church nearby. The man expressed his inability to lead them as he could not abandon his cattle. The Bava drew a circle and the goats were made to stand inside the circle. Nair was amazed to see the cattle remaining inside the boundary line. He then informed the Bava his sister was in throes of labour pain. He wanted some water blessed by him to ease her pain. For that he got ready to climb a coconut tree. But the tree inclined before him and the Bava blessed the tender coconut water. He went to give it to his sister who had an easy delivery after drinking the blessed water.

Even now the eldest member of Chakkalakkudy Thekkalakkattu Nair family leads the *perunnal* procession holding the lamp. The Holy Bava was led to Kothamangalam Cheriyaapally that day (it was established on 13 *Kanni* 1455). On reaching there he sat down on the north-western side of the church. The date of arrival was 7 *Kanni* 1685. On his arrival it is believed the church door opened by itself and the bell began to toll. It was the culmination of ultimate sacrifice, endurance and obedience. It was as indefinable as the glorious entry through heavenly portals.

Mor Hidayathulla Episcopo was consecrated Metropolitan by Yeldho Bava on 14 *Kanni* (Yacoub,

1958). He fell ill due to his extreme old age and tedious journey. He received the last sacraments of anointment with holy oil and extreme unction on 19 *Kanni*, thirteen days after his arrival at Kothamangalam. The saintly father left for his heavenly abode on Saturday, 3pm on 19 *Kanni*. At the time of his death the huge granite cross in the church compound was miraculously lit up. He was entombed in the sanctuary of Mor Thoman Cheriapally on 20 *Kanni* 1685. The Church celebrates his feast on 3 October with spiritual grandeur. According to Bull No. E 265/87 of the year 1987 he was declared a saint by H.H. Patriarch of Antioch, Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas.

## 40. Mor Basalios Shagr Allah III

(AD? – 1764)

Shagr Allah was born as the son of Deacon Moosa Al Quasbj. After completing his seminary education he became a monk and later he was ordained a priest (Aphrem I, 2000).

Shagr Allah was consecrated Maphrian in the month of August 1748 by the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, Mor Ignatius George III (1745 – 1768), and was sent to Malankara. He was sent there on the request of Mor Thoma V. Rev. Shagr Allah Maphrian was accompanied by Metropolitan Mor Yuhanon Gregorios, Very Rev. Corepiscopo Geevarghese, Ramban Yuhanon and Deacons Anthon, Moosa, Hadaya Shagr Allah and a servant Abdulla.

Two and a half centuries ago conveniences were limited and travel was dangerous. They started their journey on 25 *Chingam* from Amid (Amida or Dayarbakar, Turkey) which was the then patriarchal head quarters.

Maphrian carried with him sixty four manuscripts, holy books, three crosses from Jerusalem and relics of saints for the Malankara Church. From Amid they went to Aleppo (Old Alab

or Halab, Syria) then to Baruva and from there to Bagdad (Bagdad, Iraq). On their way to Bagdad they were attacked and the money meant for the travel was plundered. From Bagdad to Basrah (Al Basrah, Iraq) they went by boat. After spending some days in Basrah they continued their journey by an English ship to Bander-e Abbas, Iran . They were compelled to stay there for seven months for fear of pirates and because of the ongoing battle between Persian kings. Shagr Allah Bava's 'Travelogue to Malnakara' written in 1751 was published in the patriarchal magazine, 'Al Majella Al Petriarchia' (Vol. 7, pp. 125-133) by Patriarch Aphrem I (Aphrem I, 2000).

The Bava and his company reached Surat on 24 *Kumbham* 1751. In this journey as well from Bander-e Abbas to Surat they were attacked by thieves. They arrived at Cochin on 23 *Medam* 1751 (on the day of the feast of St. George.) He was the Governor's guest at the Cochin fort. He had to pay about Rs.12000/- as travel fare to the shipping company. Contrary to the prior agreement Mor Thoma V refused to meet the expenses or visit the Bava. He was in a difficult situation.

Twenty days later Metropolitan Mor Ivanios Yuhanon visited the Bava at the Cochin Fort. Mor Ivanios had been consecrated Metropolitan of the Patriarchal Palace by Patriarch Shagr Allah in 1740 and he was sent to Malankara in 1746 by Patriarch Geevarghese III. He returned to Amid, his native place in 1751 after the arrival of Maphrian Shagr Allah. Even though four letters were sent to Mor

Thoma V he did not respond. He stayed seventy two days at the Fort and after visiting the Rajah of Cochin on 3 *Karkkidakam*, he reached St. Martha Mariam Church, Kandanad on 4 *Karkidakam* 1751. Even there the meeting with Mor Thoma V did not take place. He reached Kothamangalam travelling on foot via Mulamthuruthy, Kolanchery and Kunnukurudy.

Mor Shakr Allah Bava stayed at Kothamangalam Valiyapally and Mor Thoma V at Cheriya pally for some days. In spite of that the expected meeting did not take place. The Bava offered prayers at the tomb of Basalios Bava and waited for the arrival of Mor Thoma V in vain. He had spread some erroneous references too about the Bava. In this context on 30 *Medam* 1752 Ramban Yuhanon who had accompanied the Bava was consecrated the Malankara Metropolitan instead of Mor Thoma V at the Kandanad church (Philip, 1992).

Mattancherry church was built by this Holy Father by purchasing the land for Rs.475. He had spent a long period at Kayamkulam Kadeesa church. He has written a book in Arabic 'Quelat Al Imrah' regarding the Christian belief.

His Beatitude who had lived and served the Malankara church for thirteen years attained his eternal rest while staying at Mattanchery church on 9 *Thulam* 1764. He was buried at St. Martha Mariam Church, Kandanad. The Malankara Church celebrates his feast on 22 October on a grand scale.

## **41. Mor Gregorius Yuhanon**

**(1695 – 1773)**

Yuhanon, son of priest Isahak and Semma was born in 1695 in Bakudaïda (Bakudaïda, also known as Kooded or Karakosh near Mosul) (Aphrem, 1964). He is a family member of Yeldho Maphrian who is entombed at Cheriapally, Kothamangalam. Yuhanon and his brother sleeba had been monks at Mor Bahanam Dayoro near Bakudaïda.

Yuhanon was consecrated Bishop with title Gregorius for Mor Bahanam Dayoro and parish in 1747 by the hundred and ninth Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Geevarghese III (1745 – 68). Mor Gregorius Yuhanon accompanied Mor Basalius Shakuralla Maphrian, who is entombed in Martha Mariam church, Kandanad, to Malankara in 1749. From 1764 onwards he was involved in the administration of Malankara Church (Aphrem, 1964). Yuhanon Ramban of Mosul who came to Malankara with Mor Gregorius Yuhanon was consecrated Bishop under the name Mor Ivanios Yuhanon in 1752 by Mor Shakarulla Maphrian (this venerable father died in 1794 and was entombed at Chengannoor church). These two Syrian prelates

carried on the administration of Malankara during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Thoma V died in 1765 without receiving proper laying of hands. Before his death he had consecrated his nephew Joseph as Thoma VI without any canonical decision. Mor Geevarghese Yuhanon and Mor Ivanios Yuhanon wrote a letter to Thoma VI in which they stated "Dear brother, we are foreigners in this land. We have left our own brothers and friends and henceforth we see you all in their places". Subsequently when Mor Gregorius Yuhanan was celebrating Qurbono at Niranam Church Thoma VI came up to him and fell at his feet to beg pardon. Mor Gregorius raised him affectionately and kissed him.

Thoma VI was consecrated bishop under the name Mor Divannasios on 27 May 1770 by Mor Gregorius Yuhanon and Mor Ivanios Yuhanon and he was given the hand cross, crosier and sthathikon (sent by Patriarch Geevarghese III through Mor Shakarulla Maphrian when Thoma V was to be ordained) (Philip, 1992). It was written in the *Susthanikon*, ' Mor Gregorius, the Bishop of Jerusalem and Episcopo of India Mor Ivanios have consecrated Joseph who is called Thoma as the Bishop of Malankara Church under the name Mor Divannasios. This was done on the orders of Patriarch of Antioch, Mor Ignatius.'

