

**Martyrs, Saints & Prelates  
of  
The Syriac Orthodox Church  
(350 Biographies)**

Corepiscopo K. Mani Rajan, M.Sc., M.Ed., Ph.D.

**MOR ADAI STUDY CENTRE**

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(350 Biographies)**

by Corepiscopo K. Mani Rajan, M.Sc., M.Ed., Ph.D.

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## Contents

<i>Abbreviations Used</i> .....	xxi
<i>Foreword</i> .....	xxiii
<i>Author's Preface</i> .....	xxv
<i>Acknowledgement</i> .....	xxix
1. Moran Abded Aloho II.....	01
2. King Abgar V of Urhoy .....	03
3. St. Abhai, the Martyr .....	05
4. Abraham Kidunay.....	07
5. Abraham of Keshkar.....	08
6. Mor Abraham, the Bishop of Harran .....	09
7. St. Absalom (Abselma).....	11
8. Mor Acacias of Aleppo .....	11
9. Mor Acacius of Melitene .....	12
10. St. Adai, the first Bishop of Edessa .....	13
11. Adrian with his wife Natalia, Martyrs .....	15
12. St. Agabus, the New Testament Prophet.....	17
13. St. Agapitus, Metropolitan.....	18
14. St. Agapius of Caesarea .....	19
15. St. Agatha, the Martyr .....	20
16. St. Aggai, the Second Bishop of Edessa.....	21
17. St. Agnes, Virgin & Martyr .....	22
18. Mor Ahathulla, Martyr.....	23

19.	St. Aho, the Ascetic .....	24
20.	Mor Ahudemme .....	28
21.	St. Alexander, Patriarch of Antioch .....	28
22.	St. Alexander, the Patriarch of Alexandria .....	29
23.	St. Alexander of Constantinople .....	30
24.	St. Alexios, Martyr of Rome .....	31
25.	St. Ambrose of Milan .....	33
26.	St. Ammon (Amus) of Nitria .....	35
27.	St. Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium .....	37
28.	St. Anastasia, the Martyress .....	38
29.	St. Andrew, the Disciple .....	39
30.	Mor Anthimos, the Episcopo of Nicomedia .....	41
31.	St. Anthimos, the Patriarch .....	42
32.	Mor Anthrayose, Kallada .....	43
33.	Sts. Antoninus, Zebinas, Germanus, and Mannathus .....	45
34.	St. Antony of Egypt .....	45
35.	St. Anysia, the Martyress .....	47
36.	St. Aphrahat, the Ascetic .....	48
37.	Mor Aphrem I Barsoum, the Patriarch .....	50
38.	St. Aphrem, the Syrian .....	52
39.	St. Apollonia, the Martyress .....	54
40.	Apostle Aquila .....	55
41.	St. Archippus, one among the Emissaries .....	56
42.	St. Arnobius, the Martyr .....	57
43.	St. Arsenius, the Great .....	58
44.	St. Artemius, the Martyr .....	61



45.	Mor Athanasius Aphrem Barsoum Archbishop of Beirut...	62
46.	Mor Athanasius Denho d Beth Rumi, the Martyr.....	64
47.	Moran Athanasius I Gammolo.....	64
48.	Athanasius II (of Balad), the Patriarch of Antioch .....	66
49.	Mor Athanasius Paulose I Kadavil .....	67
50.	Mor Athanasius Paulose II, Kadavil .....	69
51.	Mor Athanasius Yeshu Samuel .....	71
52.	Mor Athanasius, the Patriarch of Alexandria.....	73
53.	St. Athanasius Paulose, the Protector of Faith.....	76
54.	Mor Athanasius Shem'un, the Delegate .....	78
55.	St. Augen of Clysmia.....	79
56.	St. Babula, the Patriarch .....	80
57.	Moran Babylas, the Patriarch of Antioch, Martyr .....	81
58.	Mor Balai, Metropolitan .....	83
59.	Mor Bar Hebraeus, Gregorius Yoohanon .....	83
60.	Sts. Barbara & Juliana .....	85
61.	St. Bar Had Beshabo, Deacon & Martyr .....	86
62.	St. Barnabas, the Apostle.....	87
63.	St. Barsabas, Persian Martyr.....	89
64.	Mor Barsoumo, the chief of Mourners .....	89
65.	St. Bartholomew, the Disciple .....	91
66.	Mor Baselios Shakr Allah III.....	92
67.	Mor Baselios Yeldho Maphrian.....	94
68.	St. Baselius of Caesarea .....	97
69.	Mor Baselius Paulose II, the Catholicos .....	99
70.	Sts. Behnam and his sister Sarah, Martyrs .....	101

71.	St. Benjamin, Deacon & Martyr .....	103
72.	St. Bishoy (Bishoe).....	104
73.	St. Callistus, Episcopo of Rome .....	105
74.	Sts. Carpos & Papylos, Martyrs.....	106
75.	St. Christina .....	107
76.	St. Christopher, the Martyr .....	109
77.	Mor Clemis Abraham, the Chief Metropolitan of the East .....	109
78.	St. Clement of Rome .....	113
79.	Constantine I, the Great.....	115
80.	Mor Constantine, Bishop of Edessa .....	117
81.	Mor Coorilos Geevarghese, Ambatt .....	118
82.	Mor Coorilos Kuriakose, Poothicote .....	119
83.	Mor Coorilos Markose, Ramanthara .....	121
84.	St. Coorilos Paulose, Thozhupadan .....	122
85.	St. Mor Coorilos Yuyakkim .....	126
86.	Sts. Cosmas & Damian, Martyrs .....	129
87.	St. Cyprian, the Martyr.....	129
88.	St. Cyril of Axiopolis.....	131
89.	St. Cyril of Caesarea, the Martyr.....	131
90.	St. Cyril of Jerusalem .....	132
91.	St. Cyril, the Patriarch of Alexandria .....	134
92.	St. Daniel, the Stylite.....	136
93.	Mor David, Bishop of Harran.....	137
94.	Mor Deevannasios V Joseph Pulikkottil.....	138
95.	Mor Deevannasios Michael .....	141

96.	Mor Deevannasios of Alexandria .....	144
97.	Mor Deevannasios Shem'un, Karavattuveetil .....	145
98.	Didimos, the blind .....	147
99.	St. Dimet of Persia.....	148
100.	St. Dimetrios of Thessaloniki, the Martyr .....	150
101.	St. Dionysius Areopagite .....	151
102.	Patriarch Dionysius I, Tell Mahre.....	153
103.	Moran Dionysius II, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	154
104.	Mor Dionysius Jacob Bar Salibi.....	154
105.	Mor Dionysius of Milan .....	156
106.	St. Dioscorus, the Patriarch of Alexandria .....	157
107.	St. Drosis, the daughter of Emperor Trajan .....	159
108.	Eleuthrius of Nicomedia.....	161
109.	Elias (Elijah) I, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	161
110.	St. Epiphanius of Egypt .....	162
111.	St. Epiphanius, the Martyr.....	164
112.	St. Eudocia, the Martyr.....	166
113.	St. Eugenia of Rome, the Martyress .....	168
114.	Mor Eulogius, Episcopo of Edessa.....	169
115.	St. Euphemia, Virgin and Martyr .....	171
116.	Eusebius of Caesarea, the Church Historian .....	172
117.	Eusebius of Samosata, the Martyr .....	174
118.	Eustathius, his wife and two sons.....	176
119.	St. Eutychius, the Disciple of Apostle John.....	178
120.	Evagris, Ascetic and writer .....	179
121.	St. Evodius, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	181

122.	St. Febronia, the Martyress.....	182
123.	St. Felicitas of Rome and her seven sons, Martyrs.....	185
124.	Flavian I, the Patriarch of Antioch.....	188
125.	Forty Martyrs of Sebastea.....	189
126.	St. Gabriel, the Bishop of Thur'abdeen .....	190
127.	Moran George I, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	193
128.	Metropolitan, George of Basibrina .....	195
129.	Mor George, Bishop of the Arab Tribes .....	195
130.	Saint George, the Martyr .....	197
131.	Mor Gregorios Dodho .....	199
132.	St. Gregory of Armenia, the Illuminator.....	200
133.	St. Gregorius Abdul Jaleel .....	202
134.	St. Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil .....	204
135.	Mor Gregorius Geevarghese, Perumpallil .....	207
136.	Mor Gregorius Geevarghese, Vayaliparambil .....	210
137.	Mor Gregorius Paulos Behnam .....	213
138.	Mor Gregorius Yuhanon .....	214
139.	St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the Younger .....	216
140.	Gregory of Nazianzus, the Elder .....	218
141.	St. Gregory of Nyssa .....	219
142.	St. Gregory, the Wonder-worker .....	220
143.	Deacon Habib of Urhoy, the Martyr .....	222
144.	Hananiah who baptised St. Paul .....	225
145.	Queen Helen, mother of Constantine .....	226
146.	Hermas, the Evangelist.....	228
147.	Hesychius of Antioch, the Martyr.....	229

148.	St. Hesychius of Constantinople, the Martyr.....	230
149.	St. Hilaria, the daughter of Emperor Zeno .....	230
150.	St. Hilarion, Abbot.....	232
151.	Hippolytus of Rome, the Martyr.....	234
152.	Mor Hosius (Ossius), the Bishop of Cordova.....	235
153.	St. Ignatius Elias III Shakir .....	235
154.	Saint Ignatius Noorono, the Patriarch .....	239
155.	Moran Ignatius Nuh (Noah), the Patriarch of Antioch .....	242
156.	Irenaeus of Sirmium .....	243
157.	St. Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons .....	244
158.	St. Irini, the Martyress .....	245
159.	Mor Isaac of Nineveh .....	247
160.	Isaac, Doctor of the Church.....	249
161.	St. Isaiah, the Solitary.....	250
162.	St. Isidore of Chios, the Martyr .....	251
163.	Mor Ivanios Hidayathulla, Delegate .....	252
164.	Mor Ivanios Philipose, Parappallil .....	254
165.	Mor Ivanios Yuhanon .....	256
166.	Mor Jacob of Bartelli.....	258
167.	St. Jacob of Edessa .....	258
168.	St. Jacob of Nisbis .....	261
169.	Mor Jacob of Serugh .....	263
170.	St. James, the Disciple, the son of Alphaeus .....	264
171.	St. James, the First Archbishop of Jerusalem .....	265
172.	St. James, the Disciple, the son of Zebedee .....	267
173.	Sts. Joachim and Hannah.....	268

174.	John (Ivannis) of Edessa, Priest.....	269
175.	Mor John of Mardin.....	271
176.	Mor John of Tella.....	271
177.	St. John Chrysostom, the Gold-mouthed.....	273
178.	St. John III of Sedre, the Patriarch of Antioch.....	275
179.	Moran John IX Bar Shushan, the Patriarch of Antioch ....	277
180.	St. John of Damascus .....	279
181.	St. John of Egypt, Abbot .....	281
182.	Mor John of Ephesus, the Syrian Chronicler.....	282
183.	Mor John of Jerusalem .....	284
184.	St. John the Merciful, the Patriarch of Alexandria .....	285
185.	Mor John, Bishop of Dara .....	287
186.	Mor John, the Arab .....	288
187.	St. John, the Baptist .....	291
188.	St. John, the Disciple .....	292
189.	Joseph of Arimathea .....	294
190.	St. Joseph, the Just.....	295
191.	St. Jude, the Disciple .....	296
192.	St. Julian, the Martyr .....	297
193.	Mor Julios Elias Qoro, the Delegate of the Holy See of Antioch .....	299
194.	Mor Julius Geevarghese .....	301
195.	Mor Julius Kuriakose.....	303
196.	St. Julios of Rome.....	305
197.	Mor Julios Yesu Cicek.....	306
198.	St. Julitta of Caesarea .....	308

199.	Mor Julius Yacoub .....	308
200.	St. Justin, the Martyr.....	310
201.	Mor Kauma, Monk of Toralidon .....	312
202.	St. Kuriakose and his mother, Morth Yulithi .....	314
203.	Mor Kuriakose, Metropolitan of Amid.....	315
204.	Moran Kuriakose, the Patriarch of Antioch.....	316
205.	Ramban Kuriakose, Vanchithattil .....	317
206.	St. Lazarus of Bethany.....	319
207.	St. Longinus, the Martyr.....	320
208.	St. Lucianos, the Martyr .....	321
209.	St. Luke, the Evangelist.....	322
210.	Lydia, who sold purple cloth .....	323
211.	St. Macarius of Egypt .....	325
212.	Mor Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem.....	326
213.	Macrina, the Elder .....	326
214.	St. Macrina, the younger.....	328
215.	St. Malke .....	331
216.	St. Mammias of Caesarea, the Martyr .....	332
217.	St. Marina of Antioch .....	334
218.	St. Mark, the Evangelist .....	336
219.	St. Markos, Solitary .....	338
220.	St. Martha, mother of St. Simeon, the Stylite (Younger)..	339
221.	Mor Marutha, the Maphrian of Tigris.....	340
222.	St. Mary Magdalene .....	341
223.	St. Mary of Egypt .....	343
224.	St. Mary, Mother of God .....	344

225.	Mor Mathai, Monk .....	347
226.	St. Mathew, the Disciple.....	348
227.	St. Mathias, the Disciple.....	350
228.	St. Maximus, the Confessor.....	352
229.	Moran Meletius, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	353
230.	St. Mennas, the Martyr .....	354
231.	Prophet Micah.....	355
232.	Patriarch Mor Michael Rabo, the Great .....	356
233.	Mor Militheos Barnaba, Homs .....	357
234.	Mina, the Martyr.....	358
235.	St. Moses, the (Black) Ethiopian.....	361
236.	Mor Severios Moshe Bar Kipho .....	363
237.	St. Nicephorus, the Martyr .....	364
238.	St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra .....	365
239.	Nicodemus .....	367
240.	St. Nikitha.....	369
241.	Onesimus, Disciple of St. Paul .....	370
242.	Mor Ossyo .....	371
243.	Mor Osthatheos Bennyamin Joseph .....	372
244.	St. Mor Osthatheos Sleeba, the Delegate .....	376
245.	Mor Osthatheos Thomas .....	379
246.	St. Osthatheos, the Patriarch of Antioch.....	381
247.	St. Pachomius, Hermit.....	382
248.	Mor Palladius, Solitary .....	384
249.	St. Pambo of Nitria, Abbot .....	386
250.	Pamphilus of Caesarea, the Martyr.....	388



251.	Mor Paphnutius, Bishop of Upper Thebaid.....	389
252.	Pantaenus of Alexandria.....	390
253.	Pantaleon, the Martyr.....	391
254.	Sts. Patrobas, Philologus & Gaius.....	392
255.	Mor Paul (I) of Edessa.....	393
256.	St. Paul of Tamouiah, Ascetic.....	395
257.	Mor Paul, Bishop of Tella.....	396
258.	St. Paul of Thebaid.....	397
259.	St. Paul, the Disciple.....	399
260.	Paulinus, Bishop of Trier.....	402
261.	Paulus I, the Patriarch of Constantinople.....	402
262.	St. Pelagia of Antioch.....	403
263.	St. Pelagia of Tarsus, Virgin & Matyr.....	405
264.	Peter II the Fuller, the Patriarch of Antioch.....	405
265.	Patriarch Mor Peter IV (III).....	406
266.	Patriarch Peter of Alexandria.....	408
267.	St. Peter, the Disciple.....	408
268.	Mor Phathiyoan (Pethion).....	410
269.	Apostle Philemon.....	411
270.	St. Philexinos of Mabug, the Martyr.....	413
271.	Mor Philexinos Samuel.....	414
272.	Mor Philexinos Yoohanon.....	416
273.	St. Philip, the Disciple.....	417
274.	St. Philogonos, the Patriarch of Antioch.....	419
275.	Mor Philoksinos Yuhanon Dolabani, Bishop of Mardin ..	420
276.	St. Phocas of Sinope, the Martyr.....	421

277.	Phocas, Bishop of Sinope .....	423
278.	St. Poemen of Egypt .....	424
279.	St. Polycarp of Smyrna .....	426
280.	Mor Polycarpus Geevarghese .....	428
281.	Pontius Pilate and his wife Procula .....	430
282.	Mor Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza .....	432
283.	Moran Porphyrius, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	434
284.	Prochoros, Bishop of Nicomedia .....	435
285.	St. Proclus, the Patriarch of Constantinople .....	436
286.	Procopius, the Great, Martyr .....	437
287.	St. Rabula of Edessa .....	439
288.	St. Romanos of Antioch, the Martyr .....	441
289.	Sts. Ruphos & Zosimus .....	443
290.	St. Sabas, Abbot, the Martyr .....	443
291.	St. Sabas, Ascetic .....	445
292.	St. Sabina, the Martyr .....	446
293.	Saliba Bar Khayrun, Malphono .....	447
294.	St. Seraphion, the Confessor .....	447
295.	St. Serapion, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	448
296.	Sts. Sergius & Bacchus .....	449
297.	St. Sergius, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	450
298.	Mor Severios Paulose .....	451
299.	St. Severios, the Great .....	453
300.	Mor Severius Geevarghese .....	455
301.	Mor Severus Sabukht, Bishop of Qinnestrin .....	458
302.	Mor Shalito, Hermit .....	459

303.	St. Sharbil and his sister Babai, Martyrs .....	461
304.	St. Shem' un of Qartmin .....	464
305.	Shem'un Quqai .....	466
306.	Morth Shirin, the Great, Martyr.....	466
307.	Morth Shmuni and her seven children & Eliazar .....	468
308.	St. Silas, one among the Emissaries .....	472
309.	St. Silvanus, the Martyr .....	473
310.	St. Silvester I, the Patriarch of Rome .....	473
311.	Simeon of Jerusalem, the Martyr .....	474
312.	Mor Simeon of Persia, the Martyr .....	475
313.	St. Simeon, the Aged & Morth Hannah, the Prophetess... 475	
314.	Mor Simon Zaytuni .....	477
315.	St. Simon, the Stylite (Younger).....	478
316.	Mor Simon, the Stylite .....	479
317.	St. Simon, the Zealot .....	481
318.	Sisinnius, the Patriarch of Constantinople.....	482
319.	Sophia, the Martyr .....	483
320.	St. Stephen, the Martyr .....	484
321.	Susanna, Virgin & Martyr.....	486
322.	Sts. Tharakkos, Prokkos & Andronikkos.....	487
323.	St. Thecla, the Martyr .....	490
324.	St. Themotheos of Gaza.....	492
325.	Mor Themotheos Yacoub .....	493
326.	Theodora, the Syrian Empress of Byzantine .....	495
327.	Theodorus, Hermit.....	497
328.	St. Theodosia, Virgin & Martyr .....	499

329.	Theodosius, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	500
330.	St. Theodotus, the Martyr .....	501
331.	Moran Theodotus, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	502
332.	Mor Theophilos, the Patriarch of Alexandria .....	504
333.	Moran Theophilos, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	505
334.	Mor Theophilus Thomas .....	507
335.	Mor Themotheos of Alexandria .....	509
336.	Mor Thomas of Heraclea .....	510
337.	St. Thomas, the Disciple .....	512
338.	St. Timothy, Disciple of St. Paul .....	515
339.	St. Titus, Disciple of St. Paul.....	517
340.	Trophimus, One among the Seventy-two .....	519
341.	St. Urbanus, Bishop and Martyr .....	520
342.	St. Xystus II of Rome, the Martyr .....	521
343.	St. Yacoub Burd'ono.....	522
344.	Mor Yacoub III, the Patriarch .....	527
345.	Mor Yacoub M'fasqo.....	529
346.	Mor Yuhanon Bar Afthunia .....	530
347.	Moran Ignatius Zakka I, the Patriarch of Antioch .....	532
348.	St. Zeno, Ascetic .....	536
349.	St. Zenobius and his Sister Zenobia, Martyrs.....	537
350.	St. Zosimus, Solitary .....	538
	<i>References</i> .....	539
	<i>About the Author</i> .....	557

## Abbreviations Used

c.	-	Circa, meaning approximately
cf.	-	compare with
d.	-	death
ed.	-	edition
Ed.	-	Editor
Eds.	-	Editors
Fr.	-	Father
H. B.	-	His Beatitude
H. E.	-	His Eminence
H. G.	-	His Grace
H. H.	-	His Holiness
M. E.	-	Malayalam Era
MSS	-	Manuscript
Mt.	-	Mount
n. a.	-	no author
n. d.	-	no date
p.	-	Page
pp.	-	Pages
rev. ed.	-	revised edition
St.	-	Saint
Sts.	-	Saints
Trans.	-	Translator(s)
Vol.	-	Volume
Vols.	-	Volumes



## Foreword

In the liturgical life of the Church saints feature in two places in particular, in the liturgical calendar, and in the diptychs in the course of the *Qurobo*, or Eucharistic Liturgy. Liturgical calendars can vary considerably over time and space in their extent and their choice of saints: some have a saint (or sometimes saints) for every day of the year, whereas others are limited to the most important saints, though perhaps with the addition of one or two saints of local importance. In the diptychs the number and identity of the saints mentioned varies according to which Anaphora is being used. In both cases some names of the saints will be familiar but others not; and even in the case of familiar saints, information about their life may prove difficult to find. Now, however, thanks to Corepiscopo Mani Rajan's labours in putting together these three hundred and fifty short biographies, the reader can readily learn about a wide range of saints.

It is particularly pleasing that the choice of saints for inclusion is ecumenical in character: not only are saints from all the different Syriac Churches included, but also some who are known primarily just from the Greek or the Latin tradition. Also pleasing is the presence of a good number of women saints. Another notable feature of the book is the inclusion of a number of hierarchs of the Syrian Orthodox tradition, not only from India, but also from West Asia and the Diaspora in the West: these are men who have served their Church in notable ways, and because a number of them only died within recent memory, and will have been known to at least a few readers of this volume, their sharing of these pages with saints of the past

reminds one that they all belong together as part of a living and ongoing tradition that is also shared by the reader. Browsing through this collection one will also soon become aware of the great variety of ways in which the saints have lived their lives, providing models of the very different paths to holiness that are open and can be followed.

**Sebastian Brock**

Oxford, England



## **Author's Preface**

The present volume is a selective collection of the biographies of three hundred and fifty Martyrs, Saints and Prelates of the Syrian Orthodox Church. The book does not claim to be comprehensive. However, the details of important Church fathers are dealt with adequately. The entries are presented as a calendar of Martyrs, Saints and Prelates of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

The lengths of biographical sketches vary significantly depending on the resources available. The biographical sketches of some of the saints are very short. But they present whatever is available for further study. Naturally more coverage has been given to the persons who passed away in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In the Syrian Orthodox tradition, the death anniversaries of the departed souls, and not their birthdays are celebrated. The date of death of a saint is the birthday in paradise as s/he reunites with Christ by her/his death. Also, most of the Martyrs, Saints and Prelates of the Syrian Orthodox Church are referred to as saints since holiness is a state of dedication to God's service. St. Paul addresses the faithful in his Epistles as saints (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Colo 1:1). The term saint in the larger sense is used for those who die 'in the Lord' especially the martyrs, the monks and nuns.

It is true that miracles were regarded as a proof of sanctity from Apostolic times (Acts 5:15-16; Acts 19:11-12). Secondary relics such as handkerchiefs and girdles were regarded as instruments of divine healing. Primary relics such as bones of the saints were considered

to be precious means of healing. The history of veneration of saints is full of anecdotes about such healings.

There are many contradictions in the history of saints due to differences in names, places of birth and the period in which they lived. Also, the heresies of the first few centuries confuse the reader about their adherence to the true faith of the Syrian Orthodox Church. However, I have taken much care to triangulate the details based on the calendar of saints, place of birth, date of feast, and their association with other Church Fathers, to confirm that the saint I am dealing with is the same person revered and acknowledged in the Syrian Orthodox Church. However, I am aware of the fact that errors might have crept in while compiling these details.

The major works that helped in this compilation are that of Aphrem I (2003), Smith and Wace, (1877-1887), Wace (1911), Thurston and Attwater (1990) and the work of Alban Butler (1866; 1903). The Calendar of the Syrian Orthodox Church (Rajan, 2004) based on the calendar of monk-priest Saliba bar Khayrun of Hah (d. A.D. 1340) served as a framework for ascertaining the dates and the persons. Modern Assyrian Research Archive (MARA) of the University of Cambridge, initiated in A.D. 2008, has a good collection of digital material which is a good resource for further study.

The Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, English and Syriac names of the same saint often pose problems in identifying the biographies. For example, Cyriacus/Quryaqus and Kuriakose; Acacius and Akok/Akakios; Aphrahat and Aphraates; Irene and Erini/Irini; Shmuni and Samona; Yuyakim and Joachim; Hannah and Deena, etc are there to mention a few. Similarly the earlier and modern names of places and the different spellings multiplied the problem.

There are several saints and prelates with the same name. There are more than one feast day for a saint or a prelate which should be understood as important days on which their relics were transferred from one place to another or the dates of their release from prison,

exile or torture. For example, beheading of St. John the Baptist is commemorated on 7 January & 29 August whereas finding of the head of St. John the Baptist at Homs, Syria is commemorated on 24 February and 20 October. These duplications of feasts may have some relevance which are yet to be examined. In many cases the year of birth of the saints are reckoned based on their age at their death which in most cases are approximations.

Having spent a lot of time in compiling these biographies, I realized that there exists no single volume on the Martyrs, Saints and Prelates of the Syrian Orthodox Church. I have made an attempt to provide some material and to shed some light on their lives, virtues and writings. I have avoided derogative remarks about them which are common in the context of heresies in the Church during the first five centuries. However, discrepancies and contradictions were highlighted wherever necessary to advance my view point. Skeptics and non-orthodox Christians may tend to dismiss these accounts of martyrs, but Syrian Orthodox Christians honour them because most of these names are embedded in the prayers of intercession in the Church. Moreover, Church Fathers have written anthologies and eulogies about them.

I earnestly wish and hope that the English-speaking diaspora of the Syriac Orthodox Church and those who are interested in the biographies will find this book useful to understand the life and teachings of our Church Fathers. May their intercession be a fortress for us.

**Corepiscope (Dr.) K. Mani Rajan**



## Acknowledgement

This book on *Martyrs, Saints & Prelates of the Syrian Orthodox Church* has been completed with the help of many people, and I am grateful to all concerned. Some contributions must, however, be noted.

I am grateful to Prof. Sebastian Brock, Former faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford/Wolfson College, UK, for sparing time to write a foreword to this one volume and his expert comments were really valuable. Prof. Usha Skaria, Retired faculty member of Vimala College, Thrissur, has spared much of her time in reading the proof of the book. The manuscript was reviewed by Dr. Annamma Joseph, Head of the Department of English (Retired), Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram in spite of her various time demands. I thank them; needless to say, shortcomings remain my own.

Many thanks to Dr. Thomas Joseph and Mr. Varghese Titus Areecal, California, who gifted me a few books on biographies of our Church Fathers.

I am much obliged to M/s. Mor Adai Study Centre for taking up the publication of the book. I sincerely thank Mr. Julius C. Abraham, M/s Megapixel Graphics, Kottayam, for the layout and cover design of the book.

I earnestly wish and hope that the faithful of Syriac Orthodox Church will find this book useful to understand the life and teachings of our Church Fathers. I am happy that I could bring out this volume in the context of the centenary (1920-2020) of St. Mary's Syrian Simhasana (Thronal) Church, Arthat, Kunnamkulam.



# **1. Moran Abded Aloho II**

**(A.D. 1833 – 1915)**

Abded Aloho (Abd Allah) was born in Mcluf tribe as son of Yacoub 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 monastery in Jerusalem.

Abdulla was a close disciple and incessant escort of the metropolitan of Jerusalem, Mor Osthathios Abdul Noor. St. Mark monastery 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 Coorilos Yuyakkim (entombed in Mulamthurthy), the delegate of Antioch to India made necessary arrangements during the period 1856 – 58 for this visit.

Mor Abdul 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 also accompanied him.

During the Malankara visit he participated in the Synod at Mulamthurthy, 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 A.D. 1894 Patriarch Peter IV also referred to as Peter III passed away. St. Ignatius Abdul Masih was his successor. But the Holy Synod deposed Abdul Masih in 1903. In 1906 on 15 August (September ?) Mor Gregorius Abdulla 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 Deevannasius Joseph Pulikkottil from Kunnamkulam church on 24 *Chingam* and was sent to all the churches in Malankara.

Incapacitated by old age Mor Deevannasios Pulikkottil 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 Sleeba also returned to Malankara.

In 1909 Moran Abded Aloho II 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 Qoro, the delegate of the See of Antioch (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 *Edavam* A.D. 1910 as per Bull No 42 he gave permission for *the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Prayer book* translated by Mathai Kassiso 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 Vattasseril Mor Deevannasios.

St. Abded Aloho, who returned to Jerusalem in 1912 passed away on 9 December 1915. He was entombed on the southern side of St. Mark monastery church. The feast of Abded Aloho is celebrated on 9 December in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **2. King Abgar V of Urhoy**

**(? – A. D. 65)**

Abgar Kings ruled Urhoy during B. C. 132 - A. D. 224. Abgar V was in power during A. D. 22-25 and A. D. 31-65. Abgar V is also referred to as Abgar, the Black, in a few historical books. This distinction 'the Black' was in popular use so as to distinguish him from Abgar who was white in complexion that ruled Urhoy during A. D. 26-31. The Chronicle of Zuqnin and that of Elia of Nisbis provide two lists of the Kings of Edessa (Brook & Taylor, 2001, Vol. I, pp. 155-157).

The city of Urhoy is known by different names. Urhoy is the mother of all the cities of Mesopotamia. The Greek name of Urhoy is Edessa and in Turkish it is known as Urfa. The Syriac name Urhoy is common in Syrian Orthodox liturgical texts. This city was established in A. D. 132 by the Syrian King, Ario (Abdul Ahad, 1948).

Abgar V who was the King during the reign of Tiberius Caesar of Rome sent a letter to Jesus. This fact is referred in the Church History of Eusebius and in the Syriac document known as the Doctrine (teaching) of Adai. Moreover, the prayers in the middle of the Lent (in the fifty-day Lent) affirm this historical fact. The letter of Abgar V and the reply of Jesus as given in the teaching of Adai are

reproduced below (Quasten, 1949, pp. 141-142; Brock & Taylor, 2001, Vol. II; Aphrem I, 2000).

### **Letter of King Abgar to Jesus**

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

### **The reply of Jesus to King Abgar**

“Blessed are you who, not having seen me, have believed in me, for it is written concerning me that those who see me will not believe in me, and those who do not see me will believe in me. Now concerning what you wrote to me that I should come to you, the matter concerning which I was sent here is henceforth completed, I am going to ascend to my Father who sent me, and when I have ascended to Him I will send you one of my disciples who will heal and restore the sickness you have, and everyone who is with you he will convert to eternal life. And your town shall be blessed, and no enemy shall ever have dominion over it again” (also, see, Eusebius, 1980, Book 1:13)

Abgar’s emissary, Hannan, was a painter. He wanted to draw a picture of Jesus. But the dazzling brightness of his face made it

impossible for him. Then, Jesus covered his face with a cloth and gave it to Hannan to be given to King Abgar. This is the rendition of the Greek writer John of Damascus. These details are repeated in the prayer in the middle of the lent. However, Abdul Ahad (1948) recorded that Hannan painted a portrait of Jesus from his memory and gave it to King Abgar.

There are several renditions about the portrait of Jesus. Veronica, the woman who was healed by Christ of a hemorrhage, used her headcloth to wipe the face of Jesus when he fell beneath his cross on the road to Calvary. It is the imprint of his face that was left on the cloth, which Veronica took, to Rome and by which Emperor Tiberius was healed (White, 1991). In A. D. 944 this handkerchief (mandylion) kept in Urhoy was taken by Byzantine emperor Romanos I to Constantinople. The relic remained in Constantinople until A. D. 1204. The Crusaders took the mandylion to Rome and Mushe of Mardin claims to have seen it in Rome (Brock & Taylor, 2001, Vol.II).

After the ascension of Jesus Christ, Adai, brother of St. Thomas, was sent to Urhoy as was promised in the reply of Jesus (Aphrem Aboodi, 1966; Aphrem I, 2000). Abgar was healed of leprosy and was baptized by Adai (Abdul Ahad, 1948). King Abgar built a church in Urhoy and was the first King to embrace Christianity. Adai was the first Bishop of Urhoy. The memory of King Abgar, the Black, is celebrated in the middle of the fifty-day lent (a movable date).

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

**(A.D. 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 monastery is known as Abhai's monastery 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 A.D. 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 departed for heavenly abode 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.

## **4. Abraham Kidunay**

**(c. A.D. 296 - c. 366)**

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

Not far from Abraham's cell there was a town called Beth-Kiduna whose citizens were idolators. They resisted with violence all efforts to evangelize them. This was a source of constant grief to the bishop of Edessa. The bishop of Edessa asked Abraham to leave the hermitage (against his will) and ordained him priest and sent him to preach the gospel to the people in Beth-Kiduna. He built a church in the town and preached the gospel to which the citizens were not willing to listen. Hence, he returned during the night and went again on the next day. They stoned him and left him half-dead. Upon recovering consciousness he again returned, and though constantly insulted, ill-treated, and sometimes attacked with sticks and stones, he continued for three years to preach without any apparent result.

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

Abraham led a life of penance for fifty years and lived to the age of seventy. At the news of his last illness, the whole countryside flocked to receive his benediction and after his death each one sought

to procure a fragment of his clothing. The feast of St. Abraham Kduniya (Kidunay) is celebrated on 24 October in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **5. Abraham of Keshkar**

**(A. D. ? – 588)**

The monasticism in Iraq rapidly expanded in the second half of the sixth century at the hands of the disciples of Abraham of Keshkar. They were closely associated with the school in Nisbin. Many of them were from Iranian cultural background and converts from Zoroastrianism (Pre-Islamic religion). Many legislations came into force regarding marriage, worship, attending the feast of Jews and pagans, use of amulets and burial practices. The purpose was ‘to regulate the boundaries of Christianity as an exclusive set of cultural practices, in a world where Christians did not all share the same cultural backgrounds and assumptions’ (Wood, 2013, p. 145). Monasteries existed in Iraq in the fifth century which banned celibate monasticism as a part of a wider reform of marriage practices of the Church of East. Abraham was a missionary in Hira in south-west Iraq and converted many heathen inhabitants at Hira.

In the second half of the fifth century considerable laxity crept into the Nestorian monasteries of Mesopotamia, monks being even allowed to marry (Butler, 1898). The revival of celibate monasticism is associated with the ascetic Abraham of Keshkar. He had travelled to the Pachomian coenobitic monasteries of Egypt and studied at the school of Nisbis. He visited Egypt and Sinai; and finally settled as a hermit in a cave on Mount Izla, near Nisbis (Wright, 2016). He led the life of a hermit for thirty years. At Izla, Abraham had a great number of followers and subsequently a monastery was built. He is said to have reformed the custom and dress of his monks who had been dressed like Egyptians so that they could be distinguished from

heretics. The monastic practices resembled those of the Pachomian ascetism. The focus was on integrating fasting, prayer and silence in monastic life and the importance of academic learning and physical labour.

Abraham died at Hazzah in AD 588 (Allen & Jeffreys, 2017), but his body was secretly removed to his native place Keshkar. Abraham has written a treatise on the monastic life. It is likely that the feast of Abraham of Keshkar is on 5 December.

## **6. Mor Abraham, the Bishop of Harran**

**(A. D. ? - 431?)**

Abraham was born and brought up in Cyrrhus. He succeeded Protogenes, the bishop of Harran. He was a man of piety, virtue and religious zeal. His biography was written by Theodoret of Cyrrhus in his *History of Monasticism*. Theodoret said, “Mor Abraham was an excellent fruit which ripened in Cyrrhus. He devoted himself to piety, worship, spiritual exercise, fasting and prayer, until his body grew feeble and he became sick. When he recovered, he went to a big village in the Mountain of Lebanon which adhered to heathenism. He arrived at the village disguised as a merchant and redeemed its people for fifty dinars, which he had borrowed from his acquaintances in the city of Homs. He continued to treat the villagers with compassion, despite their roughness and callousness, and they were astonished by his patience. They came to appreciate him and asked him to take charge of their village affairs. He did so, but only after they fulfilled his desire. The villagers built a church in a short period of time and embraced Christianity. They prevailed on him to become their presbyter, and he agreed. He took charge of them for three years, teaching them the fear of God. Later he chose a presbyter for them and returned to his own monastery. When the reputation of his virtues spread, he was made a bishop for Harran, which was drunk with the

wine of idolatry and deception. As a good shepherd, he labored in his field with determination, educating the villagers and directing them to the true path (<http://www.syriacstudies.com/2016/09/22/bishops-of-the-city-of-harran/>).

Mor Abraham was so self-disciplined that he never touched bread once he became a priest, but restricted his meals to mere beans. He spent the night hours in worship and prayer, catching some sleep only while sitting in a chair. He was compassionate toward the poor and strangers, taking care of their needs. He also took care of the needs of the natives of his city, asking them to live in peace and shun malice. They responded to his counsel. When his fame spread far and wide, Emperor Theodosius, the Young, a believer invited him to Constantinople, the capital. At the capital the emperor received him with great honor. He even kissed his damaged garment and wiped his eyes with it for a blessing. His prominent men knelt down to kiss Abraham's knees, realizing that the saints of God exude the scent of piety in this life and the life to come.

Mor Abraham passed away in Constantinople. The emperor and his wife Eudoxia, men of his state, and soldiers attended his funeral. His body was transported to Harran, where it was received with great honor by the natives of the cities through which it passed, especially great Antioch. When the procession reached the River Euphrates, a great crowd rushed to grab a piece of his garment in order to receive the blessing of his body, although the soldiers surrounded his coffin. The voices of chanters mingled with those of the lamenters. Finally the procession reached Harran, where he was entombed.

This saint performed many miracles after his death. He served the priesthood for nineteen years. Most likely he passed away shortly before the Council of Ephesus convened in 431. The feast of Mor Abraham of Harran is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 7 August.



## **7. St. Absalom (Abselma)**

**(A.D. ? – 309?)**

Peter, who was called Absalom (Abselma) was a famous confessor of the Kingdom of God in Casesarea, a village which is on the confines of Beth Gobrin (Eusebius of Caesarea, 1861). On the tenth day of the month Conun (January), Absalom was asked to renounce his faith but he disregarded all such temptations.

Some reminded him of his youth and the fire before him in which he was to be burnt. Some other faithful believers reminded him of the Judge of all judges and the fire in hell. They also called upon him to regard this temporary life which will soon pass away and to look up to the Kingdom of heaven. Finally, after prolonged persecutions, Absalom was burnt to death. The feast day is conjectured to be on the tenth of the month of Conun (January?). (There is another Abselma, who was the Episcopo of Edessa and the feast day is on 19 October.)

## **8. Mor Acacias of Aleppo**

**(A.D. 326? – 436?)**

There are three important Church Prelates with the name Acacias. Of these, the Metropolitan of Beroea in Syria, the modern Aleppo, is dealt with here.

Acacias was born in Syria. He joined the monastery of Asterius in Antioch at a very young age. He played a major role in the fight against the heresies of Arius (Wace & Piercy, 1999). Julianus Sabas, an anchorite (whose cave was in Osrhoene) came to Antioch to propagate the True Faith mainly due to the great efforts of Acacias.

Patriarch Moran Milithios consecrated him Metropolitan of Beroea in A.D. 378. He never changed his austere monastic way of

life even after the consecration. He led a simple and pure life worthy of emulation. Acacias took part in the synod at Constantinople in A.D. 381.

Mor Acacias played a prominent part in the ascension of Moran Flavian as the Patriarch of Antioch in A.D. 381 after the passing away of Patriarch Moran Milithios (A.D. 360 - 381). The newly consecrated Patriarch Moran Flavian (A.D. 381 – 404) could establish good relationship with Metropolitans of Rome, Alexandria and Egypt due to the enthusiastic endeavours of Mor Acacias.

Mor Acacias was once a good friend of Mor John Chrysostom, the gold-tongued (A.D. 347- -407). They were later estranged due to some unknown reasons and Mor Ivanios was banished in A.D. 403.

Mor Acacias was known as the lover of peace during the period of Nestorianism (Nestorius taught that the human and divine natures remained unaltered and distinct in their union within Jesus, son of God, one person with two natures and St. Mary is the mother of Christ and not of God).

Mor Acacias could not participate in the Synod at Ephesus in A.D. 431 due to his advanced age. Paulose of Amesa represented him there. Moran Yuhanon, the Patriarch of Antioch (John I, A.D. 428 – 442), convened a synod at Aleppo, which witnessed constructive results of efforts for peace.

Mor Acacias passed away in A.D. 436 when he was around hundred and ten years old. The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates him on 20 July (?).

## **9. Mor Acacius of Melitene**

**(5<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.)**

Acacius was a reader in the church at Melitene in Armenia Secunda (Smith & Wace, 1877). He gained the good opinion of the Bishop Otreus by the sanctity of his life. He became famous by his

steadfast opposition to Nestorius with whom he had lived on intimate terms. He became the Bishop of Amid.

At the council of Ephesus in A.D. 431, he took an active and prominent role. Several short speeches are reported to his credit besides a homily delivered by him.

He was referred to as ‘the great Acacius our father and doctor’ by the Bishops of his province. He is commemorated on 17 April in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **10. St. Adai, the first Bishop of Edessa**

**(A.D. ? – 81)**

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

Abgar V who was the King during the reign of Tiberius Caesar of Rome sent a letter to Jesus. This fact is referred to in the Church History of Eusebius and in the Syriac document known as the Doctrine (teaching) of Adai. Moreover, the prayers in the middle of the Lent (in the fifty-day Lent) affirm this historical fact. The letter of Abgar

V and the reply of Jesus as given in the teaching of Adai are reproduced below (Brock & Taylor, 2001, Vol. II; Aphrem I, 2000; Quasten, 1949, pp, 141-142).

### **Letter of King Abgar to Jesus**

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

The letter was sent by hand of King’s secretary, Hannan. Hannan found our Lord in the house of Gamaliel, “Chief of the Jews” (Thurston & Attwater, 1990) and Jesus replied as follows.

### **The reply of Jesus to King Abgar**

“Blessed are you who, not having seen me, have believed in me, for it is written concerning me that those who see me will not believe in me, and those who do not see me will believe in me. Now concerning what you wrote to me that I should come to you, the matter concerning which I was sent here is henceforth completed, I am going to ascend to my Father who sent me, and when I have ascended to Him I will send you one of my disciples who will heal the sickness

you have, and everyone who is with you he will convert to eternal life. And your town shall be blessed, and no enemy shall ever have dominion over it again” (also, see, Eusebius Book 1:13).

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

## **11. Adrian with his wife Natalia, Martyrs**

**(A.D. ? – c. 304)**

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

Natalia hurried to the prison and kissed the chains which bound her husband saying: “You are blessed, Adrian, for you have found the riches which your father and mother did not leave you, and which the wealthy themselves have need of in the day when neither father nor mother nor children nor friends nor earthy goods are of any avail.”

Natalia arranged for his instruction on faith there. Adrian sent her home promising that he will let her know how things went with him.

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

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

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

## **12. St. Agabus, the New Testament Prophet**

**(First Century)**

St. Agabus is one of the seventy disciples, and a martyr. The seventy disciples were chosen by the Lord to go before Him to preach the gospel (Luke 10:1). St. Agabus was with the twelve disciples in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter (<http://www.ucatholic.com/saints/saint-agabus-the-prophet/>).

The Scriptures will confirm that since the apostles and disciples were not being appreciated in Jerusalem, they decided to leave and head to the church of Antioch (Acts 21:3-4). Antioch at this time was the capital of Syria, and was considered an awesome commercial center (<http://www.christian-resources-today.com/biblical-prophets-5.html>). This great capital had the title - "Antioch the Beautiful and the Golden." It was at Antioch where the first gentile church was founded and the first time that followers of Jesus were called, Christians (Acts 11:26). The apostles arrived in this great city hoping to be of some service to a flourishing church.

Agabus received the gift of prophecy, as the Acts of the Apostles tells us, "And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, 'Thus says the Holy Spirit, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" (Acts 21:10-11) This prophecy was fulfilled (Acts 21:17-36).

He also prophesied about a famine on all the earth, and this was fulfilled during the time of Claudius Caesar, the Roman Emperor (Acts 11:27-28). He preached the gospel together with the holy apostles. He went to many countries, teaching and converting many of the Jews and the Greeks to the knowledge of the Lord Christ. He sanctified them by the life-giving baptism.

This moved the Jews of Jerusalem to arrest him. They tortured him by beating him severely, and putting a rope around his neck, dragged him outside the city. They stoned him there until he gave up his pure spirit. At this moment, a light came down from heaven. Everyone saw it as a continuous column between his body and heaven. A Jewish woman saw it and said, “Truly this man was righteous.” She shouted in a loud voice, “I am a Christian and I believe in the God of this saint.” They stoned her also and she died and was buried with him in one tomb. The feast of St. Agabus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 8 April.

### **13. St. Agapitus, Metropolitan** **(Second/Third Century)**

Saint Agapitus was born of Christian parents in Cappadocia during the reign of the emperors Diocletian (284-305) and Maximian (305-311). From his youth he yearned for the monastic life and so he entered a monastery, where he struggled in fasting, prayer, and service to all the brethren of the monastery.

The Lord granted Saint Agapitus the gift of working wonders. The emperor, Licinius (311-324), learned that Saint Agapitus was endowed with great physical strength, and he commanded the saint to be enrolled into military service against his wishes.

During the persecution against the Christians initiated by Licinius, Saint Agapitus was wounded by a spear, but remained alive (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2018/02/18/109054-martyr-agrippa-of-phrygia>). After the death of emperor Licinius, he obtained his freedom from military service in the following manner.

The holy Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337) heard that Saint Agapitus had healed people by his prayers. The emperor sent him a sick servant, who also received healing. The emperor wanted



to reward Saint Agapitus, who instead asked only that he be permitted to resign from military service and return to his monastery. Permission was granted, and he joyfully returned to the monastery.

Soon after this, the Bishop of Sinaus in Bithynia summoned Saint Agapitus and ordained him to the holy priesthood. After the death of the bishop, Saint Agapitus was unanimously chosen by the clergy and all the people to the See of Sinaus. The new hierarch wisely governed his flock, guiding it in the Orthodox faith and virtuous life. Through his prayers, numerous miracles occurred. The saint died in peace.

## **14. St. Agapius of Caesarea**

**(A.D.? – c. 304)**

Saint Agapius suffered martyrdom at Caesarea in Palestine under Diocletian (A.D. 284-305). Three times he was imprisoned for the faith (<http://soc-wus.org/ourchurch/St.%20Agapius%20of%20caesarea.htm>). Eusebius relates how Agapius was arrested, chained to a murderer (who was a slave) and taken to the amphitheater to be thrown to the wild beasts.

Urban, the governor of Palestine, as per the direction of Diocletian detained Agapius in prison for two years. According to tradition, the slave was pardoned, and Agapius was offered clemency if he would offer sacrifice to gods. When Agapius refused, he was left to be mauled by a bear, but was not killed. He was again imprisoned and on the next day was drowned in the sea (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). According to Eusebius Agapius battled wild animals, and was beheaded. The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates St. Agapius of Caesarea on 29 April.

## 15. St. Agatha, the Martyr

(? – A. D. 251)

Many virgins were martyred during the third and fourth century A. D. Agatha is prominent among them. Agatha was born in Palermo or Catania, Sicily (White, 1991). She vowed her virginity to God.

The Consul Quintian (Quintianus) was ruling Sicily under Decian, the King. Quintian desired to marry Agatha and invoked laws against Christianity in an effort to seduce her (*Encarta*, 2001; White, 1991). In pursuance Agatha was sent to a house of prostitution and was ill-treated. She was tortured by rods, steel hooks in her sides and fire. Quintian promised that he would let her free if submitted to his wishes. Agatha said: “Christ is my life and Saviour” (Moothedan, 2001).

Agatha was subjected to various tortures and lastly her breasts were cut off, but she was miraculously healed when St. Peter appeared to her in a vision (Hoever, 1989. White, 1991;). She was rolled over red-hot coals mixed with broken pieces of pottery. At this point a violent earthquake shook the town. Quintian, fearing that the people would rise up in protest, sent Agatha to prison where she died of her tortures. The year of her Martyrdom is believed to be A. D. 251 (Smith & Wace, 1877; Hoever, 1989; Moothedan, 2001).

According to tradition, about a year after Agatha’s martyrdom, Mount Etna erupted and threatened to engulf the town with molten lava. A few faithful prayed in the intercession of Agatha and took her veil from her tomb and stood in the path of the oncoming lava. Miraculously the lava altered its course and the inhabitants of Catania were saved (Day, 2002).

The name of the virgin martyr Agatha is included in the calendar of Saint Jerome and in the calendar of Carthage (Britannica, 2001). The intercession of St. Agatha is specially requested in earthquakes and breast diseases. The feast of St. Agatha is celebrated on 5 February.

## **16. St. Aggai, the Second Bishop of Edessa**

**(First Century A.D.?)**

After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, Apostle Thomas sent Adai, one of the seventy-two emissaries, to Abgar. Adai (named Thaddeus in the history written by Eusebius) healed the king Abgar V from his ailment. Adai then preached the Gospel to the people and they were converted. The heathen altars were broken down, and the people were baptized. King Abgar induced the Emperor Tiberius to chastise the Jews for having crucified the Saviour (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05088a.htm>).

Adai (Thaddaeus) could convert Aggai, a jeweller and wig-maker to the King and one Palut. Adai due to his poor health ordained Aggai as his successor and Palut a priest (Fortescue, 1913). Adai passed away in peace during the life time of Abgar V, the King in c. A.D. 81. Aggai succeeded Adai.

Like Adai, Aggai preached in various regions of the East. Aggai was martyred by Ma'nu, one of the unbelieving sons of Abgar while Aggai was sitting in a church (Burkitt, 1904). The reason for this brutal act was that when Ma'nu ordered Aggai to make a piece of heathen jewellery (Chinese cloth?), Aggai replied: "When my master (Adai) was feeding the flock of Christ, I used to work for your father (Abgar V, the King), but now it is my duty to feed the flock and I cannot follow another trade." The enraged King sent soldiers who broke his legs and Aggai died a martyr. Aggai was entombed in the church.

Aggai could not ordain Palut a bishop and there was no bishop in Edessa. Therefore, Palut, the successor of Aggai, was ordained bishop by Seraphion, the Patriarch of Antioch (A.D. 191-211). The feast of St. Aggai is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 9 January, 9 July and 9 December.

## **17. St. Agnes, Virgin & Martyr**

**(c. A.D. 291 ? – c. 304)**

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

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

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

## 18. Mor Ahathulla, Martyr

(A.D. ? – 1653)

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

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

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

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

The ship carrying the prelate from Mylapore to the persecution centre in Goa docked at Cochin. Hordes of Syrian Christians getting

a wind of it informed the Archdeacon and he along with priests and twenty five thousand faithful arrived at the Cochin Fort to free their holy father. There were only three hundred soldiers guarding the fort at that time. Alarmed on seeing the huge crowd they pulled back the moat bridge and positioned the cannon towards them. Helpless in rescuing the prelate they approached the king of Cochin and presented their supplication.

The King summoned the person in charge of the fort and issued an order to release the spiritual father of the Syrians who was kept in captivity. Somehow or other the Portuguese wielded their influence. That night itself they drowned Mor Ahathulla by tying a millstone round his neck. The woeful Syrians when they knew about the dastardly act decided to sever all relations with the Roman Catholic Church. The oath taken on behalf of this at Mattanchery is the historically famous Pledge of the slanting cross (*Koonan Kurishu Sathyam*). The feast of Mor Ahathulla is celebrated on 16 January.

## **19. St. Aho, the Ascetic**

**(c. A.D. 419 – 524)**

St. Aho was born around A.D. 419 in the city of Rish'aino (Rasul-'ayn ), which is to the southeast of Nisbis in present day Syria near Hassekeh. His father's name was 'Ubadyo and Aho was one of his three children. At the age of twelve Aho, an intelligent boy, became the disciple of a local monk (<http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/St.%20Aho.htm>).

In c. A.D. 439, Rish-'aino came under the Persian siege. The great army of Persians came to Nusaybin and the Romans retreated before them. They were chased to Harran. During this time, Ubadyo, father of Aho, came to him and said "My son, behold, our residents wait outside the City gate. Behold, your mother, and your brothers

are with them. Rise, we shall go.” He agreed and went with him and when they crossed over the bridge of Euphrates about 200 people died in a stampede. When the Blessed Aho saw this, he returned to the city. His father, mother, and brothers went on their way and their father died on the way.

Mor Aho returned to Rish’aino and travelled to Nusaybin along with a young man about his age. When they were travelling, a unit of a troop of Persians leading many captives caught and bound them. They arrived at Nusaybin where they gathered all the captives. They were about 7000 in number.

Mor Aho was given to Michael, a Christian soldier, to serve as a slave. Michael discovered that Aho was a Christian and they made a deal to serve together in the military. So Michael took Aho to the King (who most likely was Yazdagrid II). Michael told the King that Aho was his nephew on his mother’s side, and he persuaded the King to make Aho a soldier. The King saw in the Blessed One a countenance like that of an angel. He favored him and registered him like one of the soldiers.

Mor Michael and Mor Aho served in the Persian army for 18 years. In around A.D. 458, they decided to follow the Lord’s steps. They saw a dream. A man wearing glorious clothing appeared and said to them, “My brothers, rise, ascend at once together to the region to the west, for there the Lord prepares for us a place that we might dwell in it.” They rejoiced greatly for they realized that the Lord prepared before them His way. Very early in the morning they took their belongings and started their journey. They travelled to Nisbis, the place of Mor Aho’s capture. They entered the village of Dara. A man by name Theodoros received them well. Theodoros had a son, called Heworo who was deaf and dumb. The child Heworo regained speech by their prayer. Heworo said to them that, “There was a man with you in the evening and he took me by the hand and gave me a cup of cold water. When I drank he said to me, “Rise, go and when I came near you my tongue was straightened.”

The fame of Aho and Michael spread throughout the region when this miracle was known. Theodoros built a monastery for them in the village, Kasar. In Kasar about 20 monks joined the two saints in the monastery. Later, Mor Aho and Mor Michael were offered a nearby vineyard in the village of Zamorto (KfarZamoro is the name of the ruin today). In Zamorto, St. Aho drove out a demon from a man called Hobel.

Mor Michael left the community after five years, returned to the region of Nineveh and built for him a monastery there. He built a pillar in it and sat upon it until his departure around 463 A.D. It is also about the same time that Aho took a trip to Jerusalem for a year and a half. On his return he decided to follow the Mediterranean coast. At 'Akka he boarded a ship which turned out to be owned by his brothers. He disembarked from the vessel in Antioch. His brothers could not persuade him to return to 'Akka with them and meet his mother. When Mor Aho's mother learned of this event she travelled to Antioch, joined a caravan to Nisbis and met Mor Aho near his monastery. Mor Aho out of guilt and devotion stayed by her side for nine years until her death in A.D. 474.

Meanwhile, Theodoros built another monastery (the White Monastery in the name of his son Hewaro) for Mor Aho in Tur'abdin. After the death of his mother and Theodoros, Mor Aho left his community again and travelled to a village called Hadas and performed miracles in the house of Dorsela and Maximus.

Mor Aho continued his journey and arrived in Athens where he stayed for five years which must have been about the year A.D. 480. He continued his journey to Constantinople and then to Hadas. Dorsela and Maximus sent their eldest son, Rumanos, to Mor Aho as a disciple. Mor Aho remained in the village for two years.

Mor Aho then ventured into Armenia and near the village of Ause he encountered pagans who were celebrating under a giant tree in which they believed resided a god. Mor Aho feared for his life and prayed to God. A tornado ripped up the tree and cast it in the river



about a mile away. The people were furious at Mor Aho and they wanted to kill him because he told them that Jesus Christ was his god. They demanded that the tree be brought back and their gods with it. Another storm caused two hours of darkness in the land. The pagans then accepted the faith of Mor Aho.

In about the year A.D. 508, Mor Aho built a church and invited the Bishop of Miletene, Mor Kuriakos, who came and baptized many people and ordained many priests and deacons. A monastery was built and Mor Aho resided there for 22 years.

When the villagers heard that St. Aho was about to die, they all gathered around him weeping. He said: "My brothers, this is the end of every man." They wept and said: "O Father of Peace and Mercies, where shall we go to find you and who shall be a leader for us like you? Stretch out your right hand and confirm your sons and daughters while we are standing. Give us peace and go in peace, merciful peace. Then go to the region of pleasures. We remain here tormenting ourselves. O Good Shepherd where will we go? Your flock is left without a shepherd. You saved us from the mad wolves that would have torn us apart."

St. Aho stretched out his hand and blessed them with the sign of the Cross. He turned and knelt in prayer and prayed: "O Lord God, mighty and holy, give to your servant in this hour the petition that I ask from you. ... Give them times of peace and seasons of blessings. ... Make them fervent in all goodness and in every place where they perform vigil or intercession. In your name and in the name of your servant may there not be hail, nor blight, nor locust, nor plague."

He turned to them and said, "My moment arrives." He entrusted his soul to the Creator for eternal sleep. His face was illuminated like the sun. The people of the entire region gathered there and they made a great procession and conducted service for three days. St. Aho departed for his heavenly abode in the year A.D. 524 at the age of 105. The feast of St. Aho is celebrated on 19 April and 1 October.

## **20. Mor Ahudemme**

**(? – A.D. 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 A.D. 559. Mor Yacoub Burdaeus (A.D. 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 A.D. 575. His mortal remains were transferred to Qronta, opposite to Tigris, and were interred there.

Mor Ahudemme is counted as the first Metropolitan of the East after the confiscation of the Church by the Nestorians in A.D. 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.

## **21. St. Alexander, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. ? – 417)**

St. Alexander was the 28th Patriarch of Antioch from A.D. 412 to 417. He succeeded Porphyros (Porphyrius) who was the Patriarch from A.D. 402 to 412. He lived a monastic life before the enthronement. Theodoret praises him for the holiness and the

austerity of his life, his contempt for riches, love of wisdom, and power of eloquence (Smith & Wace, 1877). His words were so mild that he could heal the schism which had lasted for years in the the body of the Church. Patriarch Alexander was succeeded by Theodotus in A.D. 417.

## **22. St. Alexander, the Patriarch of Alexandria**

**(A.D. ? – 326?)**

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

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

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

Alexander summoned Arius to appear in an assembly of clergy and later excommunicated him in A.D. 320. Arius moved to Palestine and his representation of his case made a favourable impression on several bishops. Some of them such as Athanasius of Anazorbus, a

Cicilian bishop, and George, an Alexandrian presbyter, wrote to Alexander: “Son once ‘was not’ just as Isaiah ‘was not’ before he was born of Amos. Arius stationed himself at Nicomedia as he could secure the support of Eusebius, the bishop of the city.

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

Emperor Constantine banished Arius and a few others to Illyricum. Athanasius, the successor to Alexander, has recorded that Alexander passed away five months after the council of Nicea which can be reckoned as A.D. 326 (Smith & Wace, 1877). However, Thurston & Attwater (1990) suggest that Alexander died two years after his return to Alexandria having named St. Athanasius his successor. St. Athanasius makes mention of the tradition that Gospels should not be read in a sitting posture. The feast of Alexander is celebrated on 26 February.

## **23. St. Alexander of Constantinople**

**(A.D. 241? – c. 340)**

Patriarch Alexander was seventy-three years old when he was elected to the Holy See of Constantinople (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). Alexander was in office for twenty-three years during the heresy of Arius. In one of the conferences of theologians and philosophers, while one of them was speaking, Alexander exclaimed:

“In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to be silent.” The man’s tongue was paralyzed and by this divine manifestation of power, the Christian cause made more impression than the most solid arguments.

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

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

## **24. St. Alexios, Martyr of Rome**

**(A.D. ? – 430)**

Since the 10th century the story of Saint Alexis (Alexius or Alessio), called the “Man of God” by his unknown biographer, has been popular throughout the West. It was introduced from the East by some Greek (<http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/St.%20Alexis%20of%20Edessa.htm>).

Though much of the legend is probably apocryphal, there is no doubt that there was a man of God called Alexis and that he achieved a great reputation for holiness at Edessa. It is, however, likely that he lived, died, and was buried at Edessa.

Alexios died at Edessa in Mesopotamia about A.D. 430. He had lived by begging, and shared the alms he received with other poor people. After his death, it was learned that he was the son of a Roman patrician, who left a wealthy bride on his wedding day and gone to live in poverty in Syria. An account of Alexis, was written in Greek, and an additional narrative was produced in Latin.

Alexis was the only son of Euphremian, a Roman senator of enormous wealth and influence, and his wife Aglae (Agloe). They were devout Christians and the son was brought up in the spirit of the Gospel. Even as a child, Alexis was known for his charity.

When Alexis reached manhood he allowed himself to be betrothed to an heiress who was related to the imperial family, though he had already determined to give his life to God. Their wedding took place with great pomp and dignity. As soon as the ceremony came to an end, Alexis took off the gold ring that had just been placed on his finger, and returned it to his bride. They separated by mutual consent and he fled from his home disguised as a beggar.

He set sail for Syria and then made his way on foot to the church of Our Lady of Edessa, famous as a shrine for pilgrims, where he lived in a hut adjoining the church. The Syrian text of his legend says: "During the day he remained steadfastly in the church and in the martyrrium, refusing alms from those who offered them, for he wished to do without food during the day and thus forced himself to fast until the evening."

"In the evening, he stood in the doorway of the church and held out his hand, receiving the alms of those who entered the church. But as soon as he had received what he needed, he closed his hand and would take no more. Nor did he ever cease to live among the poor. Such was his life every day. Of his earlier condition and status he said not a word, nor did he even wish to reveal his name."

After living this life for 17 years, his identity was revealed; some say that he was recognized by a sacristan, others that the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to the people and said: "Seek the man of God."

To avoid discovery, Alexis fled and embarked a ship for Tarsus, but a tempestuous wind drove his ship to Italy.

He went to Rome and to his father's house, where he found that his parents were still living. He did not make himself known, nor did anyone recognize him, and when he asked for lodging he was given permission to sleep under the staircase of his own luxurious home; and so he lived, begging his bread in the streets and working in the kitchen, where he was often insulted by the servants and sharing crumbs of what was rightly his.

Seventeen years later while Pope Innocent I was celebrating Mass before the emperor, he heard a voice saying: "Seek the man of God." Guided by the selfsame voice, he and the emperor went to the house of Euphremian, but when they arrived they found Alexis dead. The feast of St. Alexios is celebrated on 17 March and 17 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **25. St. Ambrose of Milan**

**(A.D. 340 – 397)**

Ambrose was born in Trier (now in Germany) to Christian parents in A.D. 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 A.D. 370) he was appointed as the Governor to Liguria, Amelia in Northern Italy (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Hoever, 1989; Encarta, 2005).

In A.D. 374 Auxentius Episcopo of Arian faction died (Aphrem, 1963; Cross & Livingstone, 1974). 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 was a Christian by belief. But only a Catechumen (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). He received baptism on 7 December A.D. 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 A.D. 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 A.D. 387. St. Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, departed for heavenly abode on 4 April A.D. 397 after serving the church for twenty-three years (Aphrem, 1963). His feast is celebrated on 6 December (the day of his baptism).

## **26. St. Ammon (Amus) of Nitria**

**(c. A.D. 288 ? - c. 350)**

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

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

robbers, if any pass that way, and one for chance comers. All who transgress and are judged worthy of blows are tied to the palm tree, and receive on back the appointed number of strokes and are then released. At the ninth hour of the day it is possible to stand and hear psalmody from each habitation.

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

Saint Ammon lived in great austerity. He took only one meal a day; this he extended to two to four days. A miracle happened when Ammon was crossing a river with his disciple, Theodore. The river was overflowing as they came to cross it. Ammon was too shy to undress to swim across the river. While he stood trying to make up his mind, he suddenly found himself on the other side of the river. Theodore seeing Ammon on the other side asked how he got there. Ammon confessed the miracle and made Theodore promise that he would not tell anybody about it.

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

## **27. St. Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium**

**(A.D. 340? – c. 400)**

Amphilochius (Amphiloque or Amphilochus) was regarded by his contemporaries as the foremost man in the Eastern Church after his friends Mor Basil of Caesarea (d. A.D. 379) and Mor Gregorius of Nazianzus (d. A.D. 389). What is known about Mor Amphilochius and his family is from the writings of Mor Basil and Mor Gregorius (Smith & Wace, 1877; Wace, 1911; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV).

Amphilochius was a native of Cappadocia. Amphilochius was educated as a lawyer and was practicing at Constantinople. In about A.D. 369 Amphilochius withdrew from worldly pursuits. He lived in retirement at Ozizala, devoting himself to religious exercises and taking care of his aged father (Ozizala was situated not far from Nazianzus). Amphilochius' cousin, Mor Gregorius of Nazianzus is probably the person mainly instrumental in bringing about the change in Amphilochius.

Around the same period Heraclidas had renounced the profession of Lawyer and was working in a hospital built by Mor Basil near Caesarea. In a letter written in A.D. 372 or 373, Heraclidas urged Amphilochius to take leave of his father and to profit by the teaching and example of Mor Basil (Wace, 1911). This invitation was accepted by Amphilochius. It is safe to assume that Amphilochius was ordained bishop of Iconium at the very beginning of A.D. 374 at the age of about 35 years.

Mor Amphilochius visited Mor Basil during Easter in A.D. 374. The visit made a deep impression on the people of Caesarea. On a later occasion, Mor Amphilochius urged Mor Basil to write a treatise on the Holy Spirit which resulted in the work *de spiritu sancto* which was dedicated to Mor Amphilochius who asked for it. The work was sent to Mor Amphilochius engraved on vellum (Wace, 1911; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV).

There are canonical letters by Mor Basil addressed to Mor Amphilochius. At the direction of Mor Basil, Mor Amphilochius managed the ecclesiastical affairs of Isauria, Lyconia and Lycia. Mor Basil invited Mor Amphilochius to assist him in the administration of his own diocese of Caesarea which was a burden on him. The confidence of Mor Basil in the young bishop Mor Amphilochius is a testimony to the character and discipline of Mor Amphilochius.

Mor Amphilochius delivered a panegyric at the funeral of Mor Basil. After the death of Mor Basil in A.D. 379, the association of Mor Amphilochius was with Mor Gregorius of Nazianzus. In A.D. 381 Amphilochius was present in the synod of Constantinople with his friend Mor Gregorius. The last letter of Mor Gregorius to Mor Amphilochius was written in the year A.D. 383 (Wace, 1911). The exact date of the death of Mor Amphilochius is not known. However, his name is not mentioned in connection with the troubles of St. Chrysostom in A.D. 403. Therefore, the death of Mor Amphilochius is assumed to be around A.D. 400 (394?).

Mor Amphilochius has written a commentary on the Gospels and a biography of Mor Athanasius of Alexandria (Aphrem I, 2003). The feast of Mor Amphilochius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 23 November and 21 December.

## **28. St. Anastasia, the Martyress**

**(? – A.D. 303)**

Anastasia was a Roman lady of noble descent. She was a disciple of St. Chrosogonus (Cross & Livingstone, 1997). When Emperor Valerian ascended the throne of Rome, he gave orders to kill christians and to convert the people to worshippers of Jove (Kuriakose, 1986).

Anastasia who wanted to follow the Christian belief and practices joined a nunnery run by an abbess, named Sophia who could

raise her in fervent faith. The Minister of the Emperor who came to know about her seeking shelter in the convent commanded her to be brought before him (Kuriakose, 1986). Sophia gave her courage and advised her to suffer for Christ and to sacrifice even her life for Him. The Minister told her to give up her faith and tempted her by offering money and position if she would worship Jove. However, Anastasia remained unshaken in her faith.

Anastasia was imprisoned. She went on singing hymns praising God in her captivity. The enraged Minister subjected her to fierce and endless torture. Her tongue was chopped off. Sirilos, a young man, who witnessed this atrocity offered her water when she requested it. From then on, she was a victim of a chain of persecutions. A burning torch was put on her body which was already inflicted with wounds, her teeth were hammered down and nails were plucked off.

They accused Anastasia of vilifying their Gods as lifeless and made of stone, wood and bronze. Soon she and Sirilos, the youth who offered her water were put to death by the orders of the emperor. Some historians say the place of murder was Sirmium in Pannonia (Cross & Livingstone, 1997) whereas some others say her martyrdom occurred on the Palmaruola Island in the Tyrrhene Sea (Smith & Piercy, 1999).

St. Gennadius (A.D. 458 -71) transferred the relics of the saint to Constantinople and it was interred in the church established by Greogrius of Nazianzus (A.D. 329-389). Her memory is celebrated on 29 October by the Syriac Orthodox Church.

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

**(? - c. A.D. 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 A.D. 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. Aegeates 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 A.D. 69 (62?). With the assistance of Maxilla his body was interred in Patrae.

His relics were transferred in A.D. 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 A.D. 336-356. St. Andrew’s feast is celebrated on 30 November.

## **30. Mor Anthimos, the Episcopo of Nicomedia (A.D. ? - 303)**

The persecution under Diocletian and Maximian raged with particular ferocity at Nicomedia in Bithynia. When the edict was pasted up, it was torn down by a Christian. From that time the faithful

could not buy or sell, draw water or grind corn without consenting to offer incense to gods. Eusebius adds that bishop Anthimos (Anthimus) was beheaded along with several others who were either killed by sword or by fire (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II).

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

## **31. St. Anthimos, the Patriarch**

(? – 541)

The first two decades of the sixth century witnessed the rivalry between the Syrians and the Nestorians. When the activities of the Syrians were concentrated on the western parts of Syria those of the Nestorians were on the eastern parts. While scholars in Greek and Syriac languages were scarce among Nestorians, articles on faith by Syriac scholars abounded. Their faith spread up to Persia in the east and Episcopo Simon (Simon d. A.D. 540) of Beth Arsham near Tigris was one of those who worked hard to protect the True faith (Aphrem I, 2000).

When the Persians annexed Syria, they offered protection to the Nestorians. Emperor Caesar Justin persecuted the Syrians and issued an order in A.D. 523 to banish all those who were not Nestorians (O'Leary, 2002, pp. 119-120). This edict was not valid in Egypt.

Emperor Justin appointed his nephew Justinian as the co-emperor due to his advanced age. After his death in A.D. 527, Justinian I ascended as the next emperor.

Justinian's queen Theodora was a supporter of the Syrian Orthodox faith. During his reign Yacoub Burdo'no and his companion monk Sergius, came to Constantinople. Besides them Mor Severius,



the Patriarch of Antioch (A.D. 459 – A.D. 538) and Mor Anthimos gave leadership for the protection of the True Faith. Though the intervention of Queen Theodora provided temporary solace, it was a period of dire persecution (O' Leary, 2002).

Anthimos ascended the Patriarchal throne of Constantinople with the support of queen Theodora in A.D. 535 (Smith & Wace, 1877). Pope Agapitus arrived in Constantinople in A.D. 536, exiled Anthimos, and recognised Mennas as the Patriarch. A synod was convened immediately which condemned Anthimos, Severius of Antioch, Peter of Aphem and ascetic Sonorus and published a declaration endorsing the same. An order was issued to exile all Orthodox Christians and to confiscate their books.

In response to the above-mentioned developments, Queen Theodora and Harith Ibn Jabala, a Christian Sheik convened a meeting of all prelates who believed in the doctrine of One nature of Christ. Patriarch Mor Severius of Antioch, Patriarch Theodosius of Alexandria, Patriarch Anthimos of Constantinople, Peter of Aphem, Constantia of Lavodosya and many other metropolitans attended the meeting. Subsequently Mor Yacoub Burdo'no (A.D. 541/42) was consecrated metropolitan. The following three decades saw tireless efforts by Yacoub Burdo'no (d. A.D. 578) to promote the cause. Mor Anthimos worked diligently at a time of turmoil to prevent the Syrian Church vanishing from the world. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 31 July and 28 November.

## **32. Mor Anthrayose, Kallada**

**(A.D. ? – 1692)**

Mor Anthrayose arrived in Kerala in A.D. 1678 along with three brothers. He is considered to be a saint mainly on the basis of his devout and pious life. One of the brothers who accompanied him was a Ramban. Mulanthuruthy church received them enabling them to

spend many years there. Later on, due to some adverse circumstances he and the brothers had to leave Mulanthuruthy. They arrived in Kallada after travelling through Piravam, Manarcad and Puthenkavu. Mor Anthrayose passed away on 2 March 1692 and his mortal remains were entombed in Kallada church. After his demise the brothers set out on a journey to the northern parts of Kerala. The Ramban who went along with them passed away at Chennithala and was entombed there. The faithful believers consider his tomb a holy place.