After his consecration Thoma Mor Divannasios presented a written agreement to Mor Gregorius and Mor Ivanios in which he stated "The poorest and

weakest among all metropolitans, Mor Divannasios Joseph has written this agreement on my own free will and is presented to Bishop of Jerusalem Mor Ggregorius and Episcopo Mor Ivanius. I promise hereby to offer Qurbono according to the Syrian rites. I will give them each a silver coin daily for their day to day needs". (It was written on *Thiruvonam* day *Chingam* 1770 at Niranam church). He started ordaining priests and deacons. People were also happy at the newly established peace. These three bishops co-operated in rendering the congregational work of the church with great zeal.

From 1772 onwards Gregorius Bava's eyesight started weakening. Very Rev. Ramban Abraham Kattumangad treated him for some time. The venerable Bava passed away on 10 July 1773 and he was entombed on the north part of the altar. Later on 17 December 2006 his relics were transferred to the north side of the altar.



## **42. St. Abded Aloho II**

**(AD 1833 – 1915)**

Abded Aloho (Abd Allah) was born in Mcluf tribe as son of yacub in the village Sadad near Homs, Syria in 1833 (Aphrem, 1964). He had an inclination for ascetic life from childhood and accepted monastic vestments at St. Mark Dayro in Jerusalem.

Abdulla was a close disciple and incessant escort of the metropolitan of Jerusalem, Mor Osthathios Abdul Noor. St. Mark Dayro was in debts and Mor Osthathios tried his best to pay back and clear the debts. With the permission of Patriarch Yacoub II money was collected from various dioceses and as part of this mission Mor osthathios reached Malankara along with Abdulla Ramban. Mor Koorilos Bava (entombed in Mulamthurthy), the delegate of Antioch to India made necessary arrangements during the period 1856 – 58 for this visit.

Mor Abdulla Noor of Edessa passed away in 1867. Abdulla Ramban who had been the secretary to Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub II from 1866 – 1871 was consecrated bishop of Jerusalem with the name

Mor Gregorius (Aphrem I, 2000). When Patriarch Ignatius Peter III visited Malankara in 1875, Mor Gregorius Abdulla Bava also accompanied him.

During the Malankara visit he participated in the Synod at Muamthurthy, attended the consecration of six bishops and blessing of the holy chrism. After his return from Malankara in 1877 he served in the dioceses of Syria and Amid as the bishop. In 1888 he participated in the Lambeth Conference in England. He was able to secure two printing presses for the church while in England.

In 1894 Patriarch Peter IV also referred to as Peter III passed away. St. Ignatius Abdul Masih Bava was his successor. But the Holy Synod deposed Abdul Masih in 1903. In 1906 on 15 August (September) Mor Gregorius Abdulla Bava was consecrated the Patriarch with the new name Mor Ignatius Abded Aloho II or Abdulla II (Patriarch Abdulla II Sattuf). A decree announcing this consecration was issued by Mor Divannasius Joseph Pulikkotil from Kunnamkulam church on 24 *Chingam* and was sent to all the churches in Malankara.

Incapacitated by old age Pulikkotil Thirumeni requested Patriarch Abdulla II to consecrate new bishops for Malankara. (The fact that the deposed Abdul Masih was alive then and the contention of reestablishment of Catholicate in 1912 are contradictory). According to the orders of the Patriarch, on 14 *Kumbham* 1908 the representatives

of the Church met at the Old Seminary and elected V. Rev. Paulose Ramban Kochuparambil and Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Malpan, Vattassery to be ordained bishops and sent them to Jerusalem. They were consecrated and instituted with titles Mor Coorilos and Mor Divannasios respectively on 31 May 1908. Along with the newly ordained bishops, the delegate of Antioch Mor Osthathios Sleebea Bava also returned to Malankara.

In 1909 St. Abdulla Bava decided to visit Malankara. Vattaseril Mor Divannasios and many Church leaders went to Bombay to receive him and to accompany him to Malankara. One of the two rambans who came with the Patriarch was later appointed as Mor Yulios Elias, the delegate of Antioch (1927 to 1962) (Kurien Corepiscopa, 1982).

Mor Severios Geevarghese, the first bishop of Knanaya community, was consecrated by the Patriarch on 28 August 1910 at Vadakara church. On 30 *Idavam* 1910 as per Bull No 42 he gave permission for 'the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Prayer book' translated by Mathai Kassisso Konatt. In 1911 on the feast of transfiguration he conducted the sacrament of the blessing of the holy chrism at Mulanthurthy church. On 17 August 1911 the representatives of the Church met at Thrikunnath Seminary and Mor Coorilos Paulsoe was selected as Malankara metropolitan in the place of Vattaseril Thrumeni.

St. Abdulla Bava who returned to Jerusalem in 1912 died on 9 December 1915. He was buried on the southern side of St. Mark Dayro church. On 9 May 2000 the author was blessed and privileged to offer Holy Qurbono in the church of St. Mark and to pray at the tomb of Mor Abded Aloho.

## 43. Mor Severius Geevarghese

(1851 – 1927)

Geevarghese was born as the youngest son of the vicar of Kottiyam Valiyapally Fr. Cherian Philipose Edavazhikkal and Kunjachi on 12 November 1851 (28 *Thulam* 1027). He was ordained a deacon on 10 August 1862 (29 *Karkkidakam*) by the delegate of Antioch, Mor Yuakkim Mor Coorilos, at Kottiyam Cheriyaapally. His father Philipose Kassisa died in 1867 (Stephen, 2006) leaving the young deacon under the care and protection of his elder brothers Mathu and Very Rev. Philipose Corepiscopo.

He was ordained a priest on 25 April 1875 (13 *Medam*, Easter Sunday) at Kottiyam Puthenpally by Mor Joseph Divannasios Pulikkottil. The foundation stone for Kottiyam Valiyapally in the name of Mor Barsoumo was laid by the Corepiscopo Philipose Edavazhikkal upon the orders of the Mor Coorilos Yuakkim, Delegate of Antioch, on 15 February 1868 (Philip, 1992).

The Reformation movement in the nineteenth century (Intercession prayers to St. Mary and other saints, prayers for the dead, which are important tenets of Syrian Orthodox Church were countered

by the Protestant missionaries) created rifts in many churches. The movement rocked the Knanaya Community as well. Many members of the Kottayam, Ranni and Kallissery churches also showed a favourable disposition towards the Reformation movement. Kottayam Valiapally also witnessed arguments and disputes based on this subject and Edavzhikkal Philipose Corepiscopo who strongly opposed the new movement was suspended by Mor Athanasios Mathews, a supporter of the Reformation movement.

Though not legally valid Mor Athanasius Mathews entrusted the responsibility of Kottayam Valiapally to Fr. Thoma, Mulluseril and Philipose Corepiscopo was sent away from the church. Undaunted he conducted service in the vestry adjacent to the church. Obstructions were then created by blocking the door with firewood and nailing down the locks. Criminal cases ensued but the vestry remained in the custody of Edavazhikkal priests according to court orders. Philipose Corepiscopo died on 26 May 1875 and Fr. Geevarghes Edavazhikkal took up the responsibility.

In 1875 Patriarch Peter IV arrived in India. Fr. Thoma Mullaseril and some others who supported Mor Athanasius expressed willingness to return to the mother church. The existing cases were compromised and Rev. Fr. Geevarghese was able to celebrate the Holy Qurbano in the church. The delegate of Antioch, Mor Athansius Semuvan

Bava who was staying at Puthenpally interceded and called off the ban against Thoma Kassisa and thereby established peace in the church. The historically famous Royal court order (1889) was unfavourable to the Reformation movement and the period of persecution drew to an end. Malankara Church should remember with gratitude the efforts made by Patriarch Peter IV meeting the British authorities for the settlement of this issue.

In the last part of nineteenth century, the Knanaya Community desired to have a Metropolitan of their own. Under the leadership of Fr. Elias Malithara a meeting of the community was convened on 8 *Makaram* 1882 and it announced the formation of Malankara Jacobite Syrian Knanaya Committee. Some were of opinion that a separate Metropolitan would cause division in the church. The committee submitted a petition to Patriarch Ignatius Abdulla II (Abded Aloho) and he favourably recognised the petition.

Gheevarghese Kassiso was elevated to the rank of a Ramban on 21 August 1910 (8 *Chingam*) at Pambakkada Valiyapally by the Patriarch. He was consecrated under the name Mor Severius by Patriarch Abdulla II on 28 August 1910 at Vadakara church as the first Metropolitan of the Knanaya Community. The consecration ceremony was attended by the delegate of Antioch, St. Osthathios Sleeba Bava and St. Athanasios Paulose of Alwaye.