The remaining two brothers returned to Mulanthuruthy after visiting Kuravilangadu and staying at Srambikkal adjacent to the church building. One of them named Joseph married from Palasana family and settled down on the northern side of the western market. Two sons were born to them. One married into the Kattumangadu family (where wild mangoes grow in plenty) and the other settled down with Thanangattil (Thanangukadu) family. Most families in Mulanthuruthy can trace their roots back to these two families.

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

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

### **33. Sts. Antoninus, Zebinas, Germanus, and Mannathus**

**(A.D. ? – 308?)**

The administrators of cities and commanders of military compelled all men, together with their wives and children and slaves to offer libation to the forces of evil, and also to force them to eat off the sacrifices. An order was issued that everything that was sold in the market should be polluted with libations and the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrificed animals. Even the heathens hated these actions (Eusebius of Caesarea, 1861). Many faithful were tortured on account of this. The first among them was Antoninus, and the second was called Zebinas, and the third person's name was Germanus; and these things were done on the thirteenth of Teshrin (October). The faithful were able to overcome the threats of the judges.

A virgin (Mannathus) was brought from the city of Baishan by Maxys. Maxys was the one who was in charge of the streets of the city. Maxys stripped her and tortured and later was taken to the tribunal of the governor. She confessed that she is a Christian. The governor ordered to burn her by fire. The governor forbade the burial of the corpse of Christians. The bodies were left to be eaten up by animals and birds.

### **34. St. Antony of Egypt**

**(A.D. 251 - 356)**

The biography of St. Antony came to us through Mor Athanasius, the Great (A. D. 295-373) who had served St. Antony. Antony was born in the city of Kaman, Upper Egypt in A. D. 251. They were Christians and very rich. His parents died when he was about eighteen years old. His only younger sister was brought up under his care.

Later his sister joined a nunnery. Antony sold all his ancestral properties and donated it to the poor and needy (Smith & Wace, 1877).

Antony practised very tough ascetism. "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians. 3:10). He worked hard with his own hands and shared everything with the poor. He ate food only once, after the sun set. He ate bread and drank water. He slept on the floor. He did not use oil on his body. The cloth he wore was of leather with fur inside. He lived in caves and forts in the mountains. He lived up to the age of one hundred and five in good health, even with this life style.

Antony withstood the trials and tribulations of life reciting the Psalms and the Epistle of St. Paul to Romans: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35). "Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear, Though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident" (Psalm 27:3). He spent about twenty years in solitude. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distress, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). Through the intercession of St. Antony, many were healed. At the age of fiftyfour (A. D. 305) he established a monastery at Fayum. This is considered as the beginning of Monasticism. Another monastery was later established at Pispir (White, 1992).

During the course of his solitary life, he came to the group of faithful only twice. The first happened in A. D. 311 or 313 at the persecutions of Maximos of Alexandria and the second to help Mor Athanasius of Alexandria against the heresy of Arius. St. Antony was very particular that he should not be second to his contemporaries in practising the virtues of Christian life. He was very humble. In the presence of a Deacon, he asked him to begin the prayer. To those who approached him for healing, he said: "Healing is from God. Healing is not of men." He also said that it is the will of God to heal according to his time and plan. Thus, the sick people learned the lessons of real Christian virtues.

St. Antony knew the time of his death. In A. D. 356 at the age of one hundred and five he admonished his fellow ascetics: “Love Jesus, trust in Him, keep away from worldly pleasures, examine ones own life and repent, never boast if you can live without sin, never take pride if God answers your prayers or murmur if your prayers are not answered. Keep away from Arius and his followers. Don’t be afraid if you see the authorities protecting them. Their victory will not last, it is to perish.”

St. Antony passed away in the thick forest. He insisted that his body should not be taken to Egypt. He feared that his body may be preserved in homes as they were doing in those days. He was of the opinion that his body should be entombed as Christ was entombed. He was against the practice of preserving dead bodies, prevalent in those days. He wanted two ascetics to conduct the burial service and the place of burial was not to be revealed to anybody. He wanted his headdress, bed-sheet, and dress made of sheepskin to be handed over to Mor Athanasius of Alexandria. The staff (T-shaped) was to be given to Makkarios whom he called to monastic life. After these instructions, he stretched his legs and joined the Holy fathers. The feast of St. Antony of Egypt is observed on 18 January in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

## **35. St. Anysia, the Martyress**

**(A.D. ? - 304)**

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

Christians were forbidden from holding religious assemblies. One day Anysia wanted to attend a meeting of the faithful. As she passed the gate of Cassandra, one of the guards happened to see her

and asked her where she was going. The soldier stopped her and asked: "Who are you and where are you going?" She replied: "I am a servant of Jesus Christ and I am going to the Lord's assembly." The soldier said: "I will prevent that and will take you to offer sacrifice to gods. Today we worship the sun." As he spoke he tore off her veil to look at her face. Anysia tried to stop him and struggled with the man. The soldier killed her with a sword.

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

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

**(A.D. 280? – 364?)**

Aphrahat was born in A.D. 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 monastery, 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 monastery 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 A.D. 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 Sasanid King, Sappor II (A.D. 340? – 380?) persecution against Christians was dire. When the Roman Emperor Susthantinos 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 A.D. 337, the next twelve in A.D. 344 and the final letters in A.D. 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.

## **37. Mor Aphrem I Barsoum, the Patriarch** **(A. D. 1887-1957)**

Aphrem was born on 15 June 1887 at Mosul, Iraq. He is the son of Esthaphan and Susan and his baptismal name was Job. Job received his early education in a private Dominican school, studying French and Turkish as well as religious literature and history. He learned Arabic under Muslim scholars. In 1905, Job was a student at the Zafaran Monastery, Mardin, Turkey. Job was ordained Subdeacon (*Youfadyakno*) on 31 *Tulam* 1905 by Mor Dionysius Behanam. He was ordained full-deacon on 31 *Meenam* 1907 by the Patriarch Abded Aloho II and was called Aphrem. Deacon Aphrem was ordained Ramban on 1 *Medom* 1907 and was ordained Priest on 8 *Meenom* 1908.

In 1911, the responsibility of the printing press of Zafaran Monastery was entrusted to Father Aphrem. In 1916, he attended the synod as the representative of the Bishop of Jerusalem to elect the successor of Patriarch Abd Allah II (d. 1915). On 20 May 1928, Father Aphrem was ordained Bishop by name Severios for the diocese of Syria by H. H. Patriarch Elias III.

Mor Severios Aphrem visited the world famous libraries of Oxford and Cambridge and prepared valuable books on Syriac literature, theology and history. He participated in the World Conferences held at Geneva and Lausanne on Faith and Order (August 3-21) in 1927 as the apostolic delegate. Thereafter he was sent to the United States where he established three new churches and ordained Priests. He also gave lectures on the Syriac language and literature



at Providence University and the University of Chicago. The University of Chicago honoured Mor Severios Aphrem by giving him membership in the Asiatic Society.

Patriarch Elias III passed away on 13 February 1932 while visiting India. Mor Aphrem Barsoum was elected to be the Patriarch of Antioch on 16 January 1933. The new Patriarch was enthroned on 30 January 1933 assuming the ecclesiastical name Mor Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum. Immediately after that His Holiness completed the construction of the Patriarchal headquarters at Homs, Syria and constructed churches at Beirut, Aleppo and Zahle. A theological seminary was established at Zahle, Lebanon, which was later moved to Mosul and then to Beirut.

Among the Patriarchs, Moran Aphrem Barsoum is comparable to Mor Michael Rabo, the Great (1166-1199). Moran Aphrem Barsoum was proficient in Syriac, Arabic, Latin, French and German. He has prepared *The Church history* since the time of Bar Hebraeus (1286-1940). *The history of Zafaran monastery*, *The history of Syrian dioceses* (1687-1768), *The history of the Church during the first four centuries*, *The biographies of Syrian fathers*, *The history of Thur'abdin*, *The scattered pearls*, *Arabic-Syriac encyclopaedia*, *The shorter catechism of the Syrian Orthodox Church* and *The spiritual treasure of Canonical prayers* are a few among his writings. There are several books, which still remain as manuscripts. The Syrian Christians should earnestly take up the translation/publication of these works.

Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum served the Church with determination. His Holiness was called to eternal rest on 23 June 1957. On 27 June the mortal remains were interred at the northern side of the altar of the Soonoro church, Homs, Syria. The feast of H. H. is celebrated on 23 June.

## 38. St. Aphrem, the Syrian

(c. A.D. 306 – 373)

The great poet and saint, Mor Aphrem (Ephrem) was born in c. A.D.. 306 in Nisbis. His father belonged to a Christian family in Nisbis and his mother was from Amid (Mar 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, Mor Yacoub (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 A.D. 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 (Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1958; *Britannica*, 2001). Many scholarly historians state that he met Mor Basil only once as a visitor.

In A.D. 337 after the death of Emperor Constantine I, the Persian King Shapur II conquered Nisbis. 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 (Mor 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 Nisbis 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 Bardaisan and Marcion (*Britannica*, 2001). Bardaisan presented his arguments in verse form to the students. Aphrem also composed verses contradicting the heretical views. Mor Aphrem is given credit for awakening the Church to the importance of music and poetry in spreading and fortifying the faith. Though in the ecclesiastical hierarchy he was only a deacon, he was respected as a Doctor (*Malphono*) of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church.

The word ‘Doctor’ has its roots in the latin word ‘*Docere*’ which means to teach. Doctors of the Church is a very special title accorded by the Church to certain saints which means that their teachings and writings are known for the depth of understanding and the orthodoxy of their theological teachings. They have contributed significantly to the formulation of Christian teaching in at least one area.

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* (Smith & Wace, 1880; *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 I, 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 for the heavenly abode on 9 June, A.D. 373 (376?). His body was interred as per his own instructions. “I am unholy who don’t deserve to be entombed in a holy place. So do not bury me inside the church as I do not deserve that glory” (Aphrem I, 2001). The feast of Mor Aphrem is celebrated on the first Saturday of the Great Lent in the Syrian Orthodox Church (Fifty days’ lent - a movable day of commemoration).

### **39. St. Apollonia, the Martyress**

**(? – A.D. 245?)**

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

Mor Dionysius who was the bishop of Alexandria (247-265) at that time wrote to Fabius, Patriarch of Antioch (A.D. 251 - 254), an account of the persecution of Christians by the heathen populace of Alexandria in the last year of the reign of the Emperor Philip (<http://Soul-candy.info/2015/02/feb-9-st-appollonia-of-alaxandria/>; Thurston & Attwater, 1990). The details are as follows: “They seized aged virgin Apollonia, broke all her teeth with blows on her jaws, and piling up a bonfire before the city, threatened to burn her alive if she refused to recite with them their blasphemous sayings. But she asked for a brief delay (as if to consider the proposal) and without flinching leapt into the fire and was consumed” (Farmer, 1997, p. 29).

Most of the books referred to have given the date of martyrdom as A.D. 249 (Smith & Wace, 1877; Farmer, 1997; Attwater & John,

1996; Paul, 2014). However, the date of martyrdom recorded in the calendar of the Syrian Orthodox Church is A.D. 245 (Rajan, 2004) since this persecution is dated prior to that of Decius (A.D. 247-249). The feast of St. Apollonia is celebrated on 8 February in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **40. Apostle Aquila**

### **(First Century)**

Saint Aquila, is one among the seventy-two Apostles. He, a native of Pontus and a Jew, living in the city of Rome with his wife Priscilla (Acts 18:2) was a disciple of Apostle Paul. During the reign of Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54) when all the Jews were banished from Rome, Saint Aquila and his wife were compelled to leave. They settled in Corinth. A short while later, the holy Apostle Paul arrived there from Athens preaching the Gospel. Having made the acquaintance of Aquila, he lived at his house and was engaged with him, making tents which was his occupation (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2019/07/14/101950-apostle-aquila-of-the-seventy>).

Having received baptism from Apostle Paul, Aquila and Priscilla became his devoted and zealous disciples. They accompanied the apostle to Ephesus. Apostle Paul instructed them to continue the preaching of the Gospel at Ephesus, and he himself went to Jerusalem, in order to be present for the feast of the Pentecost. At Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla heard the bold preaching of a newcomer from Alexandria, the Jew Apollos. He had been instructed in the fundamentals of the Faith but knew only about the baptism of John the Forerunner. They called him over and explained more precisely about the way of the Lord.

After the death of Emperor Claudius, Jews were permitted to return to Italy, and Aquila and Priscilla then came back to Rome.

Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans entreats his faithful disciples, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus, who put forth their heads for my soul, whom I do not alone thank, but also all the Church of the Gentiles and the church of their household” (Rom. 16: 3-4). Saint Aquila did not long dwell in Rome: Apostle Paul ordained him bishop in Asia. Saint Aquila zealously laboured at preaching the Gospel in Asia, Achaia and Heraklia. He converted pagans to Christ, he confirmed newly-converted Christians in the faith, he established presbyters and destroyed their idols. Saint Priscilla constantly assisted St. Paul in the apostolic work. Saint Aquila died a martyr: pagans murdered him. According to the traditional belief of the Church, Saint Priscilla was killed along with him.

## **41. St. Archippus, one among the Emissaries (First Century)**

Saints Archippus, Philemon and Apphia, among the Seventy-two Emissaries were students and companions of the holy Apostle Paul (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2017/02/19/100557-martyr-archippus-of-the-seventy-apostles>). In the Epistle to Philemon (1:2), Apostle Paul names Saint Archippus as his companion, and mentions him again in the Epistle to the Colossians (Col. 4:17).

Saint Archippus was bishop of the city of Colossae in Phrygia. Saint Philemon was an eminent citizen of this city, and the Christians gathered in his home to celebrate church services. During a pagan feast the Church had gathered in Philemon’s home for prayer. When the pagans learned of it they raided the home and took Sts. Archippus, Philemon, and Apphia to be killed.

During the persecution against Christians under emperor Nero (54-68), they were brought to trial by the ruler Artocles for confessing

faith in Christ. They were whipped, buried up to their waists and then stoned. St. Archippus survived this attack, barely, and the pagans then pulled him out and left him for the children's amusement. They stabbed him all over with knives and he gave up his soul to God ([https://orthodoxwiki.org/Apostle\\_Archippus](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Apostle_Archippus)). The Church remembers St. Archippus on 20 February and 20 March.

## **42. St. Arnobius, the Martyr**

**(? - A.D. 330?)**

No one else other than Jerome has referred to Arnobius. Even what is cited in Jerome's Chronicle is meager (Roberts & Donaldson, 1956). It happened so may be because he was an idolater turned Christian.

Arnobius was born in the town Sicca Veneria situated on the north-west border Numidia in Carthage. During the period of persecution from A.D. 303 to 313 Arnobius was a distinguished rhetorician at Sicca in Africa (Roberts & Donaldson, 1956; Wace & Piercy, 1999).

Sicca Veneria was a centre of licentiousness of the goddess of lust. Many Phoenicians worshipped the goddess of lust. Many who had an excess exultation for lust and sex and who were an embarrassment to the Corinthians lived there. Women whose parents were poor sacrificed their chastity in the temple devoted to this goddess and procured dowry for their weddings.

These kinds of evil practices, superstitions and depraved customs prepared Arnobius to accept Christianity. He himself described his transformation, "O! Blindness, I used to worship idols fashioned by hammers seared in furnace. Now the noble Lord leads me into the path of truth. I realise the truth of the matter now." He has reported somewhere else, "Once I was lost due to my errors, now I am a true Christian."

Arnobius used to be an avid idolater. Nevertheless, he was touched deeply by martyrdom resulting through the edict of Nicomedia. He visited a church in Sicca. People who had known about his previous activities were scared of him. He was not acceptable even to the metropolitan because Arnobius had always stood against Christ. Later on Arnobius was baptized and according to the reports of Trithemius, Arnobius was ordained priest as well (Wace & Piercy, 1999).

Even though he accepted Christianity very late, he and Constantine did their best to wipe out idol worship after receiving the Christian faith. Of God he spoke in the noblest language of adoration, “The First Cause, foundation of all, One who is not born, Omnipresent, Incorporeal, Eternal, shrouded in light, ineffable.” His concept of Christ ran like this, . . . the only path to the Light and salvation only for those who follow him.”

In his writings to the idol worshippers, he never quoted the Gospel, as they did not approve of it. Instead, he presented the essence of Gospel truths through logical reasoning. It showed that he had studied deeply the word of God. He could always present these divine thoughts with clarity and power. His books, on scrutiny, reveal that they were written during the period between A.D. 297 and 305. Historians have reached the assumption that he must have lost his life during the period of Roman persecution (c. A.D. 330).

### **43. St. Arsenius, the Great**

**(A.D. 354 – 450)**

St. Arsenius (Arsenius) the Great was born in c. A.D. 354 in Rome in a pious Christian family. Arsenius is also known as “the Roman” or “the Deacon.” He is one of the most famous monks of Egypt. He studied Rhetoric and Philosophy, and mastered Latin and



Greek languages. St. Arsenius gave up philosophy and the vanity of the worldly life, seeking instead the true wisdom. He entered the ranks of the clergy as a Deacon in one of the Roman churches, dedicating himself to the service of God (Smith & Wace, 1877, Vol. I; <http://home.iprimus.com.au/xenos/arseniosgreat.html>).

Emperor Theodosius I (A.D. 379-395) ruled the eastern half of the Roman Empire. In about A.D. 383 he entrusted Arsenius with the education of his sons Arcadius and Honorius (Wace, 1911). Against his will, but in obedience to the will of Pope Damasos (Damasus) Arsenius agreed to teach the imperial children, hoping to teach them Christian piety as well (<http://catholicfire.blogspot.co.uk/2008/07/saint-of-day-st-arsenius-great.html>).

When Arsenius arrived at Constantinople, he was received with great honour by the Emperor Theodosius. Theodosius said: “Forget that they are the emperor’s sons, for I want them to submit to you in all things, as to their father and teacher.” The Saint devoted himself to the education of the youths, but the high esteem in which he was held troubled his spirit. St. Arsenius prayed to the Lord and he heard a voice telling him, “Arsenius, flee from men, and you shall be saved.” Then in c. A.D. 394, removing his rich clothing and replacing it with old and tattered garments, he secretly left the palace, boarded a ship for Alexandria, and he made his way to Sketis, a monastery in the midst of the desert.

The brethren led him to Abba John Colobus (the Dwarfish), famed for his holiness of life (Wace, 1911). He, wishing to test the newcomer’s humility, did not seat Arsenius with the monks for the meal (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). He threw him a piece of dry bread saying, “Eat if you wish.” St. Arsenius got down on his hands and knees, and picked up the bread with his mouth. Then he crawled off into a corner and ate it. Seeing this, Elder John said, “He will be a great ascetic!” Then accepting Arsenius with love, he tonsured him into monasticism.

Having taken on the struggle of silence he seldom left his seclusion. He came to church only on Sundays and Feast Days, observing complete silence and conversing with no one. Although absorbed in constant prayer, the Saint did not refuse monks visiting him for his counsel and guidance. St. Arsenius was interested in handicraft work and wove baskets (mats) using fronds of date palms (leaves) soaked in water. He never changed the water in which he moistened the leaves, but only poured fresh water in it. When someone asked, he answered: "I ought to be punished by this smell for the self-indulgence with which I formerly used perfumes" (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III, p. 146).

St. Arsenius felt that many were fasting and observing vigil, but it was rare for someone to guard his soul from pride, greed, jealousy, and hatred of one's brother. In this they resemble graves which are decorated outwardly, but are filled with foul smell. He was heard to cry aloud in his cell: "Forsake me not, O God! I have done no good in Thy sight, but, in Thy goodness, grant me Your mercy to make a beginning" (Wace, 1911, p. 96).

A certain monk once asked St. Arsenius what he should do when he reads the Holy Scriptures and did not comprehend their meaning. The Elder answered, "My child, you must study and learn the Holy Scriptures constantly, even if you do not understand their power... For when we have the words of the Holy Scriptures on our lips, the demons hear them and are terrified."

The Saint often said, "I have often regretted the words I have spoken, but I have never regretted my silence." He spent fifty-five years at monastic labours and struggles. He spent forty years (c. A.D. 394-434) at Sketis, and ten years (c. A.D. 434- 444) on the mountain of Troe near Memphis. Then he spent three years at Canopus, and two more years at Troe, where he fell asleep in the Lord (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III).

St. Arsenius departed for heavenly abode at Troe in the year A.D. 449 or 450. When Arsenius was very near his end, he was

weeping. The monks asked Arsenius: “Are you afraid Father?” Arsenius replied: “Truly, the fear that is with me in this hour has been with me ever since I became a monk” (Smith & Wace, 1877, Vol. I, p. 174). The feast of St. Arsenius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 8 May (and on 11 July?).

## **44. St. Artemius, the Martyr**

**(A.D.? – 363)**

Artemius was a veteran of the army of Constantine, the Great, who was made imperial prefect of Egypt. In discharging this office he had to be a persecutor as well as a heretic. George, the Cappadocian, had intruded upon the episcopal throne of Alexandria with the help of the Arian emperor, Constantius. St. Athanasius had fled, and it was the duty of Artemius to find him, which he endeavored to do with great zeal among the monasteries and hermitages of the Egyptian desert (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV).

Artemius was no less zealous against paganism, destroying temples and images, so that when Julian the Apostate became emperor the persecutor was in turn persecuted (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. I). Many accusations against Artemius were made to the emperor, including that of breaking idols. He was accordingly deprived of his property and beheaded.

The Arian chronicler Philostorgius, states that the Emperor Constantius II commissioned Artemius to bring the reputed relics of St. Andrew the Apostle and St. Luke the Evangelist from Achaia to Constantinople.

The feast of St. Artemius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 20 October.

## **45. Mor Athanasius Aphrem Barsoum, Archbishop of Beirut**

**(A.D. 1932 - 2016)**

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

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

He became a monk on 11 April 1954 by the hands of the Late Lamented Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum. On 12 December 1954, he was ordained a deacon in Aleppo by the Late Lamented Mor Dionysius Gergess Kass Behnam, and a priest by the Late Lamented Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum in Homs on 4 March 1956.

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

Ramban Aphrem Aboodi (later Mor Themotheos Aphrem Aboodi Metropolitan).

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

He authored 16 books in Syriac and Arabic; he wrote many poems and songs that are widely popular in the Syriac world. Two books written by Mor Athanasius were published in Malayalam, “*Velli Nakshathrangal*” (*The Silver Stars*), & “*Malankara Sandharshichu Bharicha Sheemakkaraya Pithakkanmar*” (*Suryoyo Fathers who visited and shepherded Malankara*). His Eminence served the Church as the Patriarchal Counsellor and also participated in numerous conferences and assemblies. He is one of the founders of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) where he represented the Syriac Orthodox Church for more than 25 years.

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

## **46. Mor Athanasius Denho d Beth Rumi, the Martyr**

**(A.D. 1836 - 1915)**

Mor Athanasius Denho was born in the village of Anhel in A.D. 1836. He was raised by religious parents of the Rumi family. After he grew up he decided to live in the monastery. He learned the Aramaic language and Syriac theology. He was tonsured a monk and later became a priest. He was ordained Metropolitan for the Diocese of Siwarach and Garagar.

Mor Athanasius Dehno was humble and virtuous in all his work. In 1915 when his diocese was attacked by barbarian Kurds, they arrested the Bishop and imprisoned him. The Bishop ran away from the village the following morning and after countless tortures he was killed by stoning (shattered his head with stones). The Bishop suffered martyrdom together with his two priests Yacoub and Joseph, and many adolescents and 60 other families.

The handcross of the Bishop is now kept at the St. Peter and St. Paul Church in Adiyaman. He served the Episcopal Office for 33 years and became a martyr at the age of 79.

Note: The Syriac text of the biographical sketch prepared by Malfono Aziz d Beth'amono which was translated by Dr. Gewargis Acis is reproduced here.

## **47. Moran Athanasius I Gammolo**

**(A.D.? – 631)**

Athanasius I Gammolo was the 42nd Patriarch of Antioch, and head of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch from 595 until his death in 631. Athanasius was also the author of *The Life of Severus of Antioch*, a biography of the first Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch.