The newly consecrated Bishop Mor Severius Geevarghese administrated the Knanaya diocese

residing at Kottayam Valiyapally in the name of St. Mary. An ordination committee was formed to decide candidates for ordination. He established Mor Aphrem Seminary at Chingavanam and performed the blessing ceremony. A mission church was also founded there to teach religious faith and pastors were appointed for that.

After eight years on 7 *Midhunam* 1919 he prepared a will in which he instructed the formation of a Trust. Any balance amount in his credit should be used for the education and welfare of the priests of Knanaya Community. Based on this Mor Severius Education Trust was founded.

The Golden Jubilee of his priestly ordination was celebrated in a simple manner on 26 April 1925. He offered Qurbano at Kottayam Valiyapalli. As he wanted to spend the rest of his old age in prayers he desired to have an assistant bishop. Respecting his wishes Thoma Kathanar, Ottathaikkal was consecrated under the name Mor Dioscorus Thomas by Patriarch Elias III on 24 October 1926 (He joined the Roman Catholic Church on 12 November 1939).

After serving the church as a bishop for sixteen years he passed away in his seventy-fifth year on 11 June 1927. He was laid to rest in Kottayam Valiyapalli. The burial service was conducted by the delegate of Antioch , Mor Yulios Elias, St. Athanasios Thirumeni of Alwaye and his successor Mor Dioscorus Thomas. 11 June is celebrated as his memorial day.



## 44. Mor Deevannasios Michael

(AD 1879 -1956)

Michael was born on 15 *Edavam* (1879 June 15?) M.E. 1055 as the eldest son of evangelist John of Alummootil family and Kilileth Achamma. After his primary education in his native town he continued his English studies in M.D. Seminary High School, Kottyam.

He was ordained *Korooyo* by Mor Joseph Deevannasios on 25 *Dhanu* M.E. 1073, *Yaufdaikkino* by Mor Geevarghese Gregorius Chathuruthil in M.E. 1077 at the old seminary and full deaconship was conferred on him in M.E. 1081 by Pulikkottil Mor Deevannasios Joseph at Kayamkulam Kadeesa church.

He was ordained *kassesso* on 15 *Chingam* M.E. 1084 at Parumala seminary with Mor Geevarghese Deevannasios as the chief celebrant along with Pulikkotil Mor Deevannasios, Mor Osthathios Sleeba (the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch) and Mor Coorlios Paulose as co-celebrants.

Fr. Michael worked in M. D. seminary from M.E. 1081 to 1086. He rendered honourable service

as the active worker of spiritual organisations such as the Sunday school, the Suryiani Youth Association and the Malankara Missionary Society.

When disputes erupted in the Malankara Church he left his job at the M. D. Seminary, Kottayam to return to his native place, Kayamkulam. He turned his attention to public service as a municipal councillor for twelve years and as a member representing Kayamkulam in Sreemulam Praja Sabha.

Rev. Fr. Michael who was selected for the dioceses of Quilon, Niranam and Thumbamon and Rev. Fr. Ottathaikkal Thomas, selected for the Knanaya community accompanied Mor Yulios Elias Bava, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, to Jerusalem on 14 *Kanni* 1102 in order to be consecrated as Metropolitans. They boarded S. S. Pilsana, an Italian ship, from Bombay on 20 *kanni* 1102.

They arrived at Port Saed on 20 October 1102 and continued their journey to Jerusalem by train. St. Ignatius Elias III was residing at the St. Mark's mansion, Jerusalem. The metropolitan candidates who were adorned with vestments and holding a cross and a lighted candle they were led inside the church.

Rev. Fr. Michael and Rev. Fr. Thomas were ordained Rambans on 4 *Thulam* 1102. On the eleventh of the same month these two Rambans along with Michael Ramban, a native of Mardin

and the nephew of the Patriarch St. Peter III, were raised to the position of Metropolitans. The installation ceremony was attended by the bishop of Jerusalem, Mor Geevarghese Gabriel, the delegate, Mar Yulios Elias and several other priests.

After assuming their new titles, the new bishops stayed in Jerusalem for fifty days and visited the holy places. The newly ordained bishops returned to Alwaye on 29 *Makaram* 1102, visited Mor Osthathios Sleeba, the delegate of Antioch, at Vadakara and arrived at Kottayam on 30 *Makaram*.

The Patriarch St. Elias III arrived in Malankara in 1931 March. Mor Deevannasios Michael served as his interpreter and helper till his death on 13 February 1932.

Mor Michael viewed Malankara church as one under the holy Apostolic See of Antioch. His reaction to the challenges of the turbid times in the church was meaningful. He used to say: Along with accession as the bishop he had taken up four things for himself, ragged clothes, torn mattress, bran pie and plain water. He had these and his children would provide them for him. He wanted to gain nothing by showing impiety to the throne of the Holy See of Antioch.

Mor Diyaskoros Thomas, the Knanaya bishop, who was ordained along with him shifted allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church. Mor Michael was saddened by this estrangement but he endeavoured to provide courage to the believers

and protested against the adversaries of faith.

On 15 December 1955 he spoke for about one hour in Panampadi church in connection with the feast of his teacher Mor Coorilos Paulose. After his meals at the vestry he told the priests, "Dear children, I will die soon." They remained silent. Rev. Fr. Kuriakose Maliyil replied, "We will be near you." His response was, "That is enough."

The next day the *Thirumeni* found it difficult to swallow food and his condition soon worsened. Then the sacrament of anointing with oil was performed. His condition soon deteriorated and he passed away at 3 a.m. on 18 January 1956. Mar Phelexinose Paulose (later H. B. Catholicos Basalios Paulose II) led the prayers in his honour. Mor Yulios Elias Bava enrobed him in canonical attire and his mortal remains were kept in the church for the public to pay their homage. Next day, after a funeral procession the burial service was completed by afternoon.

Mor Michael's name had been an inspiration to many. He visited the parish churches on foot and by ox-cart and looked into the affairs of the people and made various arrangements. The believers were taken up by his speeches and the depth and gravity of his voice. He relished the ordinary man's diet of gruel and vegetable curry. He addressed everyone by name which endeared him to the parishioners. He never hesitated to admonish those who behaved defiantly in the altar.

He looked after the administrative affairs of the diocese of Kottayam for twelve years with Thrikothamangalam Mor Sharbeel Monastery as his headquarters. The late Mor Yulios Yacoob (Manjanikkara), Mor Thimotheus Yacoob (Thrikkothamangalm) and Mor Ivanios Philipose (Vellur) received priesthood from him. The feast of Mor Michael, known as the 'roaring lion of Malankara', is celebrated on 18 January.

## **45. Mor Yulios Elias** **the Delegate of the Holy See of Antioch** **(AD 1881 – 1962)**

Elias was born on 1 August 1881 in Mardin, Turkey. His father's name was Malke Quoro. He studied at the school of the church of Forty Martyrs.

He joined Kurkumo Dayro (Dier Al-zafaran) in 1902 and received his priestly vestments on 16 June 1905 at the age of twenty four. In 1906 he was appointed as secretary to the Patriarch Ignatius Abdulla II. He became *Kassiso* at the age of twenty-seven. During 1908 - 1911 Ramban Elias visited Jerusalem, London and India. On 24 September 1909 Ramban Elias visited India along with H. H. the Patriarch. They returned on 14 October 1911.

In 1911 Abdulla Bava appointed Elias Ramban as the abbot of the dayaro and the director of the press. Sultan Muhamed Rasheed presented him a medal of honour.

He was consecrated bishop on 23 September 1923 in the church of the Forty Martyrs by Patriarch Elias III with the title Yulios and was sent to serve the Malankara Church. Mor Yulios Elias came to India on 22 October 1923. It was Yulios Bava who

took Rev. Fr. Michael and Rev. Fr. Ottathaikkal, the bishop candidates to Jerusalem in 1926. In 1927 he was appointed as assistant to the then delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, Mor Osthathios Sleeba. After the demise of St. Osthathios in 1930 Yulios Bava was appointed as the delegate of Antioch to look after the churches and institutions which are directly under the administration and control of the Patriarch.

On 5 March 1931 when H. H. Moran Elias III arrived at Karachi Mor Yulios Elias and St. Athanasios Paulose were there to receive His Holiness.