Athanasius was born in the 6th century in the city of Samosata where he was brought by his mother, Mania, after the death of his father. He and his brother Severus later entered the Monastery of Qinnasrin where they became monks, and Athanasius became Gammolo (Syriac for “camel driver”), because he delivered salt to the monastery from salt mines at Gabbula (Aleppo) by camel (Aphrem I, 2003). Following the death of Patriarch Julian I (A.D. 591-595), bishops gathered at the Monastery of Qinnasrin to elect a new patriarch. According to tradition, the bishops had a vision from God that the new patriarch would be the first monk to knock on the door of the monastery in the following morning. The next morning, Athanasius arrived with his salt and was chosen to be the patriarch.

This election, according to Michael the Great, took place in 595, immediately after Julian’s death. As the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch was forbidden from entering Antioch, Athanasius resided at the Monastery of Mor Zacchaeus near Raqqa. He later appointed his brother Severus as the bishop of Samosata. In 603, the final and longest war between the Romans and Sassanians began as Khosrau II invaded Mesopotamia and Syria, and by 610 Antioch had been conquered. In 607, upon receiving a letter from Pope Anastasius of Alexandria, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, who hoped to establish closer relations since the split in 580, Athanasius travelled to Alexandria with five bishops, including his brother Severus, to discuss implementing their new-found unity. Athanasius remained at the Monastery of the Ennaton outside Alexandria, where Anastasius resided as he was forbidden from residing in the city, for a month before returning to Syria (<https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Athanasius+I+Gammolo>).

In 628, after Emperor Heraclius’ victory over Khosrau, Athanasius sent his secretary and eventual successor, John of the Sedre to meet with the new king, Kavadh II in Ctesiphon, the capital of the Sasanian Empire. He then appointed Marutha of Tagrit in A.D. 628 as Maphrian of the East, who resided in Tagrit and reorganised

the Jacobite Church in the Sassanian Empire. Athanasius also gave special privileges to the Monastery of Mopr Mattai. The following year, Athanasius and twelve other bishops met with Heraclius in Mabbogh for twelve days to discuss union with the Imperial Church. Athanasius refused to yield to Heraclius' demands that he accept monoenergism (the doctrine that the two natures of Christ have one operation or energy) and the emperor ordered the confiscation of many Syriac Orthodox churches and monasteries.

## **48. Athanasius II (of Balad), the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. ? – 686)**

Athanasius was born in the city of Balad in Upper Mesopotamia (on the right bank of Tigris) and studied sciences, Syriac and Greek, with his friend Jacob, under the tutelage of Severus Sebokht (d. 667) at the Monastery of Qennashrin (Wright, 1894). He moved to the Monastery of Beth Malke, near Antioch, (Aphrem I, 2003) and became a monk. Athanasius studied philosophy and translated several Greek theological and philosophical works into Syriac, such as Porphyry's *Isagoge* in January A.D. 645.

Athanasius later became a priest and moved to Nisibis, where he continued to translate Greek texts into Syriac. In A.D. 666-667, he translated nine treatises of the *Hexameron* (Book of the six days) of Basil of Caesarea, as suggested by Matthew, Bishop of Aleppo, and Daniel, Bishop of Edessa. Matthew and Daniel later requested a translation of several letters of Severus of Antioch into Syriac which was completed in A.D. 669, under the pen-name of "Athanasius of Nisibis". Athanasius also translated Severus' Second Discourse against Nephalius, several homilies by Gregory of Nazianzen, and the *Corpus Areopagiticum* by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.



Athanasius was consecrated Patriarch at the end of A.D. 683 and issued a ten-page proclamation, and four canons on Christian conduct with Muslims. He condemned the consumption of sacrificial meat, participation in Muslim festivals, and relationships with Muslims. In A.D. 684, he ordained his friend Jacob as Bishop of Edessa (d.708).

Athanasius also wrote a number of supplication prayers, three of which were to be used at the celebration of the Eucharist. The first begins thus: “Thanks to the Good Shepherd by whose body the flock is fed;” the second begins: “O Lord by whom exists and lives everything;” and the third one begins: “O God, the Word and most high” (Aphrem I, 2003, p. 333). He also composed prayers for the dead and a couple of sedras. He died at the end of the year 686. The feast of Moran Athanasius is celebrated on 27 July and 11 September in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **49. Mor Athanasius Paulose I Kadavil**

**(A.D. 1833 – 1907)**

Paulose was born to Kooran Avira Varkey and Anna Vattaparambath of North Paravur on 19 Vrichikam A.D. 1833 (M. E. 1008). As a young person, he was pious, of good character and was loved by all. When he was thirteen he was ordained Korooyo by Mor Deevannasios, Cheppad on 10 Kumbham A.D. 1846 (M.E. 1021) at Cheriya Pally, Kottayam. His tutors were Fr. Abraham, Earalil, N. Paravur; Fr. Mathai, Parackal, Angamali, and Fr. David, Areekkal, Akaparambu (Chakkara Akathuttu). He received the order of ‘*Mshamshono*’ from the delegate of Antioch, St. Mor Coorilos Yuyakkim at Chalissery church in A.D. 1847 (M. E. 1022). He was the translator of Mor Yuyakkim, which enabled him to acquire a deep knowledge in Syriac. Later he could translate many Old Testament

books from Syriac (*the Book of Thubeed, Pslams, the Wisdom of Solomon and Maccabi*).

Mor Coorilos ordained him priest on 6 Makaram A.D. 1854 (M.E. 1029). He offered the first Holy Qurbono in his own parish church, North Paravur. Instead of taking up (?) the administration of the church, he engaged himself in teaching the deacons. He also served as teacher in the Old Seminary, Kottayam.

The efficiency and scholarship of Paulose was well known in Malankara. Mor Coorilos Joseph (Alathur) of Malabar Independent Church appealed to him directly and through emissaries to be his successor but Fr. Paulose had denied this offer always.

When Patriarch Peter IV visited Malankara in 1875, Paulose teacher accompanied him on his visits. In 1876, the Patriarch convened the Association of Syrian Christians and initiated a democratic set up for administration. Due to the re-organization of the Church into dioceses, the Patriarch consecrated six new metropolitans and Fr. Paulose was one among them.

On 15 Mithunam A.D. 1875 (M.E. 1051) the Patriarch consecrated him Ramban and on 21 Vrichikom A.D. 1876 (M.E. 1052) Metropolitan in his own parish church at North Parvur under the name Mor Athanasius. The Patriarch had a special interest in him and accorded him a distinct status as the representative of the Patriarch in Malankara in his *Stathikon* (order of appointment).

As the Church regained the Old Seminary at Kottayam through a court order in A.D. 1889, the Metropolitan stayed there discharging the administrative duties and supervising the education of the deacons. The reform efforts of Palakunnath Mathews Athanasius led to the closing down of Manarcad Thazhathe Pally and he stayed at Manarcad church to give guidance for the construction of a church on the eastern side of the road (Karotte church). He also took the lead in constructing churches at Kallungathara, Kumarakam and Veliyanad.

According to the direction of the Patriarch, Mor Paulose was a co-celebrant in the consecration ceremonies of Fr. Alwaris (Goa) who

joined the Syrian Church deserting the Catholic Church on 29 July 1889 and the American priest Fr. Reni Vilathy on 29 May A.D. 1892. The former was consecrated at the Old Seminary under the name Mor Yulios and the latter at Ceylon under the name Mor Themotheos.

After the passing away of Mor Coorilos Ambbat of Angamali diocese, Mor Paulose had to undertake the charge of the diocese. Mor Paulose designed and constructed the '*Kudish Kudishin*' (altar canopy) of many churches including that of Cheriya Pally, Kothamangalam.

Mor Paulose completed the construction work of Thrikunnath Seminary at Alwaye started by Mor Coorilos. He also registered a will giving away his share of the family property of the renowned and rich Kadavil (Kooran) family to his own parish church at North Paravur and to Thrikkunnath Seminary, Alwaye.

Mor Athanasius Paulose passed away on 20 *Thulam* 1907 and his remains were interred at Thrikkunnath Seminary. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his anniversary on 2 November.

## **50. Mor Athanasius Paulose II, Kadavil**

**(A.D. 1915 – 1991)**

Paulose was born on 27 June A.D. 1915 as the son of Kunjannam (D/o Thatholil Itteechen, Kulangara) and Kadavil Kurien Paulose, the son of Varkey, the elder brother of Kadavil Mor Athanasius Paulose the first metropolitan of Angamali diocese. Paulose completed his school education from St. Paul's Primary School and Government English Medium School North Paravoor.

After graduating from U.C. College, Alwaye, he took his postgraduate degree in Philosophy from Madras Christian College (A.D. 1941) and another Postgraduate degree in Political Science from Columbia University, U.S.A.(1950). His doctoral studies were

completed at the Kerala University in (1966) and he secured D.D. (1974) and D.Litt degrees from Sweden.

He was ordained Korooyo in 1938 by Mor Yulios Elias Qoro, priest in 1944 by St. Athanasius Paulose (*Valiya thirumeni*), Always and a Ramban on 24 *Chingam* 1947 by Mor Yulios Elias at Thrikunnath Seminary, Aluva.

He served as teacher at Thrikkunnath Seminary, Always for some years. His service as a writer, orator and meditation guru was remarkable. The Ramban, an expert in Syriac language has written many classic books in English and Malayalam. He translated the prayers, and Qurbono Thakso from Syriac and rendered the Qurbono songs from Syriac tunes into English. He had also learnt other languages like Arabic, Bengali and French. He has composed more than thirty books in Malayalam, English and Syriac of which some are '*Bible and India*', '*Ennathe Vidhyarthikal*', '*Randu Vrudhanmmar*' '*Acharya Sahai*', '*Shushrushka Sahai*', *Four Jacobite Liturgies, Meaning and Interpretation of the Eucharist of the Syrian Church, The Orthodox Syrian Church: Its religion and philosophy* (Ph.D. Thesis), *Five Years in the Central Jail, Sheema Yatra, Njan Kanda India, England and America etc.* A versatile personality, drawing was another of his amusements. He has occupied responsible positions like the President of the Evangelical Association of the East (EAE), Administrator etc.

During the uncertain times in Malankara in the seventies on the request of the EAE, the Patriarch decided to consecrate Rev. Paul Ramban who was serving as the mission director, a missionary Metropolitan. The Patriarch Ignatius Yacub III consecrated him under the same name of his ancestor, Mor Athanasius on 2 September 1973.

He was selected as the assistant Metropolitan of Niranam, Quilon, Thumbamon dioceses when Mor Deevannasios Michael (d. 1956) was unwell. Mor Athanasius was the first metropolitan to be consecrated during the problematic years of the Church. He executed a bold leadership in the Church and EAE from 1973 onwards. After

his seventieth birthday in 1985, he retired from administrative affairs of the Church and led a life of rest at St. Ignatius church, Cheriya Vappalasersy. He was entombed in the same church at his death on 6 March 1991. His death anniversary is celebrated on 6 March.

## **51. Mor Athanasius Yeshu Samuel**

**(A. D. 1907- 1995)**

Yeshu was born on 25 December 1907 at the Mesopotomian village called Hilwa, South of Nisbin. His father Soumay was from Midyath and mother Khatoum from Basabrin, Thur'abdin. He had a younger brother by name Malki.

Soumay died when Yeshu was only seven years of age. Thereafter, Khatoum and the two children moved from Hilwa with the help of Joseph, her husband's brother. They were forced to leave Hilwa because of the Kurd invasion. On the way Malki, the younger brother, was killed by the Kurds. Yeshu was in the company of Joseph but was missing when they reached Thur'abdin. After a few days Khatoum found Yeshu who had been taken into the care of Fr. Demitrius and his wife Mary.

At the age of thirteen, Yeshu joined the school at Adena. Father Hannah Dolabani influenced the young Yeshu. Later he continued his education at Homs, Beirut and Damascus. At the age of fifteen Yeshu visited Jerusalem to fulfill a vow of his mother.

In 1926, the Patriarch St. Elias III ordained him Ramban at St. Mark, Jerusalem. He joined the Coptic Seminary at Cairo and was a student there for about two years. He returned to Jerusalem and in 1931 was directed to reach Mosul to accompany St. Elias III to India. Ramban Yeshu was at Manjinikkara, India when St. Elias breathed his last. Ramban Yeshu stayed at Majinikkara for about a year. On 4 April 1932, Ramban Yeshu was ordained Priest by the delegate, Mor Julius Elias Qoro.

After his return to Jerusalem, Fr. Yeshu Samuel worked as the editor of the Patriarchal magazine. He was also the Patriarchal delegate at Jerusalem since Mor Philexinos Jacob was physically weak. In December 1946, H. H. Aphrem I (at Homs, Syria) ordained Father Yeshu Samuel the Metropolitan for Palestine and Jordan. In 1947, Mor Athanasius Yeshu Samuel purchased the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumaran Scrolls) discovered by Bedouin (a tent-dwelling nomad) from the caves of Ain Feshka, near Jericho.

On 19 October 1948 H. H. Aphrem I appointed Mor Athanasius Yeshu Samuel as the apostolic legate to America and Canada. The main purpose of the trip was to collect funds for the Syrian Christians who were refugees in and around Jerusalem. This was an occasion to exhibit the Dead Sea scrolls in the United States and to find a potential buyer.

In 1949 two churches were consecrated, one at New Jersey in the name of St. Ephrem and another at Detroit in the name of St. Ivanius, the Goldmouthed. The Dead Sea Scrolls were displayed at the Library of Congress, Walters Arts Gallery at Baltimore, Durham Duke University at North Carolina and at Chicago University. Dr. Willard F. Libby of the University Institute for Nuclear studies submitted the scrolls to Carbon dating on 9 January 1951. The studies revealed that the scrolls date back to A. D. 33. The scrolls include the Prophecy of Isaiah, the quotations from the book of Habakkuk, its commentary and the scroll of Lamech dealing with the worship, faith and laws of a Jewish group.

On 13 May 1952, H. H. the Patriarch appointed him as the Patriarchal Vicar of United States and Canada. In August 1952 another church was consecrated in the name of St. Ephrem at Quebec, Canada. In 1953, a Bishop's house was established at Hackensack, New Jersey. Meanwhile 15,000 U. S. Dollars were sent to Syrian Christians living as refugees in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and Jordan.

On 1 June 1954 an advertisement was placed in the Wallstreet Journal for the sale of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scrolls were sold to

Mr. Sidney Esteridge for \$ 250,000/-. The amount was invested as the capital for the “ArchBishop Samuel Trust”(Athanasius Yeshu Samuel, 1966).

Mor Athanasius Samuel organised several parishes in the United States. During 1957-93, His Grace sponsored several Priests from Malankara for congregations in the United States. His Grace wanted to be entombed at Manjinikkara but the idea was later abandoned. The County authorities of Burbank, California did not grant permission for his entombment there for the burial in a church is against the rules and practices of that country. Under these circumstances His Grace selected St. Ephrem Monastery, Holland as his resting place as early as 1993.

H. G. Mor Athanasius Yeshu Samuel has visited India several times. His Grace has published several liturgical books in English. The texts of the Holy Qurbano and the sacraments are a few among the publications.

His Grace departed for his heavenly abode at 8.00 p. m. on 16 April 1995 at New Jersey. His Holiness Ignatius Zakka I, the Patriarch came down to New Jersey on 2 May and celebrated the Holy Qurbano and the body was taken to Holland by air. On 5 May the body was entombed at St. Ephrem Monastery, Holland. The anniversary of Mor Athanasius Samuel is observed on 16 April.

## **52. Mor Athanasius the Patriarch of Alexandria (A.D. 295? – 373)**

Athanasius was born in A.D. 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 A.D. 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). In this work he expounds how the God, the word, (*Logos*) by His union with manhood, restored to fallen man the image of God in which he had been created (Gen. 1:27), and by His death and resurrection met and overcome death, the consequence of sin (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). 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 A.D. 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 A.D. 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 Arsanios himself was presented before them (Aphrem, 1963).

In A.D. 335 the Synod at Tyre excommunicated him. Two years later (on 23 November A.D. 337) he returned to the diocese (Quasten, 1960). Again in A.D. 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 A.D. 341 exonerated him from all the alleged crimes. The Serdica synod in A.D. 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 A.D. 345. Emperor Constans who died in A.D. 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 (A.D. 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 A.D. 361. Bishop George who had annexed power was murdered. The atmosphere was congenial for Mor Athanasius to return on 22 February A.D. 362. He was banished again twice, the last occasion was in A.D. 365. In his Easter letter in A.D. 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 A.D. 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 entered into eternal rest on 2 May A.D. 373.

### **53. St. Athanasius Paulose the Protector of Faith (A. D. 1869 - 1953)**

Paulose (Kunjipaulose) was born on 23 January 1869. His parents were Mathai of Thekkekkara family, Ayyampally and Annamma of Pynadath family, Akapparambu. He had three sisters and two brothers.

At the age of seven, as an altar boy, Paulose read the fifth diptych during the holy mass celebrated by H. H. Patriarch Peter IV at the Angamaly church. This was much appreciated by the Patriarch. Paulose had his theological studies under Ambatt Mor Coorilos Geevarghese. He was ordained Subdeacon (Korooyo) on 21 April 1879 by His Grace Coorilos. He had his secular education at the Government High School, Aluva and the C. M. S. High School, Kottayam. Later he became a teacher at Kottayam.

On 12 *Vrichikam* 1898, Deacon Paulose was ordained Priest by Saint Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil (assisted by their Graces Pulikkottil and Kadavil Metropolitans) and on 15th, was ordained Ramban. Saint Gregorius presented Ramban Paulose a *Masanafiso* (a head cover worn by Bishops) and *Bhatrasheel (Uraroh Raboh)*. The prophecy of a future Metropolitan of the saint was fulfilled in A. D. 1910.

The Patriarch Abded Aloho II (Abd Allah) visited India in 1909. The Patriarch ordained Ramban Paulose Bishop on 27 Edavom 1910

by name Athanasius at the Akapparambu church. Mor Athanasius Paulose participated in the consecration of the holy Chrism on 19 August 1911 held at Marthoman church, Mulanthuruthy.

The Malankara Church was again divided when a deposed Patriarch by name Abdul Messeh was brought here in 1912 at the instance of some interested parties. Subsequently, Church cases restarted. His Grace Mor Athanasius was cautioned by some leaders that he may have to vacate the Aluva Thrikkunnath Seminary. His Grace's response was quick and firm: "My children, I don't fear, we have a landed property at Akapparambu, we will build a small house and live there."

On 6 *Dhanu* 1917, Malankara Metropolitan Mor Coorilos entered eternal life and Mor Athanasius was elected to succeed him. In 1920, Mor Athanasius was in charge of Kandanad, Kottayam, Niranam, Kollam and Thumpamon dioceses. He was relieved of the duties of Kottayam, Niranam, Kollam and Thumpamon when Mor Dionysius Michael was ordained Bishop in 1926. The Kandanad diocese was later handed over to Mor Themotheos Augen.

The demise of Mor Osthatheos Sleeba, the delegate of the Holy See, in 1930 and that of His Holiness Patriarch Elias III in 1932 made His Grace very sad. The Malankara Suriyani Christhyani Association held at Karingachira on 6 September 1935 elected Mor Athanasius as the Malankara Metropolitan. The defeat in the case filed at the Kottayam District Court caused much agony to His Grace. He said to his helper Mathew: "Mathew! I am not going for anything. If the Court sends a warrant for the court expenses, we shall go to jail. We have to take with us the prayer book and the book of Psalms." His Grace had to face defections of Mor Dioscoros Thomas of Kananaya Diocese in 1939 (to the Roman Church) and of Mor Themotheos Augen in 1942 (to the Catholicos faction). His Grace stood firm during these hard times.

The Holy Mass celebrated by Mor Athanasius was really of a contrite heart. In his early eighties His Grace recited the Psalms with

tears: “Do not forsake me when my strength fails” (Pslams 71:9). The Patriarch Aphrem I Barsoum called him “The Protector of Faith”, a title that His Grace deserved by all counts. All acclaims his Grace’s prayerful life and the courage he showed to protect the apostolic faith.

Mor Athanasius Paulose departed for the heavenly abode on 25 January 1953. His mortal remains are interred at the Aluva Thrikkunnath Seminary. The Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I declared Mor Athanasius saint on 19 August 2004 (Apostolic Bull No.E 218/2004). The feast of the Saint Athanasius Paulose is celebrated on 26 January.

## **54. Mor Athanasius Shem’un the Delegate (? – A. D. 1889)**

The second half of the 19th century witnessed the invasion of Protestant missionaries into the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church. They had the support of the British. The Kottayam Cheriapally was in the custody of the Protestants following a Court order.

Patriarch Moran Peter IV returned to Jerusalem in 1877 after conducting the Mulanthuruthy Synod (in 1876). In 1880, Mor Dionysius Joseph Pulikkottil (who was ordained by Patriarch Moran Yacoub II in 1865) and Mor Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil (who was ordained by Patriarch Moran Peter IV in 1876) wrote a letter to the Patriarch Moran Peter IV describing the difficulties in the Malankara Church due to the Protestant schisms. Understanding the situation, Moran Peter IV ordained Ramban Shemvun by name Athanasius and sent him to Malankara along with Deacon Sleeba (later the delegate Saint Mor Osthathos Sleeba). Ramban Shemvun had visited India in 1849 along with Mor Athanasius Sthepanose of Thurabdin. They reached Kochi on 1 January 1881.

In 1879, Mor Dionysius Joseph filed a petition against Thomas Athanasius, the successor of Palakkunnath Mathews Athanasius for the recovery of properties in their custody. The Royal Court Judgement was in favour of Mor Dionysius Joseph in 1889. During this period (1881-1889) Mor Athanasius Shemvun was residing and conducting services at the Barsawmo's Church (Puthenpally) Kottayam. [The Foundation stone for Puthenpally was laid as per the direction of Mor Coorilos Yuyakim, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, on 15 February 1868 (Philip, 1993)]. The Kottayam Valiyapally was also under the custody of the Protestants except the vestry to the South of the church (Philip, 1993; Stephen, 2006).

Subsequent to the Royal Court Judgement, Mor Dionysius Joseph regained the Old Seminary and Mor Athanasius Shemvun shifted his residence to the Old Seminary, Kottayam. Mor Athanasius Shemvun departed for the heavenly abode on 11 June 1889 at the Old Seminary. The mortal remains were interred at the Northern side of the altar of Mor Barsawmo's church (Puthenpally) Kottayam. The anniversary of Mor Athanasius Shem'un is celebrated on 11 June.

## **55. St. Augen of Clyisma**

**(? – A.D. 363)**

Christian monasticism originated in Egypt. St. Antony (A.D. 251 – 356) and St. Athanasius (A.D. 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 (A.D. 292 – 346).

Men from various foreign nations joined the Egyptian monastery. 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.

## **56. St. Babula, the Patriarch**

**(A.D. ? – 251)**

St. Babula ascended the throne of Antioch as the Patriarch after the demise of Patriarch Zbino (A.D. 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 (A.D. 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 with King Gordian III in the murder of his predecessor, 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 A.D. 249 during the reign of the Roman king Dikkios 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 A.D. 251.

The mortal remains of St. Babula, who served the church as the Patriarch for fourteen years and who finally became the martyr, were entombed in Antioch. A church was also constructed there. In A.D. 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.

## **57. Moran Babybas, the Patriarch of Antioch, Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 251)**

Babybas, Patriarch of Antioch, succeeded Zebinus (Zbina A.D. 231-237) in the year A.D. 237. Babybas (Babulas) is the most celebrated bishop of Antioch after St. Ignatius. Babybas was a good

shepherd who continually took care of the widows and orphans who lived in his Patriarchate.

During this time, the governor of Antioch was a pagan named Numerian who hated all followers of Christ. Once, Numerian decided to go to a Christian church in Antioch and to make fun there. The Holy Patriarch Babylas met him at the gate and refused his entry into the church. The enraged governor sent soldiers to arrest Saint Babylas. At that time there were three young orphans living in the house of the Patriarch. They were also arrested and tortured to renounce Christ. Governor demanded Babylas to make a public apology for obstructing his entry into the church. Bablas instead told him to give up his sinful way of life. The governor ordered to persecute all the four. In Apostle Paul's letter to Romans he says: For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

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

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

There are several feast days of St. Babylas as the dates of relics were transferred to different places. The Syrian Orthodox Church



celebrates the feast of Babylas along with his three disciples on 23 September. The other popular feast day of Babylas is 24 January.