Mor Yulios Bava took the initiative to build the tomb of H. H. Elias III at Manjanikkara and constructed the dayro church. The reconstruction work of the tomb of St. Elias III was started on 1 November 1954. It was under his leadership the church buildings were constructed for Simhasana churches at Kunnamkulam, Melelkurishu and Kottayam. He also established Simhasana churches at Thumpamon, Perumbally, Kallumgathara, Alleppey and Pampady.

Mor Yulios was a bishop during the times of H. H. Elias III, H. H. Aphrem I, and H. H. Yacub III. On 21 October 1932 Mor Yulios Elias left India to participate in the Holy Synod held at Homs, Syria on 6 January 1933. On 17 December 1933 Mor Yulios Elias returned to India along with V. Rev. Abdul Ahad Ramban. Mor Yulios ordained Very Rev. Ramban (Later H. H. Yacub III) *kassiso* in

1934. Abdul Ahad Ramban stayed at Manjanikkara from 1933 to 1946.

On 11 September 1952 Mor Yulios Elias accompanied Rev. Fr. P. J. Paulose who was to be ordained as Mor Philexinose Paulose. They returned on 15 January 1953.

Mor Yulios has contributed greatly to strengthen the relationship between the Holy Apostolic See of Antioch and the Malankara Church. He was arrested following a dissension in Kunnamkulam Simhasana church soon after the peace agreement in 1958. Today Kunnamkulam Simhasana church is under the administration of the Apostolic See of Antioch mainly due to the intense efforts made by Mor Yulios Elias of blessed memory.

Mor Yulios gave great importance to the education of priests. Those who were trained during his tenure in Manjanikkara received incomparable discipline. After serving as a bishop for thirty nine years he departed for the heavenly abode on 19 February 1962. He was buried in the tomb already prepared for him. His feast is celebrated on 19 February.



## **46. Mor Philexinos Samuel**

**(1930 – 1985)**

Samuel was born on 4 May 1930 (M.E. *Medam* 21) as the son of Kodath Geevarghese and littimootil Annamma at Konni. He had three brothers and three sisters. His primary and Middle School education were at Kallara Krishnan Nair School and N.S.S. School, Konni. He graduated from N.S.S. College, Pandalam and took his post graduate degree from S. B. College, Changanacherry.

As per the directive of Mor Divannasios Michael he was ordained Koroo by Mor Cleemis Abraham of Knanaya diocese at Chingavanam Dayaro. He underwent theological studies at Manjanikkara Dayaro and Thrikunnath Seminary, Alwaye. He was ordained Kassiso by Bishop Mor Gregorius Geevarghese, Vayaliparambil on 14 February 1959. In 1964 he joined Basalios College, Kottiyam as a lecturer.

Rev. Fr. Samuel was ordained a Ramban on 25 December 1975 by H. B. Catholicos Bassalios Paulose II at Mor Elia Chapel, Puthenkurishu. The Rev. Ramban was elevated to the position of a Metropolitan under the title Mor Philexinos

by H. B. Catholicos on 26 December 1975 at Thuruthissery Simhasana church. He was entrusted with the administration of the Diocese of Malabar. 'Sunthroniso' service was conducted at Meenagnadi Church on 6 January 1976 and he stayed in a small house with limited conveniences to execute administrative matters. According to the decision of the representatives of the Malabar Diocese a building along with twenty-two cent land was bought and it functioned as the head quarters and Bishop's Palace.

Even though the Bishop resigned his job at Basalios College his house at Chandhanikkat (near Pakkil, Kottayam) remained a temporary centre for many congregational activities. Many deacons who came from Malabar to Kottayam for their higher studies stayed there treating it as a *Gurukulam* performing their prayers and other daily activities there which still remains a refreshing memory in the author's mind.

Mor Philexinos Samuel was to lead the service in connection with the feast of Parumala Thirumeni at Jaipur Church on 1 & 2 November 1978. For that he arrived at Delhi and travelled to Jaipur by bus along with this scribe patiently bearing all kinds of inconveniences like any other ordinary person. His endurance he showed during that journey can never be forgotten.

The Metropolitan was able to obtain permission from the Patriarch to frame a constitution and he was successful in formulating it for the Malabar

Diocese. Long journeys were difficult for him as he was a diabetic patient. Once his leg was burned while travelling in a jeep but he was unaware of it. It was too late by the time the severity of the wound was noticed.

As he was undergoing treatment in Lissy Hospital, Ernakulam he expired on 17 January 1985. His mortal remains were kept at St. Peter's Chapel for the public to pay homage. By evening the remains were taken to Meenangadi via Thrissur, Kunnankulam and Calicut. He was entombed after the Holy Qurbano on 18 January 1985 in the St. Peter's cathedral which was still under construction. Many organisations like Mor Philexinos Memorial printing press, Book Stall, M.P.M. Library, etc. function to enliven his memory. His anniversary is celebrated on 17 January.

## **47. Mor Gregorius Geevarghese, Perumpallil**

**(1933 – 1999)**

Kunjukunju (Varghese) was born as the seventh son of Mathu Asan of Karapuzha Parapllil family and Annamma of Kanjiramtharyil family in the Puthupally (Valiyapally) church. He had three brothers and four sisters and of them Aleyamma died at a younger age. He was only six years old when his father expired on 22 February 1940.

His Primary, Middle School and High School education were in Puthupally church School, St. Thomas School, Iravinellloor and St. George School, Puthupally respectively. He secured First rank in B.O.L Degree (Bachelor of Oriental Languages) from the Kerala University. After that he completed Teachers' Training programme from the Calicut Training School.

His association with Bishop Mor Divannasios Michael, Rev. Ramban Geevarghese, Kochuparambil, Rev. Malpan Yacoub Paraykulath (Mor Thimotheus Yacoub) and Rev. Ramban Yacoub Madappad (Mor Yulios Yacoub) from his early childhood helped him to gain deep knowledge in Syrian traditions.

He was ordained a deacon in 1958 by the delegate of Antioch to India, Mor Yulios Elias Bava. He was ordained a priest on 1 August 1959 and subsequently was appointed as the vicar to St. George Simhasana Church, Perumpally on 9 September by Yulios Bava. He started his journey to Perumpally bidding farewell to Rev. Kuriakose Ramban, Vanchthattil and Rev. Yacoub Madappad Ramban then staying at Manjanikkara. Yulios Bava blessed Rev. Fr. P. M. Varghese and presented him a black habit of Manjanikkara Bava and a silver coin.

After taking charge as the vicar he joined Mahatma Gandhi Memorial High School as a Malayalam teacher on 2 June 1960. Previously he had been employed in the Revenue Department for a short period. He continued his service in Kandanad High School from 6 July 1966 to 1974.

The centenary celebrations of St. Thomas and heresies regarding apostolic succession of St. Thomas marked a turning point in the Malankara Church. The Church atmosphere became turbulent on various questions like the throne of St. Thomas, the argument that the Malankara Church was autocephalous and the cancelling of the visa of the delegate of the Patriarch, Mor Thimotheus Aphrem Aboodi. A meeting was convened in this troubled times on 24 – 1- 1974 in which Rev. Fr. P. M. Varghese was selected to the post of the Metropolitan (the meeting on 8 – 12 – 1973 at Valiyapally, Kothamangalam had selected Rev. Fr. Thomas Cheruvallil as well). A request was sent to

the Patriarch for consecrating these two bishops. Accordingly, Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Yacoub III consecrated Fr. Geevarghese under the name Mor Gregorius Geevarghese on 24 February 1974 (Fr. Thomas was consecrated under the name Mor Divannasios along with him).

When the newly consecrated bishops arrived in Kerala prohibitions, fraudulent cases and heresies were started against them. The Indian Orthodox Church was agitated and shaken by the grand reception and popular support accorded to the new bishops. The services extended to the Church by Mor Gregorius in this period from 1974 – 1999 are unequalled. H. G. Mor Gregorius Gheevarghese initiated and organised numerous institutions in Kerala like Soonoro church, Elamkulam; St. Joseph Cathedral, Kottayam, the renovated St. George Simhasana Church, Perumpally, the Cupola in the name of Parumala Thirumeni at Perumpally, Hail Mary English Medium High School, Hail Mary Hospital, M.G.M. Santhi Mandiram etc. He also wrote a few books like '*Aradhana Manjar*', 'Intercession Prayers to St. Mary', the service of 'washing of feet', Good Friday prayers, Bethel, the Biography of St. Mary, '*Marana Bhavanathil*' etc.

Besides popular songs, '*Bhoo Swargham Perunnone* and *Sodarare kelppin Koodivarin*' and *Hoothmo*, '*Rogam, Vyadhi, Vasanthakal, Keduthikal, Kopavadikal Mathave nin yachanamoolam mattidenam*' were also composed by this venerable bishop.

He could communicate with people of all stations of life. His voice, its gravity manifested his concern and relationship to them. An average believer accepted and liked his style of oratory though it contained exaggerations and repetitions. His suggestions and exhortations at the conclusion of the ordination ceremony and advice to the couple at the end of the marriage ceremony had his own unique style. His belief in St. Mary was deep and indescribable. From the time, the present author was given charge of the M.M.D.M. Patriarchal centre at Ittithanam on 24 July 1994 he has been aware of the concern and care this Bishop showed to the organisation and the believers till his demise.

The bishop had taken up many offices in the Malankara Church. He had been the President of the Malankara Jacobite Suriyani Association from 4 July 1974 till H. B. Catholicos Baselios Paulose II was consecrated on 7 September 1975. He served as the Metropolitan of Cochin and Malabar dioceses and as the secretary of the Synod. In 1980 he was appointed as the assistant metropolitan of Kottayam diocese and from 1982 onwards he took up full responsibility of Kottayam diocese after relinquishing the charge of Cochin. He had to look after the southern dioceses when Metropolitan Mor Coorilos expired in 1995. He shouldered the responsibility as the president of the Synod of Malankara after the demise of H. B. Catholicos Basalios Paulose II on 1 September 1996. He could ordain as many as one hundred and seventy eight in the priestly hierarchy.

Mor Gregorius offered the last Holy Qurbono on 9 December 1998 at St. Ignatius Church, Vazhamuttam. While undergoing treatment at P.V.S. Hospital he visited Perumpally twice and stayed there for some days. He passed away to eternal rest on 22 February 1999 at 8.25 pm. On 23 February (Tuesday) the funeral service was officiated by the Archbishop of Sweden, Mor Diyascorus Benjamin Akthash who had come to attend the feast at Manjinikkara, Mor Yulios Kuriakose, secretary to the Patriarch and other bishops. As he had desired, the steel trunk containing the black habit and silver coin is kept in front of the tomb of His Grace. The death anniversary of Perumpally Thirumeni is celebrated on 22 Februray.



## **48. Mor Clemis Abraham**

### **The Chief Metropolitan of the East**

**(AD 1918 - 2002)**

#### **Childhood and Education**

V. I. Unnittan (Unnikunju) was born on 27 April 1918 as the son of Vayala Kochidukkala and Aythala Kalarikkal Pennamma of Ranni. After his primary education in Vaikom Govt. Primary School he pursued his studies at Ranni M.S. Middle School. As high school facilities were not available at Ranni he joined St. Mary's English High school at Alwaye. He stayed with Mor Athanasios Paulose (1935 -1936) to complete his high school studies. The Intermediate and B. A. courses were done at C.M.S. College, Kottayam and at St. Xavier's, Palyamkotta respectively. After graduating in 1941 he took B.A. Honours Degree in Politics from Annamalai University, Chidambaram.

#### **Ecclesiastical Studies and Priesthood**

He was ordained '*msmrono*' by Mor Diascorus Thomas in 1931 at Valiyapalli, Ranni. The same year on 6 *Vrizchikom* 1107 Ranni Valiapally witnessed his ordination as 'korooyo' by H. H. Patriarch Elias III. After his primary education in

Syriac from Thazhath vallyyachan he continued his studies at Thrikunnath Seminary, Alwaye and Mor Ignatius Dyaro, Omallur. Mor Yulios Elias ordained him priest at Valiapally, Ranni on 15 January 1947. He celebrated the first Holy Qurbona on 20 January. He served as assistant vicar and teacher at M.S. High School, Ranni for two years.

He embarked on a voyage to Iraq from Bombay on the invitation of Patriarch Mor Aprem I on 1 May 1949. After thirteen days the ship anchored at Port Basra, Iraq and he continued his journey to Bagdad by train. After spending two days there he proceeded to the Metropolitan Palace in Mosul, Iraq. He acquired knowledge in Syriac, Arabic, English, Church history, Theology, the Bible, ancient books, Philosophy, World History and Geography. He was further trained in conducting prayers and holy services, delivering speeches and rendition of songs.

### **Metropolitan**

In the Knanaya Association convened on 29 March 1951 he was selected unanimously as the candidate to the post of the Metropolitan. The specially called synod decided to conduct the consecration ceremony on 15 April 1951. He was given the vestments of the Ramban on 8 April by Patriarch Aprem I assisted by the bishop of Aleppo, Mor Deevannasios. On Sunday 15 April, Mor Clemis Abraham was consecrated the third metropolitan of the Knanaya Diocese. Moran Mor

Ignatius Aphrem I, the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, was the chief celebrant at the Patriarchal palace in the town of Homs, Syria. Mor Clemis participated in the consecration of the holy chrism on the fortieth Friday of the fifty days' lent on 20 April 1951. When the newly appointed Metropolitan returned to Chingavanam on 24 May 1951 he was accorded a grand reception.

### **The Constitution of the Knanaya Community**

Mor Cleemis was installed as the third metropolitan at the age of thirtythree. He introduced a five year plan for the overall progress of the community which was presented for discussion and was passed in the first Knanaya association meeting on 13 September 1951. The constitution which perpetuated the Episcopal doctrines and respected democratic principles, was unanimously approved. As a first step all the churches in the community were brought under the limits of the authority of the Metropolitan. With a foresight envisaging future benefits for the community, Kurichi estates and Edessa gardens at Kulashekaram were brought under its control.

### **Higher Studies in the US**

Mor Clemis Abraham went to the US to study at the Union Theological Seminary in 1960. The Programme of Advanced Religious Studies (P.A.R.S.) made arrangements to bring twenty five Christian youth leaders together to provide them training and education. It was funded with the aid

of a scholarship instituted by the millionaire Rock Feller. He registered for the course of Master of Sacred Theology. He obtained P.A.R.S. diploma and S.T.M. degree on 21 May 1961. He could visit Eiffel tower, Lake of Geneva, the leaning tower of Pisa, the famous church at Assisi, Vatican City and Basilica of St. Peter along with a European tour group. He also had the opportunity to visit the Pope on 29 July 1961.

### **Other Activities in the Malankara Church and Community**

Bishop Mor Athanasios Paulose, the Malankara Metropolitan, departed for his heavenly abode on 25 January 1953. Mor Clemis was elected unanimously as the Malankara Metropolitan trustee by the Malankara Suriyani Kristhiani association at the meeting held on 21 June 1957 at St. Mary's High School owned by Manarcad Martha Mariam church.

H. H. Moran Mar Ignatius Aprem I passed away on 25 June 1957 at the patriarchal palace in Homs. A synod was convened under the leadership of *Kaimakkam* Mor Osthathios on 3 October at the Patriarchal palace. The election was held in the Martha Mariam church adjacent to the palace. Though *Kaimakkam* himself was elected as the Patriarch he declined the post. Thereby in the next round of election Mor Sevarios Yacoub, the metropolitan of Beirut was elected as the next Patriarch. His consecration ceremony was on 27

October 1957 with the honorific title Moran Mor Ignatius Yacoub III. The newly elected Patriarch consecrated the holy chrism on 30 November. Mor Clemis was fortunate enough to witness this holy sacrament.

It was the cherished desire of Knanaya community to start a college. The official sanction for the same was granted on 7 February 1964. The Patriarch Yacoub III laid the foundation stone for St. Thomas College, Ranni. It was upgraded in 1968 and foundation stone for Kana Thoma hostel was laid on 10 August 1968. 'Magdalana Mariam Vanitha Samajam', an association intended for diverse development of women had been functioning from 1932 onwards. This association was later transformed into 'Knanaya Women's association' in 1962. A convent was also inaugurated by giving canonical dress to Sr. Mariam Pallathara and Sr. Rachel Thaitara who longed for monastic life.

Knanaya community was the smallest community in Kerala. The church leaders and metropolitans were distressed due to dearth of money and lack of people. To prevent the recurrence of financial difficulties a reserve fund was formed. Utilising money from this permanent central fund they started rubber plantation in the twenty five acres land in Edessa Gardens.