## **58. Mor Balai, Metropolitan**

**(? – A.D. 448?)**

There are very few historical records about Mor Balai, the Metropolitan of Balsh. It is conjectured that either he had been the disciple of Mor Aphrem (d. 373) or he had been tutored by one of his disciples. He was a Corepiscopo of Aleppo church. He was the noblest companion of Metropolitan Acacius, of Aleppo congregation. When Mor Acacius passed away in A.D. 432 (?) Mor Balai composed five madrasso eulogizing Acacius. According to the description of Patriarch Mor Barshusan (d. 1073) Mor Balai was the metropolitan of Balsh (today known as Maskanal) a town situated to the east of Aleppo (Aphrem I, 2000).

Mor Balai who is remembered in the fifth diptych is believed to have entered to eternal life in the fifth decade of the fifth century. The basis of this deduction is that his name is not found in the list of those who attended the Synods in A.D. 449 and A.D. 451 (Aphrem I, 2000). The Bovoortho and songs composed by him are part of the liturgy and sacraments of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **59. Mor Bar Hebraeus**

### **Gregorius Yoohanon**

**(A. D. 1226-1286)**

Mor Gregorius (Gregory) Yoohanon was born at Melitine (Malatya, Turkey) in 1226. Syrians called him Bar Hebraeus. He was called *Abu al-Faraj* or *Abulfaraj* in Arabic. He was also known as Ibrî and Jaman Aldin.

The origin of the name 'Bar Hebrae'us is that either he himself or one of his forefathers was born during the crossing of the River Euphrates (Aphrem I, 2000, pp 152-153). This is inferred from one of the poems written by Bar Hebraeus himself. Some have given wrong explanations for his name that he is from a Jewish tradition and that his father was a converted Christian (e. g., *Encarta encyclopedia*, 2001).

Bar Hebraeus is the son of Deacon Tajal-Din Aaron who was a physician. He was christened with the name John (Yoohanon). He learned medicine from his father. The family migrated from Melitene to Antioch in A. D. 1243 due to the Mangolian invasion. In 1244, at the age of eighteen, he entered into ascetic life. Mor Ignatius III David (1222-1252) ordained him Priest. At the age of twenty, on 4 September 1246 he was ordained Metropolitan for Gubas/Jubas by name Gregorius. Later, the Patriarch appointed him to the dioceses of Lakhbin/ Laqbin and Aleppo. At the age of thirty-eight, on 19 January 1264 he was ordained Maphryono of the East by the Patriarch Ignatius IV Yeshu (1264-1282). The headquarters of Maphryono was at the monastery of Mor Mathai, Mosul, Iraq (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

Maphreyono Bar Hebraeus was a scholar and he was well accepted by all learned men of the time. He travelled to Nineveh, Baghdad and Mosul and selected a few for the monastic order. From among them he ordained twelve Bishops. He was instrumental in the construction of churches, monasteries and diocesan headquarters.

Bar Herbraeus was a scholar par excellence. He mastered medicine, astrology, philosophy, law, Syriac grammar and history. *The world history*, *Secular history* and *Church history* are the most acclaimed works of Bar Hebraeus. The history written by Bar Hebraeus is based on the history written by the Patriarch Mor Michael Rabo, the Great.

In the *Church history*, he described the period from St. Peter to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchs until A. D. 1285. He has also written a history of Maphreyonos upto his time. Although the Syriac Orthodox

Church does not recognize the Nesthorian Maphreyonos, he has included their history also in his writings.

He prepared the *World history* in Arabic, which was popular in Europe in the 17th century. He has written interpretation for the Old and New Testament books except for the Revelations (*Store house of secrets*). He has quoted the works of early Church fathers and (upto) Mor Michael Rabo in his writings.

Most of the works of Bar Hebraeus are in Syriac and Arabic. The book dealing with monastic life ‘*Dove*’ and the ‘*Canon*’ (10 chapters) were translated from Syriac by His Grace Mor Julius Yacoub and His Grace Mor Julius Kuriakose and are available in Malayalam. Bar Hebraeus is known as the “Sea of Wisdom.” Rev. Fr. Biji C. Markose has prepared a thesis on prayers and fasts according to Bar Ebreyo (Chirathalattu, 2004).

Bar Hebraeus departed for the heavenly abode on 30 July 1286 at the age of sixty at Maragha. The mortal remains were interred at the Monastery of Mor Mathai, Mosul, Iraq which is a pilgrim centre. The feast of Mor Gregorius Bar Hebracus is celebrated on 30 July.

## **60. Sts. Barbara & Juliana**

**(? - A. D. 303)**

Barbara was born at Nicomedia in Bithynia, modern Isnik, Turkey. She was the daughter of King Dioscorus (Aphrem, 1963; *The encyclopedia Americana*, 1988; Brock & Taylor, 2001). Barbara was very beautiful and her father kept her in a fort (*Encarta*, 2001).

Once Dioscorus went for a long journey. When he returned Barbara testified that she become a Christian. Dioscorus got angry with this and he wanted to kill her. However, Barbara escaped the attempt to kill her with a word. Thereafter, Dioscorus wanted to give

her in marriage to a gentile King. Barbara resisted the decision. He threatened Barbara and took her to Marcian, the chief of the town. These efforts did not succeed and she was tortured by different means (Aphrem, 1963). The barbarous tortures of the time are detailed by Abdul Ahad (1948).

Juliana, a close friend of Barbara shared her persecutions. Juliana was also imprisoned. Later, Dioscorus beheaded Barbara and Juliana was martyred at Nicomedia. The date of martyrdom is given as 4 December A. D. 303 (Aphrem, 1963). A few accounts of the martyrdom give the date as c. A. D. 235 (e. g., *Nelson's encyclopaedia*, 1913; *Encarta*, 2001). Since the persecutions were during the time of Diocletian, it should be towards the end of the third century or in the beginning of the fourth century (*The encyclopedia Americana*, 1988).

On his way back after the beheading of her daughter Barbara Dioscorus was charred by lightening and thunder (*Encarta*, 2001). The faithful requests her intercession especially during lightening, thunder and storms. The Church celebrates the feast of Sts. Barbara and Juliana on 4 December.

## **61. St. Bar Had Beshabo, Deacon & Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – c. 355?)**

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

The persecutors shouted at him saying: “Worship fire and water, and eat the blood of beasts, and you shall be set free.” But the deacon

replied: “Neither you nor your king nor any manner of suffering shall ever be able to separate me from the love of Jesus; him alone have I served from my childhood to this old age.” Thus he was condemned to be beheaded. Bar- had-beshaba stood bound, waiting with joy for the moment to join the company of angels. Aggai, the executioner (an apostate Christian), struck seven times at the martyrs neck but was not able to sever his head from body. Finally, he used the sword to separate the head from the body. Some books give the date of martyrdom as A.D. 338 instead of A.D. 355.

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

## **62. St. Barnabas, the Apostle**

**(A.D. ? – c. 61)**

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

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

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

As can be seen in Acts 14: 8-19, in Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: "Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them. Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.

Shortly afterwards a dispute arose in the Church of Antioch with regard to the observance of Jewish rites, some maintaining in opposition to the opinion of St. Paul and St. Barnabas that pagans

entering the Church must be circumcised as well as baptized. This led to the calling of a council at Jerusalem in A.D. 50. St. Paul and St. Barnabas gave a full account of their labours among the Gentiles. The council emphatically declared that Gentile converts were exempt from the obligation to be circumcised.

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

### **63. St. Barsabas, Persian Martyr**

**(A.D. ?–342?)**

Barsabas, a Persian martyr, was an abbot who died with eleven of his monks during the persecution conducted by the Sassanid King Shapur II. Tortured and beheaded near the ruins of Persepolis, in modern Iran, these martyrs brought about the conversion of a pagan Persian who joined them in death in c. A.D. 342 ([https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=1681](https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=1681)). The feast of St. Barsabas is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 28 August.

### **64. Mor Barsoumo the Chief of Mourners**

**(A. D.? – 458)**

Barsoumo was born at the village of Otton near the city of Smeshath. His parents were Hanock and Zachia. The life story of Barsoumo, chief of the mourners, written by his disciple Samuel, the Priest, is kept in the library at St. Mark, Jerusalem (Zafaran, MSS 117).

Barsoumo is known as the head of the mourners (Archimandrite). His name is known differently in the historical books - - Barsuma and Barsoma. One day Barsoumo went for a festival in the city of Smeshath. He happened to be alone on the bank of Euphrates. He was crying. A monk by name Abraham met him and asked: "Why are you crying?" Barsoumo replied: "I want to be the slave of Jesus Christ, our Lord." Abraham took him to the monastery and taught him ascetic practices. His teacher Abraham, the ascetic, departed for heavenly abode in c. A. D. 409.

After the death of his teacher, Barsoumo visited the holy land. On return, he stayed on a high mountain. The faithful built a monastery for him at that place and he stayed there. The Dayro of Mor Barsoumo is near Melitine. On a summer night Barsoumo went out of his room and looked at the shining stars. He thought of his humble self and the mighty creations of God. He decided on that day that he would not sit in the presence of his master. That day onwards he remained standing before the Lord and supported himself on a rock whenever he was tired.

In A. D. 449 Barsoumo attended the second Synod of Ephesus as the representative of all monasteries of the East (Wright, 1894). He was given the authority over other monasteries by Caesar Theodosius (to settle disputes and issues). After the death of Theodosius II, the army chief Markkian took charge.

Barsoumo felt bad about the decision of Chalcedon synod. The Chalcedonians read an order of excommunication of Barsoumo in a church. Then a prominent person testified that his son was seriously ill and Barsoumo's prayer healed him. The faithful was unanimous in their conviction of the saintly life of Barsoumo and Chalcedonians could not do anything.

Barsoumo was a close friend of Mor Dioscoros, the Patriarch of Alexandria (Smith & Wace, 1877). Mor Barsoumo entered his heavenly abode on February 3 A. D. 457/58. The feast of Mor Barsoumo is celebrated on 3 February and 31 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church.



## **65. St. Bartholomew, the Disciple**

**(? – A.D. 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.

## **66. Mor Baselios Shkr Allah III**

**(A.D.? – 1764)**

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

Shkr 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. Mor Shkr Allah Maphrian was accompanied by Metropolitan Mor Yuhanon Gregorios, Very Rev. Corepiscopo Geevarghese, Ramban Yuhanon and Deacons Anthon, Moosa, Hadaya Shkr 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 headquarters.

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, 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. Mor Shkr Allah's *Travelogue to Malanakara* 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 Maphrian 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 Maphrian. He was in a difficult situation.

Twenty days later Metropolitan Mor Ivanios Yuhanon visited the prelate at the Cochin Fort. Mor Ivanios had been consecrated Metropolitan of the Patriarchal Palace by Patriarch Shkr 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 Shkr 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 Shkr Allah 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 Maphrian offered prayers at the tomb of Baselios Maphrian and waited for the arrival of Mor Thoma V in vain. He had spread some erroneous references too about the Maphrian. In this context on 30 *Medam* 1752 Ramban Yuhanon who

had accompanied the Maphrian 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 (INR). 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 Mattancherry church on 9 *Thulam* 1764. His Beatitude was entombed at St. Martha Mariam church, Kandanad. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 22 October. The name of this saint was included in the fifth diptych by the apostolic bull No. 123/2017 of Patriarch H. H. Moran Aphrem II.

## **67. Mor Baselios Yeldho Maphrian**

**(A.D. 1593? – 1685)**

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

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

In 1677 Geevarghese Ramban was consecrated Metropolitan under the name Mor Dioscorus by Mor Yeldho 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 (Kurkuma) monastery and spoke about the necessity of metropolitans going to Malankara. Mor Yeldho Baselios 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 Behnam monastery, Jocko and Mathai and Mor Ivanios Hidayathulla Episcopo. Of these five only three, Mor Yeldho Maphriano, the Episcopo 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 Maphrian 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 Maphrian 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 Maphrian 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 Maphrian drew a circle and the they were made to stand inside

the circle. Nair was amazed to see the cattle remaining inside the boundary line. He then informed the prelate 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 Maphrian 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 Maphrian was led to Kothamangalam Cheriyapally that day (it was established on 13 *Kanni* A.D. 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 Mor Yeldho Baselios 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, 3 p.m. 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 Cheriyapally, Kothamangalam on 20 *Kanni* 1685. 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. The Church celebrates his feast on 3 October with spiritual grandeur.

## **68. St. Baselius of Caesarea**

**(A. D. 329 - 379)**

Basil was born at Caesarea, the capital of Cappadocia in A. D. 329. His parents were members of noble and wealthy families, and were Christians by descent. His grandparents on both sides had suffered during the Maximinian persecution. His maternal grandfather was deprived of his property and life. Macrina, his grandmother, on his father's side, and her husband, were compelled to leave their home in Pontus due to the severity of the persecution. His father, Basil, was an advocate and teacher of rhetoric. His mother, Emmelia brought up their ten children, five of each sex.

Macrina was the eldest daughter. The youngest son Peter's birth was almost contemporaneous with his father's death. Basil was the eldest of the sons, two of whom besides himself, Gregory of Nyssa and Peter of Sebaste, were Bishops. One son died in infancy. Naucratius, the second son, died when he was about 27 years of age. Among the five daughters, Macrina, the eldest, embraced a life of devotion. The other four daughters got married (Smith & Wace, 1877; Quasten, 1960).

Basil had his education at Caesarea, Constantinople and Athens (A. D. 351-355). At Athens he met Gregory of Nazianzus with whom he established a life-long friendship. He returned to Caesarea in A. D. 356 after his education at Athens. He began his career as a rhetorician, which he renounced after sometime. He describes this spiritual awakening: "I had wasted much time on follies and spent nearly all my youth in vain labours, and devotion to the teaching of a wisdom that God had made foolish (1 Cor.1: 20). Suddenly I woke as out of a deep sleep. I beheld the wonderful light of the Gospel truth, and I recognized the nothingness of the wisdom of the princess of this world . . . "

Subsequently Basil received the sacrament of Baptism (c. A. D. 357) and was ordained Reader (Quasten, 1960; Douglas, 1978). Then

he travelled to Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia in order to meet famous ascetics and to study their religious life (White, 1991). Their lives inspired him: “I admired their continence in living, and their endurance in toil. I was amazed at their persistency in prayer, and at their triumphing over sleep . . .” (Quasten, 1960; p. 205).

On his return, he divided his fortune among the poor and went into solitude on the Iris. Meanwhile, Macrina, his sister had begun a community life on one of their estates at Annesi on the River Iris with their widowed mother Emmelia (White, 1991). Gregory of Nazianzus visited him in A. D. 358 and they together prepared *Philocalia*, an anthology of Origen’s work (Cayre, 1935; Quasten, 1960).

In A. D. 364, Eusebius of Caesarea ordained Basil Priest. Eusebius passed away in A. D. 370 and Basil was ordained Bishop of Caesarea, Metropolitan of Cappadocia and Exarch of the civil diocese of Pontus. He soon won the love and affection of his people. He established hospitals, homes for the poor, and hospices for travellers and strangers. Emperor Valens sent a delegate, Modestus, to Basil asking him to sign a statement showing adherence to the Arian heresy. Basil was threatened with confiscation and exile if he did not oblige. The reply of Basil was as follows: “The confiscation of goods does not harm one who has nothing, perhaps, for these tortures and sufferings you need a cloak and a few books which are my whole life. Exile I do not know . . . for the whole world is of God . . . But death would be an act of kindness for it will bring me nearer to God, for Whom I live and for Whom I have been created and to Whom is the greater part I have died and to Whom I hasten” (Quasten, 1960, p. 206).

Modestus was astonished at these words. He said: “No one until now has spoken to me in such a manner . . .” To this Basil replied: “Perhaps you have never met a Bishop before . . . Fire, swords, beasts and the instruments of tearing the flesh are wished for by us as delights more than horrors . . . you will not persuade us nor win us over to the impious doctrine (Arianism).”



Basil, besides being eloquent, was learned and unusually talented for organisation, and possessed great personal holiness. He is equally renowned as a writer of exegetical, ascetical and homiletic works (Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1958). As an ascetic, he established a monastic system during that period. As a Bishop, he showed a genuine gift for leadership in ecclesiastical affairs and social needs. As a theologian, he showed determination to uphold Nicene doctrine (Douglas, 1978). He has written a text for the holy *Qurbano*. St. Baselius departed for his heavenly abode at the age of fifty on 1 January A. D. 379.

## **69. Mor Baselius Paulose II, the Catholicos (A. D. 1914-1996)**

Paulose was born at Cherai, Kochi, Kerala on 12 June 1914. He was the third son of Rev. Fr. P. P. Joseph, Puthusseril and Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas, Eralil. He had three brothers and four sisters.

Paulose completed his school education from Ramavarma High School, Cherai. He learned Syriac from his father and from Rev. Fr. Mathai Vellakkunath. He continued his secular education at the C. M. S. College, Kottayam and the U. C. College, Aluva. In 1933, at the age of 19, Paulose was ordained Deacon by His Grace Mor Julius Elias, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, at Kottayam Valiyapally. In 1938, he was ordained Priest by His Grace Mor Julius Elias at Manjinikkara. Thereafter, Rev. Fr. P. J. Paulose served Mor Julius as secretary and was a teacher at Manjinikkara Dayara.

Malankara Metropolitan Mor Athanasius Paulose of Aluva was in charge of the Kandanad diocese. By 1952, Mor Athanasius was taking rest at Thrikkunnath Seminary Aluva. The representatives of the Kandanad diocese in its meeting held on 25 April 1952 elected Father P. J. Paulose as Metropolitan designate. Subsequently, on 11

September the Metropolitan designate left for Homs, Syria along with the delegate, Mor Julius Elias. His Holiness the Patriarch Apherem I ordained him Metropolitan by name Philexinos on 19 October 1952 at Homs, Syria.

On 12 January the new Bishop Mor Philexenos Paulose took charge of the Kandanad diocese. At that time the adherents of the Patriarch of Antioch had no headquarters for the Kandanad diocese. Therefore, as a temporary arrangement, the property of the Holy Throne at Malelcruz was given as a residence for the Bishop. (The Malelcruz monastery was founded by the delegate Mor Osthatheos Sleeba in 1923, which was given by a gift deed to the Holy Throne of Antioch by Kuriako of Valayal family, Vadayampady).

After the demise of Mor Dionysius Michael in 1956, the responsibilities of the Kottayam and Kollam dioceses were also given to Mor Philexinos Paulose. Since the unification of the Church in Malankara, His Grace served as the president of the Sunday School Association (1966-74). Since 1974, the Malankara Church again witnessed a division for various reasons (arguments such as the Catholicos is seated on the Throne of St. Thomas, the Malankara Church is autocephalous and that powers of the Patriarch of Antioch are at a vanishing point). Subsequently, Mor Philexinos Paulose was ordained Catholicos on 7th September, 1975 by H. H. Patriarch Mor Ignatius Yacoub III at Damascus, Syria by name Baselius Paulose II. The Catholicos visited churches and laid the foundation of several churches in and outside Kerala. The Church went through a tough time with litigations and persecutions.

On 25 June 1980, the Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Yacoub III passed away at Damascus. On 14 September 1980, Catholicos Baselius Paulose II officiated in the enthronement of the new Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. Thus, the Catholicos of Indian origin had a rare privilege in the Church history. The Catholicos received all his ordinations from the delegate of the Holy See and was ordained Metropolitan and Catholicos by the Patriarch of Antioch.

On 1 September 1996 His Beatitude Catholicos Baselius Paulose II was called to eternal rest and was entombed at Malelcruz Dayara, which served as his temporary headquarters in 1952. It is unique that the Catholicos is entombed in the property gifted to the Holy Throne of Antioch. The feast of the Catholicos is celebrated on 1 September.

## **70. Sts. Behnam and his sister Sarah, Martyrs**

**(A.D. – 388?)**

King of Persia, Sanharib (Sennacherib) ruled Nineveh. His son Prince Behnam had forty armed knights as his constant companions, but his daughter Sarah was afflicted with leprosy (<http://st-takla.org/books/en/church/synaxarium/04-keyahk/14-kiahk-behnam.html>).

One day prince Behnam went hunting in the wilderness with some of his slaves. He saw a large animal and chased it, separating himself from the group. Night came and he slept alone in the wilderness. He had a dream that someone was telling him to look for a man named Matthew, who lived in that mountainous area. St. Matthew would pray for his sister and she would be cured.

The next morning the prince found his party and they searched for St. Matthew. They found the saint in a cave in the mountain. The prince knelt before St. Matthew and told him about his sister and the vision he had. He asked St. Matthew to come with him to the city and see his sister Sarah. When they reached the palace, the prince went to his mother and told her about his vision and that St. Matthew had come with them to pray and cure the princess of her disease.

The queen allowed Sarah to see the saint. St. Matthew prayed for the princess and she was cured. Then the saint began to tell them about our Lord Jesus Christ; how He died for all of us and how He gave us salvation and the power over sickness and death. Subsequently,

they were baptized by the saint in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Afterward, the saint went back to his cave.

The king was surprised and delighted when his daughter went to meet him, seeing that she was cured of her disease. He asked her how it happened. St. Sarah told her father that our Lord Jesus Christ through the hands of St. Matthew cured her and that she and the prince are Christians. The king became angry that they were baptized and threatened them with severe punishment if they did not renounce their Christian faith. Behnam and Sarah refused to renounce their faith and tried to escape with some of their friends but the king's soldiers found them and killed them. They both received the crown of martyrdom.

Later an evil spirit possessed the king. It tormented him with pain and fear. The worried queen sent for St. Matthew, knowing in her heart that the saint had indeed brought about the cure for her daughter. When St. Matthew arrived, he prayed for the king and the Lord immediately healed him. The king was very glad to be free of the terrible evil spirit and he and the queen listened to St. Matthew's words about the all powerful and true God. Both the king and queen believed in our Lord Jesus Christ and were baptized. Eventually the entire city believed in our Lord Jesus. The king built a monastery for St. Matthew and the bodies of his children, Sts. Behnam and Sarah were entombed in it. Many healings and miracles were attributed to the relics of St. Behnam and Sarah.

In July 2014, ISIS fighters reached the monastery and ordered the monks to leave immediately. On 19 March, 2015, ISIS fighters blew up the tomb of Mor Behnam and Morth Sarah with explosives completely levelling the structure (<http://hyperallergic.com/216393/another-treasure-lost-in-iraq-the-story-of-mar-behnam-monastery/>;[http://www.suscopts.org/mightyangels/vol12\\_no3/stbehnam&sarah.pdf](http://www.suscopts.org/mightyangels/vol12_no3/stbehnam&sarah.pdf)).

The feast of Sts. Behnam and Sarah is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 27 April and 10 December.

## **71. St. Benjamin, Deacon & Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 424)**

The Christians in Persia had enjoyed twelve years of peace during the reign of Isdegerd, son of Sapor III, when in 420 it was disturbed by the indiscreet zeal of Abdas, a Christian Bishop who burned the Temple of Fire, the great sanctuary of the Persians. King Isdegerd threatened to destroy all the churches of the Christians unless the Bishop would rebuild it.

As Abdas refused to comply, the churches were demolished, Abdas himself was put to death, and a general persecution began which lasted forty years. Isdegerd died in 421, but his son and successor, Varanes, carried on the persecution with great fury. The Christians were submitted to the cruelest tortures.

Among those who suffered was St. Benjamin, a Deacon, who had been imprisoned a year for his Faith. At the end of this period, an ambassador of the Emperor of Constantinople obtained his release on condition that he would never speak to any of the courtiers about religion ([https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=338](https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=338); <http://www.catholic-saints.info/roman-catholic-saints-a-g/saint-benjamin.htm>).

St. Benjamin, however, declared it was his duty to preach Christ and that he could not be silent. Although he had been liberated on the agreement made with the ambassador and the Persian authorities, he would not acquiesce in it, and neglected no opportunity of preaching. He was again apprehended and brought before the king. The tyrant ordered that reeds should be thrust in between his nails and his flesh and into all the tenderest parts of his body and then withdrawn. After this torture had been repeated several times, a knotted stake was inserted into his bowels to rend and tear him. The martyr departed for heavenly abode in the most terrible agony about the year 424. The feast of St. Benjamin is conjectured to be on 29 April.