Mor Clemis participated in the grand reception given to Mor Geevarghese Gregorios Perumpally, Mor Deevannasios (bishops consecrated by

Patriarch Yacub III on 4 March 1974) and Mor Athanasios Paulose of the Evangelical Association of the East. He offered courageous leadership in the endeavours for the protection of the true faith and was a powerful presence in the patriarchal day celebrations on 23 February 1975 and the great march in 1977.

Patriarch Ignatius Yacub III passed away on 25 June 1980. Mor Clemis attended the burial and also participated in the election of the new Patriarch, H.H. Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I on 11 July 1980.

### **Honours**

Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I when he visited Malankara in 1982 honoured Mor Clemis by bestowing on him the title '*Koobur Neethi Hakkimo*' (the intelligent captain) based on his leadership abilities. He participated in the consecration of the holy chrism in Manarcad St. Mary's Church on 26 February 1982. According to Bull No. E 128/89 he was elevated to the rank of the Chief Metropolitan of the East.

### **Jubilees and Celebrations**

His priestly silver jubilee was celebrated on 31 May 1972 and the Episcopal silver jubilee on 2 May 1976. He was present at the meeting between the Patriarch and the Pope in Vatican on 14 May 1980.

In connection with his priestly Golden Jubilee Celebration on 25 January 1997, Holy Qurbono was offered on fifty-one altars. The Jubilee Memorial Centre was inaugurated at Chingavanam on 11 February 1997. The Metropolitan Golden Jubilee was celebrated on 9 April 2000 with Patriarch Zakka I as the chief celebrant along with holy Qurbono on seventeen altars at Chingavanm.

The Patriarch granted permission according to Bull No. 30/90 on 6 April 1990 to include St. Kanai Thoma's name in the fifth diptych.

### **Last Days**

The bishop was unwell and his disease worsened from August 2002 onwards and he had to be admitted in hospital frequently. In the Bull No.121/ 2002 issued on 14 February he bid farewell to the community members and requested them to remember him in their prayers. In the Bull No. 122/2002 on 21 September he exhorted them to manage the administration and financial matters efficiently. On 23 September (Monday) he ordained five sub-deacons and received the last sacramental rites. On Sunday 29 September, he received Holy Communion and at 11 pm his soul departed for the heavenly abode. The burial was conducted on 1 October in Chingavanam Dayaro church. It was attended by the Patriarch delegate, Archbishop Mor Yulios Yeshue Ceecek of central Europe, the Catholicos Basalios Thomas I, various metropolitans of the Malankara Church, the Chief

Minister, other ministers and eminent social and political leaders.

Mor Clemis Abraham was a rare personality who had the great fortune to take part in the consecration of the holy chrism performed by three Patriarchs, H. H. Aphrem I, H.. H. Yacub III and H. H. Zakka I. He could also participate in the election of two Patriarchs and be a metropolitan for more than half a century. His memorial day is celebrated on 30 September.



## **49. Mor Osthatheos Bennyamin Joseph**

**(1949 – 2004)**

Benny was born on 24 June 1949 as the son of Panakkal Ukkru (Joseph) and Thandu, worshippers of Arthat Simhasana church, Kunnamkulam. Apart from his twin sister he had six brothers and four sisters.

His school education was completed in M.J.D. High School, and Pre Degree in Sri Krishna College, Guruvayoor. He graduated from St.Thomas College, Thrissur in Mathematics. The then vicar of St. Mary's Simhasana Church, Kunnamkulam, Rev. Fr. Kuriakose (the late Mor Yulios Kuriakose) encouraged Benny to join the church service as an altar boy.

After his secular education he joined Manjanikkara Dayoro and there he was the secretary to the delegate of Antioch, Mor Thimotheus Aphrem Aboodi in 1972. He was ordained sub deacon at Manjanikkara Dayoro on 15 June 1973 (Golden Friday).

He joined Mor Aphrem Theological Seminary in Lebanon in 1974 for his higher education. He used

to recollect frequently his experiences in Lebanon during the civil war. He was ordained '*Yaufadiakno*' by Mor Severius Hava, the Patriarchial Vicar on 13 July 1977 and '*Sharvoyyo Ramban*' by Patriarch Yacoub III on 14 July 1977. The full deaconship was conferred on him on 16 July 1977.

He served as an English teacher and Vice-principal of St. Aphrem Syrian Orthodox Theological Seminary in Achani (Mt. Lebanon) during the period 1977 – 79. He was ordained a Kassiso on 15 July 1979 and in the December of the same year he was appointed as secretary to the Patriarch for looking after the affairs of Malankara Church. He also served as vicar of the parish of Jordan from 1979 to 1984.

Rev. Father Bennyamin got the opportunity serve as the vicar of Mor Ignatius Syrian Orthodox Church in Dubai for six months. He officiated as the first secretary to the Patriarch till 1984. He was consecrated a bishop under the name Mor Osthatheos on 7 October 1984 at St. George Cathedral, Damascus by Patriarch H. H. Zakka I. He returned to Malankara in 1984 to take up full responsibility of Simhasana church, Kunnamkulam and as the assistant metropolitan of all other Simhasana churches and institutions.

Metropolitan Mor Osthatheos Bennyamin was appointed as metropolitan of all Simhasana churches and institutions on 24 January 1992 upon the demise of Mor Yulios Yacoub Madappattu.

'*Sunthroniso*' service was conducted by Mor Themotheos Aphrem Aboodi on 13 February 1993 at Manjanikkara Dayoro.

He was impleaded in the church case of St. Mary's Simhasana church, Kunnamkulam after receiving the power of attorney from Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I in 1985. (Rev. Fr. K. V. Kuriakose had been the power of attorney holder until 1985). The church received a favourable verdict (O.S. No.2/1983) on 29 November 2002. In the interest of Bishop Bennyamin the feast of Mor Osthathos Bava was celebrated on a grand scale celebrating Holy Qurbono on nine altars.

Bishop Bennyamin during his short tenure built up institutions in Manjanikkara and in other places. Foundation stone for a Pilgrim Centre was laid on the northern side of Manjanikkara Dayoro on 7 November 1989 and it was duly blessed on 10 February 1996. A plan was drawn for the reconstruction of the Dayoro church and accordingly the northern and western sides could be renovated. Foundation stone for a Kurissupally was laid at Pelakkattupayyur near Kunnamkulam on 8 February 1991 and it was blessed in March 1992. St. Elias Simhasana Church in Unnukallu near Manjinikkara also saw its inception (23 March 1997) and completion (13 October 1998) under his efficient management. Elias III Benevolent Society was registered in 1998 and it started functioning under his leadership. Foundation stone for St. George Simhasana Church, Akathiyur near

Kunnamkulam was laid on 23 August 1998 and it was blessed on 6 May 2001. First Holy Qurbano was offered at St. Peter's Simhasana Chapel, Thrissur on 30 June 2002. Nedumkandam St. Mary's Simhasana church was also consecrated and Qurbano was offered on 25 August 2004. Apart from these, Mor Osthathos Chapel, Arthat, the cross of St. Osthathos and the Cross at Pazhottumuri were also consecrated by him.

The bishop had always raised his voice against those who tried to confiscate Malankara churches and Dayro under the administration of Patriarch of Antioch. Mor Athanasius Thomas who was in charge of Kandanad diocese tried to appropriate Malelkurisu Dayoro which was under the Patriarch. It was only due to the timely intervention and determination of Bishop Bennyamin (on 13 October 1996) that the dayoro still remains under the control and management of the Apostolic See of Antioch.

It had been an agenda of Indian Orthodox Church to close down churches which owe allegiance to the Patriarch and the throne of Antioch. Bishop Bennyamin travelled the whole stretch of Kerala in an endeavour to resist this move. He rushed to areas like Kattachira, Mangalam Dam, Erukkumchira, Kannyattunirappu, Kadamattam, Kolencherry, Ooramana, Chalissery, Cheruthony etc and had stayed there for many days. He suffered from severe problems associated with diabetes but that was never a hindrance in

protecting the true faith and in showing allegiance to the Holy See of Antioch.

His Grace was the president of '*Antioch Viswasa Samrakshna Samithy*' and KEFA. Even though he tried to frame a constitution according to the Apostolic Bull No. 22/97 of 1 May for the solidarity and stability of Simhasana churches it did not materialise due to many reasons. Simhasana Church Association and related organisations were formed and started functioning but most of the procedures remained incomplete.

### **Last Days & Burial**

Bennyamin Thirumeni offered Qurbono on 13 June 2004 at St. Peter's Simhasana Chapel, Thrissur and returned to Kunnamkulam by afternoon. A heart problem had been diagnosed earlier and surgery was advised. On enquiry by this writer he said "There is no need for all that. I am fine. Tomorrow there is a check up". On Sunday evening he was admitted to a hospital in Thrissur as per prior appointment. Monday morning as he was reading the newspaper he felt unwell and suffered a stroke. Immediately he was transferred to the ICU but the condition remained unchanged.

On 17 June 2004 at 2.45 am he breathed his last while in the hospital. His mortal remains were taken to his native church, St. Mary's Simhasana church, Kunnamkulam by 10 am and was laid there for the public to pay homage. The next day (18 June) after the Holy Qurbono at 8.30 am the

funeral procession passed through N. Angady; St. Thomas Simhasana Chapel, Parayil; Parannur Mor Ostatheos Kurissu; Angamali, Kalamassery, Karingachira, Malelkurisu Dayoro, Mulamthurthy, Perumpally Simhasana church, Ettumanoor, Peroor, St. Mary's Cathedral, Manarcad; Simhasana Church, Kottyam; Chingavanam Dayoro, Simhasana church, Thiruvalla; Pathanamthitta, via Omallur Cross and arrived at Manjanikkara Dayora at 10 pm.

On Saturday 19 June, the burial service following the *Holy Qurbano* was led by H. B. Catholicos Baselios Thomas I (who had been on an American visit) assisted by many other metropolitans. His tomb was prepared in the place specified by him. The mortal remains were entombed in the burial chamber filled with frankincense at 12.30 pm. The tomb was sealed after the evening prayers at 5.30 pm. His Grace had offered his services at Manjanikkara Dayoro for twenty years and his anniversary falls on 17 June.

## **50. Mor Yulios Yesu Cicek**

**(1942 – 2005)**

Yesu Cicek was born on 1 January 1942 in Kafro or Upper Kafro (Near Thurabdin, South-east Turkey) as the son of priest Bar Saumo and mother Saied. He joined Dayarul Safran Seminary when he was nine years old.

After being ordained a deacon in 1958 he was appointed as secretary to Metropolitan of Mardin Mor Philexinos Yuhanon Dholbani. He started his life as a monk in 1960 after joining Mor Gabriel Dayaro in Kartmene (east of Midhiath). He served as a music teacher and administrator of the Dayaro during the period 1962-67. After being ordained a priest in 1967 he served the church in Holland, Lebanon and America. Rev. Ramban Yesu Ceecek was the superior of Gabriel Dayaro in 1974.

His higher studies were pursued in Michigan University, America (1975 -77) and Wiersberg University, Germany. He was consecrated bishop on 24 June 1979 by Patriarch Yacoub III under the name Mor Yulios and he was appointed as the first Archbishop of the Central European diocese which comprised Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, Austria, Switzerland etc.

The majority of Christians in Central Europe were people who sought asylum there due to the persecution in Turkey. A thirty acre plot of land worth crores was bought in Losser, Holland and St. Aphrem Syrian Dayaro was established there for the administration of hundreds of churches and organisations scattered over various places. In Germany alone in the Central European diocese there were fifty four churches.

Mor Yeshu Cicek was particularly keen on the necessity of having publications and was also anxious about the future of the Syrian Church. The press in Holland and Bar Ebroyo publications are examples for that. The magazine 'Kolo Suriyoyo' (the voice of Syriac) as well as the history of the Syrian Orthodox Church was published in three volumes. It recorded the history of the Syrian Church from the first century onwards. It was translated into five languages in 2001. The Church considers his works 'The Ancient Aramic Heritage (Vol I), The Heirs of the Ancient Aramaic Heritage (Vol II), At the turn of the third Millennium: The Syrian Orthodox Witness (Vol III)' published by Trans world Film, Italia as proud possessions. In total he has published hundred and thirteen books. The title Yacoub Burdhono of twentieth century was conferred on him by Patriarch Zakka I Iwas.

The bishop was happy that the Kerala Christians led a life similar to that of the people in Thurabdin, Turkey. He expressed a desire to spend the rest of his life in India after two or three years.



He has visited Malankara many times. The bishop has contributed a considerable amount of money towards the construction of M.S.O.T Seminary at Vettikkal. He has also financially assisted many big and small organisations like M.J.S.S.A., St. Mary's Convent etc. The Association of the Academic Arameans in Sweden honoured him by giving him the 'Aram Award' in 2003.

Bishop Yeshu Ceecek breathed his last in Germany in the course of a journey on 29 October 2005. He was laid to rest on 5 November in the cathedral at Holland. The burial service was led by the Patriarch along with many other metropolitans. The death anniversary of the bishop is celebrated on 29 October.

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## NAME INDEX

(Vol. I)

Abgar V, King of Urhoy .....  
Agatha, the Martyr .....  
Antony of Egypt, the First Ascetic.....  
Aphrem I Barsoum, the Patriarch .....  
Athanasius Yeshu Samuel, Archbishop.....  
Athanatius Paulose, Saint .....  
Athanatius Shemvun, the Delegate .....  
Barbara & Juliana, Saints .....  
Bar Hebraeus Gregorius Yoochanon, the Historian .....  
Barsoumo, Chief of Mourners .....  
Baselius of Caesarea, Saint .....  
Baselius Paulose II, the Catholicos .....  
Cyprian, Saint.....  
Forty Martyrs of Sebastea .....  
George, the Martyr .....  
Gregorius Abdul Jaleel, (St.) the Delegate .....  
Gregorius Chathuruthil, Saint .....  
Gregory of Nyssa, Bishop.....  
Helen, the Queen .....  
Ignatius Elias III Shakir, (St.) the Patriarch.....  
Ignatius Noorono, the Patriarch .....  
Jacob of Serugh, Bishop .....  
James, the First Archbishop of Jerusalem.....  
James, the Disciple .....  
John Chrysostom, (Ivanious) the Golden-mouthed....

John, the Baptist.....  
 John, the Disciple.....  
 Julius Yacoub, Bishop.....  
 Luke, the Evangelist.....  
 Mark, the Evangelist.....  
 Mary, the Mother of God.....  
 Mathew, the Disciple.....  
 Michael Rabo, the Great, the Patriarch.....  
 Moshe Bar Kipho, Bishop.....  
 Osthatheos Sleebe, (St.) the Delegate.....  
 Paul, the Disciple.....  
 Peter IV (III), the Patriarch.....  
 Peter, the Disciple.....  
 Philexinos of Mabbug, the Martyr.....  
 Quryaqos & Morth Yulithi.....  
 Sergius & Bacchus, Saints.....  
 Severios, the Great, (St.) the Patriarch.....  
 Simon, the Stylite.....  
 Stephen, the Martyr.....  
 Thecla, the Martyr.....  
 Themotheos Yacoub, Bishop.....  
 Thomas, the Disciple.....  
 Yacoub Burd'ono, Saint.....  
 Yacoub III, the Patriarch.....  
 Yacoub of Nisbis, Bishop.....

NAME INDEX  
(Vol. II)

Abded Aloho II .....	00
Abhai, the Martyr .....	00
Ahudemmeh .....	00
Ambrose .....	00
Andrew, the disciple .....	00
Aphrahat .....	00
Aphrem, the Syrian .....	00
Athanasius, the Patriarch of Alexandria.....	00
Augen (Eugene) of Clysmia .....	00
Babula .....	00
Bartholomew, the disciple.....	00
Basalios Shahr Allah III .....	00
Baselios Yeldho Maphrian .....	00
Clemis Abraham .....	00
Clemis of Rome .....	00
Coorilos (Cyril), The Patriarch of Alexandria .....	00
Deevannasios Michael .....	00
Dioscorus .....	00
Divannasios of Alexandria .....	00
Eusebius.....	00
Gregorius Geevarghese, Perumpallil .....	00
Gregorius Yuhanon .....	00



Gregory of Nazianzus .....	00
James, the disciple, the son of Alphaeus .....	00
Joachim & Hannah (Deena) .....	00
Joseph, the Just .....	00
Jude, the disciple.....	00
Macrina.....	00
Marutha, The Maphrian of Tigris.....	00
Mary Magdalene.....	00
Mathias, the disciple .....	00
Osthatheos Bennyamin Joseph.....	00
Osthathios, The Patriarch of Antioch.....	00
Pachomius.....	00
Paul of Thebaid .....	00
Pelagia .....	00
Philexinos Samuel .....	00
Philip, the disciple .....	00
Phocas of Sinope .....	00
Polycarp of Smyrna .....	00
Rabula of Edessa .....	00
Severius Geevarghese .....	00
Sharbil .....	00
Simon, the Zealot .....	00
Yacoub M'fasqo .....	00
Yacub of Edessa .....	00
Yuhanon Bar Afthunia .....	00
Yulios Elias Quoro .....	00
Yulios of Rome .....	00
Yulios Yesu Cicek .....	00

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Fr. K. Mani Rajan is the Vicar of St. Mary's Syrian Simhasana Church, Arthat, Kunnamkulam, Kerala, India. He is a lecturer at St. Joseph's Training College, Mannanam, Kottayam. He was a CERC Research Fellow at the University of California, Riverside, U.S.A. during 1990-93. Before assuming his position at St. Joseph's Training College, he was a teacher at Kendriya Vidyalaya, Kochi.