## **72. St. Bishoy (Bishoe)**

**(A.D. 320 – 417)**

Saint Bishoy (Bisve) was born in A.D. 320 in a pious family in a small village called Shensha, in the province of Menoufeya, Egypt (<http://www.coptic.net/synexarion/Bishoy.txt>; <http://www.copticchurch.net/topics/synexarion/bishoy.html>). ‘Bishoy’ is a Coptic word, which means ‘lofty’ or ‘elevated’. He was the only one to be called “the perfect man”, also known as ‘the Great of Cyrus’. An angel appeared to his mother, and announced to her that her son was chosen from among his six brothers to be the servant of God. She obeyed gladly and prepared him for his mission. In A.D. 340 Saint Bishoy went to live in Wadi-El-Natrum and there he became a friend of Saint John the Short; both were disciples of Saint Pambo (d. 385).

When Saint Pambo died, Saint Bishoy and Saint John prayed for God’s guidance, and an angel appeared to Saint Bishoy, directing him to the site of the present monastery, where he lived the life of a hermit. There, Saint Bishoy became the spiritual father to many monks who gathered around him. He grew famous for his love, simplicity, kindness, as well as for his extreme ascetic life.

He was serious, wise and a great recluse, loving seclusion and quietness. It is said that because of his love for God and his desire to be with Him always, he used to tie his hair with a rope to the ceiling of his cell in order to resist sleep during his long night prayers.

In the year 407 A.D., barbarians attacked the monasteries at Scete. During this time Saint Bishoy, accompanied by some of his disciples, went to Antinopolis where he met Saint Paul of Tamouiah and their love for each other was such that God promised them that they would never be parted. Until this day, the body of Saint Bishoy and the relics of Saint Paul lie together in the main church of the monastery of Saint Bishoy in Wadi-El-Natrum. Saint Bishoy died in 417 A.D. and the feast of St. Bishoy is celebrated on 2 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **73. St. Callistus, Episcopo of Rome**

**(A.D. ? – 222)**

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

Pope Zephyrinus put him in charge of the Christian cemetery on the Appian Way where most of the previous bishops of Rome were entombed. Callistus was very able and was chosen to succeed Pope Zephyrinus in A.D. 217? (Smith & Wace, 1877). Bishop Callistus had a short and controversial reign on account of his mediation between two parties with rival theories of incarnation. Callistus was accused of laxity for readmitting into communion those who had done public penance for murder, adultery and fornication (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). There were other allegations that he recognized marriages between free women and slaves, contrary to Roman civil law. Although very little is known of Callistus, other than what is noted by his rivals, he is believed to be a firm upholder of true doctrine and good discipline.

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

## 74. Sts. Carpos & Papylos, Martyrs

(c. A.D. 170 ? - c. 250?)

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

Carpos, when he was asked his name, replied: "My first and noblest name is that of Christian; but if you want to know my worldly name, it is Carpos." The proconsul (Optimus?) invited him to offer sacrifice to idols. Capos replied: "I am a Christian. I worship Christ, the Son of God, who came in these latter times to save us and who had delivered us from the snares of the Devil. I do not offer sacrifices to idols like these. The gods that have not made heaven and earth shall perish." Capos quoting from the prophet Jeremias declared that the living does not sacrifice to the dead. The magistrate asked: "Do you think that gods are dead?" The martyr retorted: "They were never even living men that they should die." Subsequently, Carpos was hung and flayed.

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



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

## **75. St. Christina**

### **(Third century)**

St. Christina (of Tyre or Bolsena) lived during the third century. She was the daughter of Urban (Urbain), the governor of Tyre. Urban was an ardent idol worshipper ([https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=148](https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=148)). Christina means 'Little Christ' or 'follower of Christ'. He wanted her daughter to be a pagan priestess. He locked her up in a room which had a number of golden idols and instructed her to burn incense before the idols. While Christina was locked up in the room she prayed to the creator of the world and asked him to reveal himself to her. She began to fast and continued to pray. An angel came to Christina and taught her the gospel of Christ. She was then called a bride of Christ, but warned she would suffer for her faith.

Being enlightened of the truth, Christina broke the idols and distributed the pieces among the poor. (<http://magnificat.ca/cal/en/saints/christina.html>). Infuriated by this act, Urban became the persecutor of his own daughter. Urban had her whipped and thrown her into the prison. Her tormentor brought her forth to have her body torn by iron hooks, then she was fastened to a rack beneath which a fire was kindled.

The torments to which this young girl was subjected to would seem as difficult to devise and imagine. But God was beside her at all times. Christina was thrown into the lake of Bolsena, but was rescued by an angel and was seen walking on the water accompanied by several angels.

After the death of Urban, Governor Dion succeeded him. He was a cruel pagan experienced in persecuting the Christians. He tried to win her over by reminding her of her nobility, suggesting she was in serious error. Her reply infuriated him: “Christ, whom you despise, will tear me out of your hands!” Then Saint Christina suffered the most inhuman torments. The governor also was struck down by divine justice. Like Urban, Dion also suffered an unexpected death. A third one named Julian, succeeded him. “Magician!” he cried, “adore the gods, or I will put you to death!” She survived a raging furnace, after remaining in it for five days. Serpents and vipers thrown into her prison did not touch her but killed the magician who had brought them there. She dispersed them in the name of Christ, after restoring the unfortunate magician to life; he was converted and thanked the God of Christina and the Saint. Later her tongue was cut off.

The Saint prayed to be allowed to finish her course. She was pierced with arrows, and finally gained the martyr’s crown at Tyre, a city which formerly stood on an island in the lake of Bolsena in Italy but has since been swallowed up by the waters. Her relics are now at Palermo in Sicily. Her tomb was discovered in the 19th century at Bolsena, marked with an inscription dating from the 10th century (<https://spiritualray.com/life-of-saint-christina>).

The region’s governor was sent to execute St. Christina’s punishment in her father’s stead but she survived every torture. When fellow believers discovered the miracles, they began to gather at her cell. During her time in captivity, she converted nearly 300 people until a new governor arrived and resumed her torture. When she survived five days in a red-hot furnace, she was finally executed with a sword. The feast of St. Christina is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 24 July.

## **76. St. Christopher, the Martyr**

**(3<sup>rd</sup> Century)**

Christopher (Christophoros) who was unable to speak Greek was taken as a prisoner. He prayed and an angel touched his lips and gave him power to speak Greek. So he entered the city and began to preach Christ. And when soldiers were sent out to take him, his staff put forth buds and they believed in Christ. They were baptized with him at Antioch by Patriarch Babylas (Babulas, the Martyr) of Antioch (A.D. 237-251).

About the year A.D. 250 he suffered persecution under Decius in Lycia (Smith & Wace, 1877). He was scourged with iron rods, his head was finally severed from his body which had been inflicted with arrow-wounds. The feast of St. Christopher is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 9 May.

## **77. Mor Clemis Abraham, the Chief Metropolitan of the East**

**(A.D. 1918 - 2002)**

V. I. Unnittan (Unnikunjhu) was born on 27 April 1918 as the son of Vayala Kochidukkala and Aythala Kalarikkal Pennamma of Ranni. After his primary education in Vaikkom 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 completed 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.

He was ordained 'msmrono' by Mor Dioscorus Thomas in 1931 at Valiyapalli, Ranni. The same year on 6 *Vrizchikom* M.E. 1107 Ranni Valiapally witnessed his ordination as 'korooyo' by H. H. Patriarch Elias III. After his primary education in Syriac from Thazhath valliyachan 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 served as assistant vicar and teacher at M.S. High School, Ranni for two years.

In the Knanaya Association convened on 29 March 1951 he was selected unanimously as the candidate to the post of the Metropolitan. He was given the vestments of the Ramban on 8 April by Patriarch Aphrem 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. 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.

Mor Clemis 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.

Mor Clemis Abraham went to the US to study at the Union Theological Seminary in 1960. 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 Programme of Advanced Religious Studies (P.A.R.S.) diploma and S.T.M. degree on 21 May 1961.

Bishop Mor Athanasios Paulose, the Malankara Metropolitan, departed for his heavenly abode on 25 January 1953. Mor Clemis was elected unanimously as the Malanakara Metropolitan trustee by the *Malankara Suriyani Krithiani* 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 Aphrem I passed away on 25 June 1957 at the patriarchal palace in Homs. A synod was convened under the leadership of *Kaimakkam* (one who takes the position temporarily) Mor Osthathios on 3 October at the Patriarchal 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 title Moran Mor Ignatius Yacoub III. The newly elected Patriarch consecrated the holy chrism on 30 November. Mor Clemis was fortunate enough to participate in 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 Thaithara 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.

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. 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.

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 p.m. his soul departed for the heavenly abode. The burial was conducted on 1 October in Chingavanam Dayro church. It was attended by the Catholicos Basalios Thomas I, the

Patriarch delegate, Archbishop Mor Yulios Yeshue Ceecek of central Europe, 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.

## **78. St. Clement of Rome**

**(A.D.? – 101)**

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

Origen and Iranios believed that it is to Clemis 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 (A.D. 68-80), Anicleteus (A.D. 80-92) and Clemis ( A.D. 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. Clemis 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 Clemis 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 Iranius. It was written after the persecution by Domitian during the period A.D. 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. Clemis is regarded as a martyr and his feast is celebrated on 24 November by the Syrian Church.



## 79. Constantine I, the Great

(A.D. 274 ? – 337)

Constantine I, the Great, (Flavius Valerius Constantinus) was born on 27 February A.D. 274(?) in Nissa (Naissus), upper Moesia. He was the son of Flavius Valerius Constantius, an army officer, and Helen(a). Constantine was brought up in Drepanum in Cilicia, his mother's birthplace (Smith & Wace, 1877; *Britannica*, 2016).

In A. D. 293 his father was raised to the rank of Caesar, as Constantius I Chlorus, and was sent to serve under Maximian in the West (*Britannica*, 2016). In A.D. 289 Constantius had separated from Helena in order to marry a step-daughter (Theodora? Fausta?) of Maximian. His father sent him when he was about 16 years old, as a sort of hostage to Diocletian at Nicomedia, who treated him with kindness (Smith & Wace, 1877).

In c. A.D. 297 Constantine took part in the successful war against the Persians. In A.D. 303 Constantine was present at Nicomedia during the persecution of Christians at the court of Diocletian. The early Christianity faced two significant threats; one external and the other internal. The external threat was the persecution by the Roman government and the internal threat was the Arian heresy. It was Constantine who played a key role who defended the Christianity.

Throughout his life, Constantine ascribed his success to his conversion to Christianity and the support of the Christian God. After his victory over Licinius in A.D. 324, Constantine wrote that he had come as God's chosen instrument for the suppression of impiety, and in a letter to the Persian king Shāpūr II he proclaimed that, aided by the divine power of God, he had come to bring peace and prosperity to all lands.

Constantine's adherence to Christianity was closely associated with his rise to power. He fought the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (according to Eusebius, during the campaign against Maxentius) in

the name of the Christian God, having received instructions in a dream to paint the Christian monogram (Cross) on his troops' shields to invoke the help of Christ. The evening prayer for Friday and the prayers on the feast of the Holy Cross on 14 September allude to this event (The book of common prayer of the Syrian Church, 1965).

With the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, the three-centuries-long persecution came to an end. Clergy were exempted from military and other public duties. Bishops were publicly recognised as possessing civil jurisdiction. In A. D. 321 Sunday was made a public holiday (Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1958). Constantine had already donated to the bishop of Rome the imperial property of the Lateran, where a new cathedral, the Basilica Constantiniana was built. In the early fourth century, a theological controversy (Arianism) broke out which affected the unity of the Roman Empire. Constantine wrote letters to Bishop Alexander and to Arius, urging them to make up their differences and forgive each other. When that failed, an ecumenical council was convened with the help and patronage of Constantine. The council held in June/July A.D. 325 repudiated the Arian heresy, and the bishops inserted the word *homoousios* ("of the same essence") into the creed. By asserting that Christ was of the same essence as God the Father, the Council decisively affirmed the divinity of Christ (<http://www.antiochian.org/constantine-great-roman-emperor-christian-saint-historys-turning-point>).

In later years he commissioned new copies of the Bible for the growing congregations at Constantinople. He composed a special prayer for his troops and went on campaigns with a mobile chapel in a tent. He issued numerous laws relating to Christian practices. He extended several privileges to the clergy. Constantine had hoped to be baptised in the Jordan River, but perhaps because of the lack of opportunity to do so he delayed the ceremony until the end of his life. It was while preparing for a campaign against Persia that he fell ill at Helenopolis. Then he returned to Constantinople. Emperor Constantine died on 21 (22?) May A.D. 337 at Ancryona, Izmit,

Turkey (Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1958). Shortly before his death, he was baptised by Eusebius of Nicomedia. After his baptism he refused to wear the imperial purple and died wearing the white baptismal robe. He was entombed in the church of the Holy Apostles just days after he had dedicated it. Emperor Constantine is commemorated on 20 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church along with his mother Helen.

## **80. Mor Constantine, Bishop of Edessa**

**(A.D. ? – 735)**

Constantine was the most famous disciple of Jacob of Edessa (d. A.D. 708). He lived with him in the monastery of Ousebuna for a long time (Aphrem I, 2003). In A.D. 699, he was ordained Metropolitan of Bithynia by Patriarch of Antioch Julian II (A.D. 686-708). Although Mor Constantine was ordained for Bithynia, he was sent to the diocese of Homs. After the death of his master, Mor Jacob, he was transferred to the diocese of Edessa by Patriarch (Elias?) Elijah I in A.D. 709. He administered the diocese for twenty-six years.

Constantine was energetic in the pursuit of knowledge. His questions to his master (Mor Jacob of Edessa) resulted in the composition of two works, viz., *The First Cause* and *The six days of Creation*. He has also composed metrical discourses which were preserved in the library of Mor Abraham monastery in Midyat, Turkey (Aphrem I, 2003).

Mor Constantine passed away on 25 July A.D. 735. The feast of Mor Constantine is celebrated on 25 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **81. Mor Coorilos Geevarghese, Ambatt**

**(A.D. 1834? – 1891)**

Geevarghese (Korath) was born in M.E. 1010 (A.D. 1834?) as the third son of Ittimathu and Elikutty of Ambatt Vadakkan family of Akaparambu (Angamali) parish. During the conquest of Tippu Sultan, this family migrated from Arthat and settled down at Poikkattusery. His maternal grandfather, Korath, Mazhuvancherry Parambath, Ayyampally was a judge in the old Cochi region. His desire was to become a priest like his father's brother, Yacoub (Chacko) Ambatt.

After learning the vernacular, he learned Syriac language and litany from Rev. Fr. Yacoub Kooran Karavattuveetil and Rev. Fr. Ittimathu, Parackal. He was also an expert in Theology, Maths and Architecture.

Mor Yuyakkim Coorilos ordained him Deacon and after his ordination, as Priest he served in his own parish. He was consecrated Ramban by Patriarch Ignatius Peter IV at Mulanthuruthy church on 27 June 1876 on a Tuesday along with two other Rambans. When the Patriarch decided to divide the Malankara Church into dioceses and to consecrate Bishops for the same, Geevarghese Ramban, Ambatt was designated the Angamali diocese.

Geevarghese Ramban was consecrated a Bishop under the name Mor Coorilos Geevarghese on 10 December 1876 at Mor Thoman church, North Paravoor. He was entrusted authority over St. Mary's church Angamali and other churches around it. Mor Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil was consecrated along with him for Niranam diocese. The bishops consecrated on 3 December, Mor Geevarghese Yulios, Konatt (Thumbamon) and Mor Paulose Athanasios, Kadavil (Kottayam) were co-celebrants along with the Patriarch in this consecration.

When Shem'veun Deevannasios, Karavattu-veetil and Mor Ivanios Paulose (Kandanad) were consecrated on 17 May 1877 at

Chiralayam church, Kunnamkulam, Mor Geevarghese Coorilos, Ambatt also served as a co-celebrant.

Mor Coorilos Ambattu has done much valuable services for the Church. He constructed many churches and ordained many priests. He stayed in various churches at Kothamangalam, Kuruppam-pady and Rakkad. With the emergence of the reformists the bishop visited many churches and did his best to retain the priests and believers in the True faith.

He bought the land where Trikunnath Seminary is situated for making it the head quarters of the Angamali diocese. The most memorable and valued institution for the Church and the diocese is the St. Mary's seminary church, Thrikunnath, the construction of which started in A.D. 1889 (?). The first Holy Qurbano was celebrated there on 2 March 1899. He made use of contributions from Angamali, Akaparambu churches and provided money from his own pocket for its completion.

While on a visit to Pambakuda church Mor Coorilos Geevarghese fell ill and returned to Akaparambu church. He realized his end was near and retired to Cheria pally, Angamali where he constructed a tomb on the northern side. He passed away on a Sunday in his fifty-sixth year on 9 March 1891 and was interred in the tomb which had been prepared by him. The feast of Mor Coorilos Geevarghese is celebrated on 9 March in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **82. Mor Coorilos Kuriakose, Poothicote**

**(A.D. 1935 – 1995)**

Mor Coorilos was born on 1 May 1935 to Cherian George, Mepral Poothicote Payikandathil and Annamma. He pursued his education in St. Thomas Middle School, Viyapuram; M.G.M. High School, Thiruvalla; U.C. College, Alwaye and C. M. S. College, Kottayam.

Mor Gregorios Geevarghese, Metropolitan of Angamali, Niranam and Thumbamon dioceses ordained him Korooyo on 8 May 1956 at St. Johns Valiya Pally, Mepral. He completed theological studies under the tutelage of Rev. Ramban Yacoub Madapatt. Malankara Malpan Kurien Kaniamparambil was also his mentor.

Arch Bishop Mor Athanasius Yesu Samuel of America and Canada ordained him 'Yaufodayakino' in 1961 at Attamangalam church, Kumarakom. Mor Philexinos (later H.B. Catholicos Mor Baselios Paulose II) ordained him priest on 2 February 1962 at Piramadom Dayro.

During his tenure as the vicar in Valiya Pally, Mepral the committee meetings of Quilon, Niranam and Thumbamon churches elected him as a candidate for the order of a metropolitan. Subsequently, Patriarch Ignatius Yacub III consecrated him metropolitan under the name Mor Coorilos on 21 July 1974 at St. George Cathedral, Damascus.

He, who had a lead role in the conduct of Church litigations, was a diabetic patient. The tireless lifestyle took its toll on the metropolitan. The Church cannot forget two decades of meritorious service rendered by him. He established institutions like Mor Deevanasios Michael ITC, Adoor; Adichanelloor School; Delegate Mor Julius U. P. School, Vilavoorkonam, and St. Mary's Snehasadanam. He made many arrangements for the convenience of the pilgrims to Manjanikkara. He constructed a Kurisumthotty at Aranmula and made arrangements for food for the pilgrims to Manjinikkara.

Mor Coorilos had been the President of the Sunday School Association for a decade. He passed away on 21 March 1995 in the midst of the busy activity of constructing the diocesan head quarters and chapel at Adoor. He received the honor '*M'sbrono Nasiho*' (the exemplary missionary) from the Holy See of Antioch.

Mor Coorilos who led a simple life had his residence in a small building near Valiya Pally, Mepral. His death anniversary is celebrated on 21 March.

## **83. Mor Coorilos Markose, Ramanthara**

**(A.D. 1946 – 2005)**

Mor Coorilos Markose was born on 6 October 1946 as the eldest son of Mani Varkey Ramanthara and Elyamma who belonged to the parish of St. George Jacobite Syrian church, Ponpally, Nattassery in Kottayam diocese. He completed his studies from St. Mary's L. P. School, Nattasery; Holy Family H. S., Kottayam and Baselius College and C.M. S. College, Kottayam before undergoing training at the Old Seminary, Kottayam.

H. B. Baselius Augen Catholicos ordained him Deacon on 7 May 1970 and Mor Greevarghese Gregorius, Perumpally, ordained him Priest on 25 March 1974. He was the favourite student of Malpans Mor Yulios Yacoub (Manjinikkara) and Mor Themotheos Yacoub (Thrikothamangalam) and of Rev. Fr. T. J. Abraham (Mulanthuruthy).

A well-known Syriac scholar, Mor Coorilos was a Malpan (teacher) in Vettical seminary for a long period. He served not only in the churches in Kottayam diocese but also in many churches outside Kerala like St. Mary's church, Bhilai; St. Peter's church, New Delhi and Bahrain. He had been a Syriac teacher of hundreds of priests for more than thirty years. He has composed various books like *The order of worship in the Church, litany, A guide to the study of Syriac language*, etc. The book on the procedures of the church services is an invaluable asset.

He was zealously faithful in protecting the True Faith and in order to take care of the decisive future of the Church he issued an order to convene a meeting at Puthencruz in 2002. While presiding over the Association meeting of the Jacobite Syrian Christian Church he passed the constitution of the Church and elected H. G. Mor Deevannasios Thomas (later H. B. Baselios Thomas I), the Metropolitan trustee of the Church.

Mor Coorilos' services extended to other fields as well. Being a Syriac scholar, he served as a teacher and a guide at St. Ephrem

Ecumenical Research Institution (SEERI), an examiner (Syriac) in M. G. University and the editor of a magazine published by Kottayam diocese.

Mor Yulios Kuriakose, in the presence of other bishops, elevated him to the rank of Ramban on 6 August 2000 at St. George Simhasana church Perumpally. He was consecrated Metropolitan on 14 January 2001 at the Patriarchal cathedral, Damascus by Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I with many other metropolitans as co-celebrants. Mor Ivanios Mathews, the Metropolitan of Kandanad was also consecrated on the same day. Mor Coorilos led a simple and ordinary life even after his consecration and many people were attracted by his humorous talk and interaction with others. All his speeches at important church meetings made people laugh as well as think. The respected bishop was a kind host who welcomed and treated his guests generously. He never allowed any compromise on his faith. The bishop stayed at the bishops' house adjacent to St. Mary's church, Pangada. He passed away on 30 May 2005 at 9.20 a.m. after being on his sick bed for a long while. His mortal remains were interred at St. Mary's church, Pangada. The anniversary of Mor Coorilos Markose is celebrated on 30 May.

## **84. St. Coorilos Paulose, Thozhupadan** **(A.D. 1850 – 1917)**

Paulose was born on 4 December to Thozhupadan Varkey and Anna, daughter of Thoppil Skaria, a priest. Paulose learned Syriac under the tutorship of Rev. Geevarghese Malpan, Pallathittayil and Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Koonapillil. Mor Coorilos Yuyakkim ordained him deacon in A.D. 1860 and in December A.D. 1866 Bishop Mathews Athanasius, Palakkunnath, ordained him priest. He offered the first Holy Qurbono on 7 January 1867 at St. Martha Mariam Church, Kandanad.



When there was a dispute about the validity of the ordination of Mor Mathews Athanasius, a meeting of the representatives of churches was convened at Parumala Church and according to the decision of the committee Bishop Mor Deevannasius Joseph, Pulikkotil reordained him on 2 Kanni, A.D. 1873. Subsequently he was appointed the vicar of Mulanthuruthy Church.

During this period Geevarghese Ramban, Chathuruthil was leading a monastic life at Vettikal Kurisupalli. Rev. Paulose was also interested in monastic life and thus a companionship developed between them, which he favoured a lot. It was during his tenure as vicar of Mulanthuruthy Church that Patriarch Peter IV visited Malankara in 1875. Rev. Paulose as well as Chathuruthil Ramban participated in the synod at Mulanthuruthy in June 1876 and the consecration of the Holy Chrism in August.

Fr. Paulose Thozhupadan was elevated to the rank of a Ramban by Patriarch Peter IV on 5 September A.D. 1876. Along with him, Shem'veun Corepiscopo, Karavattu, Kandanad and Yacaub Kori, Chalappuram, Mulanthuruthy parish were also elevated as Rambans. Rev. Paulose Ramban could not stay for long in Vettikal with Chathuruthil Geevarghese Ramban as the latter was soon consecrated a Bishop under the name Gregorius (entombed at Parumala) on 10 December 1876 by Patriarch Peter IV.

Rev. Paulose Ramban was entrusted with the responsibility of the Old Seminary in A.D. 1894 by Mor Deevannasius, the Malankara Metropolitan. Very soon, he started the construction of the Old Seminary chapel. In A.D. 1895, Chathuruthil Mor Gregorios wished to make a journey to Jerusalem for which preparations were made under the leadership of Deacon Sleebe (Later Mor Osthathos Sleebe, Deligate of the Holy See of Antioch) who had been staying at Puthenpally, Kottayam and the Old Seminary from A.D. 1881 onwards. Thozhupadan Paulose Ramban also accompanied Chathuruthil Mor Gregorios to the Holy Land.