Fr. Mani Rajan holds a Ph.D. from the University of California, U.S.A. He received his B.Sc. degree (1978) from the University of Kerala, his M.Sc. degree (1980) from Jabalpur University, his B.Ed. Degree (1981 - First Rank) and M.Ed. degree (1983) from Calicut University. At present, he is a research guide in Education at the School of Pedagogical Sciences, M.G. University, Kottayam.

Fr. Mani Rajan was ordained priest in 1984 by His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas at Damascus, Syria. His Holiness decorated him with a pectoral cross in 2000 in recognition of his services to the Simhasana church and his literary contributions to the church.

In addition to *Martyrs, Saints and Prelates of Syrian Orthodox Church*, he is the author of *Queen*

*of the Sacraments* (1991), *The prayer book of the Syriac Orthodox Church* (1993), *Perspectives in physical science teaching* (1999), *A treatise on form and style of thesis and dissertation* (1999) and *Science of Science Education* (2004). He has authored a chapter in *Secondary Education: The Challenges Ahead* (2002) published by NIEPA, New Delhi. He has published about a dozen articles in journals and has presented half-a-dozen papers at national conferences. He has authored, compiled and edited a few other books in Malayalam and English. He has attended American Educational Research Association (AERA) meetings at Chicago (1991) and San Fransisco (1992).

Fr. Mani Rajan is a member of the Manjinikkara Dayara Committee and a member of the Joint Commission for dialogue between the Catholic and Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church. He has served Kerala Public Service Commission as a subject expert.

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The Syriac Orthodox Church**  
Volume II

Translated by Prof. Usha Skaria

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

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46	Mor Philexinos Samuel .....	00
47	Mor Gregorius Geevarghese, Perumpallil .....	00
48	Mor Clemis Abraham .....	00
49	Mor Osthatheos Bennyamin Joseph.....	00
50	Mor Yulios Yeshu Cicek .....	00
	References .....	00
	Name Index .....	00
	Other Books by the Author.....	00
	About the Author.....	00



## Contents

Preface	
Acknowledgement	
1 Sts. Joachim & Hannah (Deena) .....	00
2 St. Joseph, the Just .....	00
3 St. Jude, the disciple.....	00
4 St. Simon, the Zealot .....	00
5 St. Bartholomew, the disciple.....	00
6 St. James, the disciple, the son of Alphaeus .....	00
7 St. Mary Magdalene.....	00
8 St. Mathias, the disciple .....	00
9 St. Andrew, the disciple .....	00
10 St. Philip, the disciple .....	00
11 St. Clemis of Rome.....	00
12 St. Sharbil .....	00
13 St. Polycarp of Smyrna .....	00
14 St. Babula .....	00
15 Mor Divannasios of Alexandria .....	00
16 St. Phocas of Sinope .....	00
17 St. Pelagia .....	00
18 St. Osthathios, The Patriarch of Antioch.....	00
19 Mor Eusebius.....	00
20 St. Pachomius.....	00
21 St. Paul of Thebaid .....	00
22 St. Yulios of Rome .....	00
23 St. Augen (Eugene) of Clysma .....	00
24 St. Aphrahat.....	00
25 Mor Athanasius, the Patriarch of Alexandria.....	00
26 St. Aphrem, the Syrian .....	00
27 St. Macrina.....	00
28 St. Gregory of Nazianzus .....	00

### ***Abbreviations Used***

c.	- Circa, meaning approximately
St.	- Saint
Sts.	- Saints
p.	- Page
pp.	- Pages
Trans.	- Translator(s)
Vol.	- Volume
ed.	- edition
rev. ed.	- revised edition
Ed.	- Editor
Eds.	- Editors
M. E.	- Malayalam Era
MSS	- Manuscript

### ***New Testament Abbreviations***

Rom	- Romans
Acts.	- Acts of the Apostles
1 Cor.	- 1 Corinthians
2 Cor.	- 2 Corinthians
Phil.	- Philippians'
2 Ths.	- 2 Thessalonians
Gal.	- Galations

## Preface

The first volume of Corepiscopo Dr Mani Rajan's *Martyrs, Saints & Prelates of the Syriac Orthodox Church* was published in 2007, containing fifty short biographical notices of fifty. The present volume continues on with fifty further entries. As before, the coverage of saints and martyrs is admirably wide, and many of those covered are revered and honoured by all the Churches; thus several entries record the early traditions concerning the apostles and immediate disciples of Christ, while others deal with the saints and martyrs of the early centuries of the Christian Church prior to the three-way split in Eastern Christianity that emerged in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries. Saints of this earlier period include representatives of the great Greek Fathers and Writers of the fourth century, such as Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, and of the Syriac Fathers, such as Aphrahat and Ephrem. Following on in time these saints, who are regularly commemorated in the Calendars of many different Churches, come those saints who are specific to the Syriac Orthodox tradition, such as the monk Barsoumo, Patriarch Severios and Maphrian Gregorios Yuhanon Bar 'Ebroyo. It is particularly welcome to find included some much

more recent prelates who have been officially regarded by the Syriac Orthodox Church as being among the saints who may be commemorated during the Holy Qurbano in the Fifth Diptych, such as Patriarch Ignatius Elias III. A distinctive feature of Corepiscopo Mani Rajan's collection lies in the inclusion of several further notable prelates whose lives fall within the last couple of centuries, reaching up to the end of the twentieth century: it is particularly good to have some basic biographical information about these figures who have all played a prominent role in the modern history of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

Many of the saints included in these volumes are regularly commemorated in the liturgical services of the Syriac Orthodox Church: thanks to Corepiscopo Mani Rajan, these need no longer be just names, but they can begin to become actual persons who have set an example to us all by dedicating their lives to the service of God in a great variety of different ways.

Dr Sebastian Brock

## Acknowledgement

Biographies of saints and prelates of the Syrian Orthodox Church are not properly preserved although available in Syriac and Arabic languages. The work of the Late Patriarch His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem I titled *The History of Syriac Literature and Sciences* is a rich resource for the students of patristic studies.

I have written five volumes, each containing thirty biographies, in Malayalam. Of the 150 biographies fifty biographies were translated and published in 2007 at the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the St. Mary's Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church, California, USA.

I am grateful to Prof. Sebastian P. Brock for sparing time to write the preface to this edition. Prof. Brock is one of the most popular scholars in Syriac and Oriental Studies (Former faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford/ Wolfson College, UK). He has published several books and articles. Prof. Sebastian P. Brock was decorated with the Medal of Mor Ephrem the Syrian, by the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch in 1998. Prof. Brock was a close associate of Late H.E. Mor Julius Yeshu Cicek of Holland.

The translation of the present work (second volume) in English was diligently undertaken by Prof.Usha Skaria, Retired Professor of English, Vimala College, Thrissur. It would have taken couple of years for me to undertake the work by myself. I sincerely thank Prof.Usha Skaria for her yeoman service in translating and typing the biographies.

The manuscript was reviewed by Dr. Annamma Joseph, Head of the Department of English (Retired), Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram. I am grateful to her for volunteering to help me in this regard.

I sincerely thank M/s The Travancore Orthodox Publishers, Kottayam for taking up the publication. I sincerely thank Mr. Santhosh Joseph for the layout and cover design of the book. The printing was done by M/s Dona Colour Graphics, Kottayam with utmost care.

I earnestly wish and hope that our new generation will find this book useful to understand the life and teachings of our Church fathers.

Kunnamkulam,