Rev. Paulose Ramban was busy completing the work of a mess hall at the Old Seminary and the chapel after his return from Jerusalem in May 1895. He could publish '*Malankara Edvakappathrika*' simultaneous with his responsibility as the Seminary Manager.

He was delegated the construction of a church in Trivandrum and could complete the same in one year. This is the St. George church seen in Trivandrum today. His next endeavour was to start a school in Piravom in A.D. 1903.

In spite of holding and discharging various duties for the church, he never distanced himself from prayer, fasting and meditation. His missionary zeal enabled him to baptise more than two hundred people from other religions. Paulose Ramban took the initiative to construct St. Thomas Chapel for the newly converted Christians in Manarcad, Aripparambu and Amayanur, Kottayam at a time when untouchability and caste ostracism were prevalent in society. He himself came forward to carry out the religious needs of the newcomers to the Church.

A meeting of the representatives of the Church convened by Mor Joseph Deevannasios on 27 February 1908, selected Rev. Paulose Ramban and Vattaseril Geevarghese Ramban as candidates for the post of bishops. An eleven-member team including these two rambans started their journey to Jerusalem on 25 April 1908. They arrived on 26 May at the presence of Patriarch Abded Aloho II (Abbdul Masiha who had been deposed was alive then. It is claimed that in 1912 Abdul Masiha was invited to re-establish the Catholicate in India).

On Sunday 31 May 1908, Patriarch Abded Aloho consecrated both Paulose Ramban and Vattaseril Geevarghese Ramban metropolitans under the names Coorilos and Deevannasius respectively. Mor Osthatheos Sleeba (the delegate of Antioch, entombed at Kunnamkulam Simhasana Church) and Mor Ivanios Elias (Patriarch Moran Elias III, entombed at Manjanikkara) were co-celebrants of this metropolitan consecration.

The newly consecrated bishops along with Mor Osthathos, the delegate of Antioch, arrived in Malankara on 17 July 1908. They were given a royal reception by the Church.

Mor Deevannasios Joseph passed away on 11 July 1909 and Mor Geevarghese Deevannasios, Vattaseril ascended as the Malankara Metropolitan with the blessings and permission of H.H. the Patriarch of Antioch. The consecration ceremony was conducted at the Old Seminary with Mor Osthathos as the main celebrant and Mor Ivanios Murimattom and the newly consecrated Mor Coorilos Paulose as co-celebrants (Mor Osthathos Sleebea's preference was for Mor Coorilos to become the Malankara Metropolitan).

Patriarch Abded Aloho II arrived at Bombay on 24 September 1909 to visit Malankara. He came to Kottayam after paying his respects to Sree Moolam Thirunal, the King of Travancore. He asked the two newly ordained bishops to submit the legal agreement as per prior assent. Mor Coorilos did accordingly on 29 Chingam A.D. 1910 whereas Bishop Vattaseril refused to hand over the agreement, which was followed, by division, allegations, and counter allegations.

Patriarch Abded Aloho II on 31 May 1911 issued an order from the Old Seminary excommunicating Mor Deevannasios Vattaseril due to the aforementioned event. Malankara association was convened under the presidentship of the Patriarch in Thrikkunnath Seminary, Alwaye on 30 August 1911 and Mor Coorilos was elected as the next Malankara Metropolitan. Disputes and quarrels became daily occurrences in the Seminary. Mor Coorilos left the Old Seminary for Attamangalam church, Kumarakom. The rest of his days were spent at Panampady church and Piravom church.

The final Bull issued by him on 2 Thulam 1917 from Panampady church was heart touching. He was ill, his condition worsened from the first week of December 1917. Mor Athanasios (d. 1953), Mor Osthathos, the delegate of Antioch (d. 1930), and Mor Savarios Edavazhikkal (d. 1927) reached Panampady church and conducted the necessary last rites and prayers.

Mor Coorilos, who had fought the good fight, completed his race and protected the faith, passed away on 14 December 1917. The next day the Holy Qurbono was offered on three altars with Mor Athanasius as the main celebrant and he was entombed on the north side adjacent to the altar of St. Mary's church, Panampady. Mor Osthatheos delivered the funeral speech. According to Bull No. E215/08 dated 10 October 2008 he was declared a saint and his feast is celebrated on 14 December.

## **85. St. Mor Coorilos Yuyakkim**

**(A.D. 1818 – 1874)**

Mor Coorilos Yuyakkim was born in A.D. 1818 in the village Habab in Thur'abdin, Turkey. His father's name was Malki Bar Israel. He had five brothers Elia, Israel, Mordokkai, Skaria, Gabriel and two sisters Satha and Hedna.

He rendered his spiritual duties with great enthusiasm even at a young age. He learned Syriac language and Theology under the tutorship of Mor Severios. In 1845 Ramban Yuyakkim was consecrated a Metropolitan under the name Mor Coorilos by Patriarch St. Elias II (1838 – 1847).

During this period, English missionaries tried to prevail on Bishop Mor Deevannasios of Chappad to make alterations in the rituals and practices of Malankara Syrian Church. They wanted to remove the prayers for the faithful departed, and intercession to St. Mary and other saints from the Holy *Qurbono Thakso*. Daniel Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta, gave leadership to this movement (Curian, 1982). Malpan Abraham Palakunnel of Maramon co-operated with the foreign missionaries and became their spokesperson.

A meeting of the two sides was convened with the help of Chappad Mor Deevannasios on 5 Makaram 1836 at Mavelikkara and

a contract was accepted. This is known as ‘the Mavelikkara Padiyola’. The Padiyola declared that the Syrian Christians of Kerala were directly under the ecclesiastical administration of the Patriarch of Antioch. The holy spiritual leaders of the Church formulated the prayers and the rituals of the Church and no modifications can be made in them without the sanction of the Patriarch (Aphrem Paulose, 1964).

Mor Deevannasios informed Patriarch Ignatius II when the English missionaries violated the contract. Rev. Philipose Kassisa Edavazhikkal also supported him on this issue.

Deacon Mathews, son of Mathachan Palakkunnath, a native of Maramon, was sent to the Patriarch who was stationed at Mardin, Turkey under the guise of carrying a request from the people. He was endowed priestly position and was consecrated Bishop with the title Mor Athanasius on 2 February 1842. (He was the initiator of the Marthoma Church).

Mathews Athanasios who was not consecrated legally started working with the reformers. On hearing about the complaints against him, the Patriarch sent Mor Coorilos to Malankara. He arrived along with his brother Israel in Cochin on 26 *Chingam* 1846. A team of believers under the leadership of Mor Deevannasios received them. Mor Coorilos listened to the charges against Mathews Athanasios and as he was convinced about the veracity of the issue, published the excommunication Bull the Patriarch had entrusted to Mor Coorilos.

After his ban, Mor Athanasios sought refuge with the Protestants. With their assistance and influence, he cajoled the Raja of Travancore to issue a declaration on 9 June that he was the legally consecrated Metropolitan. The British Resident upon his influence published an ordinance prohibiting the entry of foreign metropolitans to Travancore & Cochin. Mor Coorilos was compelled to leave Kottayam and to go to Cochin on 8 January 1849 (Aphrem Paulose, 1964). He stayed at Fort Cochin and constructed a church there.

When Patriarch St. Ignatius Yacoub II (1847 – 1871) came to know about the turn of events, he sent Mor Athanasius Stephanos to

Malankara. He arrived at Cochin in February 1849. Even after his arrival, the state of affairs remained the same. Mor Athanasius then went to London via Calcutta on 1 September 1852 and filed a petition in the Court of Directors of the East India Company. The prohibition order was cancelled in 1857 and as the travel ban on foreign metropolitans was lifted, Mor Coorilos could travel freely in Malankara. He discharged his services by thwarting the efforts of the Reformists, constructing new churches and thereby protecting the True Faith.

The prayer book printed at Kottayam Seminary Press by Mor Athanasius had not included the prayer 'Hail Mary. . '. Mor Coorilos sent Joseph Kathanar, Pulikkottil to Calicut to print 2000 copies of the original prayer book for distribution. Mor Coorilos who was a scholar in medical science and Mathematics could cure many sick people. He was an expert in Syriac and Arabic languages and he mastered Malayalam during his twenty-eight years' stay in Malankara.

Mor Coorilos spent many years in Mulanthuthy Church which is known as the Jerusalem of Malankara. He ordained Deacon Geevarghese Chathuruthil, a priest (1865) and later a corepiscopo. He also ordained Paulose Kochuparambil of the same parish, a deacon (Mor Coorilos Paulose Panampady, d.1917). Bishop Mor Geevarghese Chathuruthil (d.1902) and Mor Coorilos Kochuparambil got inspiration for spiritual growth from the venerable Mor Coorilos.

After his laudable service in Malankara for twenty-eight years, he entered to eternal rest on 2 September 1874 and he was entombed on the northern side of Mor Thoman Church, Mulanthuruthy. According to Bull No. E214/08 dated 10 October 2008 he was proclaimed a saint. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 2 September. The name of this saint was included in the fifth diptych as per the bull number 123/2017 of Patriarch H. H. Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II.

## **86. Sts. Cosmas & Damian, Martyrs**

**(A.D. ? – 306 ?)**

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

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

Many miracles of healing were ascribed to them after their death. Emperor Justinian I recovered from a serious illness and he had high regard for the relics of Cosmas and Damian. Three brothers of Cosmas and Damian, Anthimus, Leontius and Euprepius are also said to have been martyred with them (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). Cosmas and Damian are the patron saints of doctors. The popular feast days of these saints recorded in the Syrian Orthodox Calendar are 6 April, 17 June, 1 July and 12 October.

## **87. St. Cyprian, the Martyr**

**(A. D. 200-258)**

Cyprian (Kupriyanos) was born in Carthage, Africa in A. D. 200. His father was one of the principal senators (Hoever, 1989; White, 1991). His parents were pagans and very wealthy. He was a student

of law and later became an advocate. He was a Professor of rhetoric and a public orator. In the middle age he came under the influence of the Priest, Caecilian. As a result of this association, he made a vow of chastity and was baptized.

Cyprian was soon ordained Bishop in A. D. 238. Emperor Decius began his persecution in A. D. 250. Several Christians abandoned the faith. In A. D. 251, Cyprian returned from his hiding place. Several people came back to the faith. Subsequently a crisis arose in the Church regarding accepting those returning to the Church. A Priest, Novatus who had opposed the election of Cyprian, fuelled this. Cyprian was in favour of accepting those returning to the Church who were previously baptized in the Church, but opposed accepting those baptized by the heretics and schismatics. Cyprian refused to recognize their validity. Cyprian although was lenient to laity in the above issue, was very tough with the clergy. Those Priests who joined heretics and later returned to the Church were not acceptable to him. In A. D. 252, Emperor Gallus persecuted the Church. In addition, Novatus the Priest, quarrelled with Cyprian. Cyprian opposed Pope Stephen I in the matter of baptism conferred by heretics. However, after the martyrdom of Stephen I (A. D. 257) the successors had good relations with Carthage. In August 257, Emperor Valerian passed an edict forbidding all assemblies of Christians and requiring all Bishops, Priests and Deacons to take part in the official worship or be exiled. On August 30, Cyprian was brought before the proconsul, Paternus, who exiled him to Curubus, Gulf of Hammamet. He was recalled and tried again in A. D. 258. On 14 September Cyprian was beheaded.

Cyprian was a theologian, Bishop, and a steadfast leader in the Church of Africa. Tertullian, the theologian of North Africa, influenced him. Cyprian has written about the use of the sign of the cross on different occasions. The Syriac Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Cyprian on 15 June and 16 September.



## **88. St. Cyril of Axiopolis**

**(A.D. ? – 303)**

Christian life started very early in Axiopolis (earlier known as Herakleia) as many old martyrologies both Syrian and Greek note the martyrs in Axiopolis during Diocletian's persecution, from 303. Saint Cyril or Kyrillos was very popular in Axiopolis. The historian Procopius from Caesarea (6th century) writes about the renowned fortress of Justinian near Axiopolis that it bore the patronage of St. Cyril. It is also possible that the ruins discovered here of a big cemetery church may be the original place of his tomb. It is likely that Cyril have been the bishop of Gortina (Crete) who died during the same persecution (<http://theodialogia.blogspot.com/2013/04/sts-martyrs-from-axiopolis-in-scythia.html>). The feast of St. Cyril of Axiopolis is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 12 May.

## **89. St. Cyril of Caesarea, the Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 251)**

Saint Cyril of Caesarea (Kayseri) was raised in a wealthy pagan family. In his youth, Cyril was baptized in secret. When his family learned of his conversion, his father banished him from the family estate.

Saint Cyril suffered while still a boy at Caesarea in Cappadocia, during the persecutions of the third century (<http://www.catholic-saints.info/roman-catholic-saints-a-g/saint-cyril.htm>). He used to repeat the name of Christ at all times and confessed that the mere utterance of this name moved him strangely. He was beaten by his heathen father, but he bore all this with joy. He drew many of his own age to Christ. When his father in his fury turned him out of doors, he said he had lost little, and would receive a great recompense instead.

On account of his faith Cyril was brought before the magistrate. Cyril was imprisoned for his faith, and ordered by local officials to renounce Christianity and offer sacrifice to idols. No threats could make him show a sign of fear, and the judge, pitying perhaps his tender years, offered him his freedom, assured him of his father's forgiveness, and besought him to return to his home and inheritance. But the blessed youth replied, "I left my home gladly, for I have a greater and a better home which is waiting for me." He was filled with the same heavenly desires to the end. He was taken to the fires as if for execution, and was then brought back and re-examined, but he only protested against the cruel delay. He was beheaded in A.D. 251 in Caesarea, Cappadocia (<https://catholicsaints.info/tag/died-in-cappadocia/>). The feast of St. Cyril of Caesarea is celebrated on 28 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **90. St. Cyril of Jerusalem**

**(c. A.D. 315 ? – 386)**

St. Cyril was born about the year c. A.D. 315 in Jerusalem and was educated there (Quasten, 1960; Thurston & Attwater, 1990). He was ordained priest by St. Maximus, bishop of Jerusalem. Cyril had a sister who was the mother of Gelasius, bishop of Caesarea. He was probably ordained deacon by Macarius in c. A.D. 335 (330?) and priest by his successor Maximus in c. A.D. 345 (343?) (Smith & Wace, 1877; Douglas, 1978).

Priest Cyril was entrusted with the instruction of the Catechumens delivered in c. A. D. 350 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974) and those who had received Baptism. He is remembered for his Catecheses, eighteen instructional addresses given to the candidates for baptism during Lent, and five given to the newly baptized after Easter (Attwater & John, 1996). The lectures to catechumens were given at the

Constantine's basilica of the Holy Cross (erected on Calvary by St. Helena), usually called the Martyrion, and to the newly baptized at the church of Resurrection. In these lectures there were allusions to the discovery of the cross and about the proximity of the rock which closed the Holy Sepulchre.

Cyril became bishop in c. A.D. 348/349 (Quasten, 1960; Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Douglas, 1978; Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997). In the first year of the episcopate of St. Cyril, on 7 May (A.D. 351?) a rare atmospheric phenomenon appeared over the city of Jerusalem about which he wrote to Emperor Constantine (Smith & Wace, 1877; Thurston & Attwater, 1990). The letter says: "On the nones of May, about the third hour, a great luminous cross appeared in the heavens, just over the Golgotha, reaching as far as the holy Mount of Olives, seen not by one or two persons, but clearly and evidently by the whole city. This is not, as might be thought, a fancy-bred and transient appearance: but continued several hours together, visible to our eyes and brighter than the Sun. The whole city, penetrated alike with awe and with joy at this portent, ran immediately to the church, all with one voice giving praise to our Lord Jesus Christ" (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). The excitement caused by the miraculous manifestation (parhelion) resulted in the conversion of many Jews and Gentiles to Christianity (Smith & Wace, 1877).

Cyril became bishop at a time when there were troubles arising from Arianism. The Orthodox concept of the Holy Trinity – the threefold godhead of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit was being challenged by Arians. Cyril was an ardent supporter of Meletius, Patriarch of Antioch (d. A.D. 381), who defined the Son as of the same substance as the Father; "three persons are conceived in the mind, but we speak as if addressing one" (Smith & Wace, 1882). Added to the controversy, there were disagreements between St. Cyril and Acacius, the metropolitan of Caesarea about the primacy of the throne of Jerusalem. This resulted in the exile of Bishop Cyril in A.D. 357 by the Arian Emperor Valens. Cyril made his way first to Antioch and then to Tarsus where he was supported by Bishop Silvanus. Later

he was recalled in A.D. 359 and in the subsequent years was again banished twice.

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

St. Cyril is considered as a doctor of the Church, the rightful bishop of ‘the mother of all the Churches’ and one who worked hard to preserve the true faith against Arianism (Douglas, 1978). Cyril’s twentyfour Catecheses are his chief surviving work (see, English edition by W. Telfer). He entered to eternal rest at the age of about seventy after being bishop for thirty-five years, of which 16 years were spent in exile (Farmer, 1997). The feast of St. Cyril is celebrated on 17 March by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **91. St. Cyril, the Patriarch of Alexandria (A.D. 376 - 444)**

St. Cyril (Coorilos) was born in 376 A.D. in Alexandria (Egypt). He was consecrated bishop by his uncle (father’s brother?). On 17 October, A.D. 412 he became the Patriarch of Alexandria (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Douglas, 1978; Moothedan, 2001).

St. Coorilos presided over the Council of Ephesus convened by Emperor Theodosius II. The Council which commenced on 22 June, A.D. 431 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 A.D. 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 examined 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 *Qurbano*, 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 departed for heavenly abode on 27 June, A.D. 444. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Coorilos on 27 June.

## **92. St. Daniel, the Stylite**

**(c. A.D. 409 ? – c. 493 ?)**

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

Inspired by the visit, he took up his position on a pillar four miles north of Constantinople at the age of fortyseven (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). Daniel offered the following prayer before he began life on the pillar: “I yield Thee glory, Jesus Christ my God, for all the blessings which Thou hast heaped upon me, and for the grace which Thou hast given me that I should embrace this manner of life. But Thou knowest that ascending this pillar, I lean on Thee alone, and that to Thee alone I look for the happy issue of my undertaking. Accept, then, my object; strengthen me that I finish this painful course; give me grace to end it in holiness” (Smith & Wace, 1877, p. 786).

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

Daniel, against his wishes, was ordained priest by Patriarch Gennadius (Cross & Livingstone, 1974), who read the prayers beneath the pillar and then climbed the ladder to lay hands on him and give communion. He preached regularly in the afternoon, his theme frequently being the love of God and of one's neighbor, especially shown in almsgiving, as well as 'the everlasting condemnation which is the lot of the sinners' (Farmer, 1997, p. 128).

He lived on this pillar for thirty-three years and entered to eternal rest at the age of eighty-four. He left his pillar only once in c. A.D. 476 to rebuke Emperor Basiscus who protected heretics, especially the Euthychians. He was often consulted by the emperors Leo I and Zeno and by the Patriarchs of Constantinople, and people flocked to him, bringing their sick to be anointed and prayed over (Attwater, 1996). By continually standing his feet were covered with sores and ulcers. Euphemius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, gave him the viaticum and soon afterwards he passed away in A.D. 493. The body was entombed at the chapel at the foot of his column (Farmer, 1997).

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

## **93. Mor David, Bishop of Harran**

**(A.D. ? – 880)**

Harran is an ancient city of Jazira, south of Edessa. The learned Bar Hebraeus said, "Harran was built by Qinan, son of Arphaxad, and named after his son Haran (<http://www.syriacstudies>).

com/2016/09/22/bishops-of-the-city-of-harran/). To Harran fled Abraham with his father Terah and his brother Nahur and Lot (Genesis 12:1-4). The natives of Harran spoke classical Syriac, which is the Aramaic language. It was also the language of the natives of Edessa and outer Syria.

Mor David (Dawud) of Man`em, was bishop of Harran after Gewargi (Jirjis) II. He was well known as Dawud of Man`em, after the name of his native village in Tur `Abdin. He was a relative of Mor Shim`un d-beth Zayte. He became a monk at the Monastery of Qartmin and was ordained a bishop by the Patriarch, John III (d. 873).

Mor David bequeathed his books and other precious items to his monastery (of Qartmin). They included a collection of canons copied on vellum by his nephew (son of his sister) Sawera (Severus) of Man`em. The feast of Mor David is celebrated on 10 February in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **94. Mor Deevannasios V Joseph Pulikkottil**

**(A.D. 1833 – 1909)**

Joseph was born on 7 December 1833 in the Pulikkottil family. His father was Kurien and mother Thanda. He was ordained deacon at the age of thirteen at Cheriya Pally, Kothamangalam by Mor Deevannasios Cheppad and priest at the age of twenty at Chalissery church (c. A.D. 1852) by Mor Coorilos Yuyakkim.

The reformative ideas of protestant missionaries had spread in the Church and a crisis erupted during this time. Palakunnath Abraham Malpan, a spokesperson of the new movement had sent his nephew Deacon Mathews to Antioch under the pretence that the people had selected him as a Prelate. He could convince the Patriarch who consecrated him metropolitan under the name Mor Athanasius. On his return to Malankara, with the support of the British rulers, he



acquired the rank of the Malankara Metropolitan through a royal declaration.

Even though he had attained the new ecclesiastical status using the influence of those in power, he did not try to spread the reformatory ideas or bring about any changes in the practices and rituals of the Church. Instead, he helped them and paved the way for the smooth conduct of their activities.

In order to rectify the lamentable situation Fr. Philipose Edavazhikkal proposed Fr. Pulikkottil Joseph to the rank of metropolitan. Coorilos Yuyakkim sent many letters to H. H. the Patriarch for the same purpose. Finally, Fr. Joseph started his journey to Antioch on 27 Khumbam M.E. 1038.

Patriarch Ignatius Yacub II (A.D. 1847-1871) ordained him Metropolitan under the name Mor Deevannasios in 1865 at Amid, Turkey. When he returned, he tried to thwart the activities of the reformers and to recover the lost properties of the Malankara Church. His efforts to restrain the reformers were in vain, as they enjoyed the support of the rulers.

Mor Deevannasios Joseph appraised Patriarch Peter III (IV) about the dire situation in Malankara and the attitude of the British authorities. The Patriarch visited the British king and explained the situation. The king was convinced and subsequently the royal declaration of Mor Athanasius was withdrawn. Peter IV arrived in Malankara in 1875 and summoned a meeting at Mulanthuruthy in 1876 in order to arrange the temporal matters of the Church. As per the decision of the historical synod, the Malankara Church was divided into seven new dioceses for administrative convenience. In addition, metropolitans were ordained for each diocese.

Mor Joseph Pulikkottil concentrated on the general affairs and took a strong stand on various issues. He had to file new cases to retrieve the lost Church property from the reformists. The verdicts from the sub court and royal court were in favour of the Bishop and he could regain the seminary and other property belonging to the

Church. The administration could be conducted smoothly as the famous churches like Kottayam Cheriya Pally, and Arthat church were regained.

During the tenure of Mor Deevannasios, many schools including the well-known M. D. Seminary School (A.D. 1892) started functioning. The number of churches increased from one hundred and seventy five to two hundred and eighty two. Theological seminaries were established in Kottayam, Pambakkuda, and Parumala. Many journals like '*Edavaka Pathrika*', '*Njananikshepam*', and '*Suriyani Sabha Suvisheshakan*' were published along with books dealing with the Church and its affairs. The Jacobite Syrian Missionary Association was formed for missionary activities. A church in Trivandrum and a monastery in Vettical were also set up.

The Jubilee of Bishop's priestly ordination was held at Kottayam in A.D. 1901. Sri. E. M. Philip Edavazhikkal acted as his trusted associate. The passing away of Chathuruthil Mor Gregorios on 2 November 1902 who he considered his successor and of Mor Athanasius Paulose of Angamali and Kottayam dioceses on 2 November 1907, left Mor Deevannasios in great sorrow. Following the deaths of these two metropolitans, the Patriarch Abded Aloho II consecrated two bishops Mor Coorilos Paulose, (Thozhupadan) Kochuparambil and Mor Deevannasios Vattasseril in 1908 at the monastery of St. Mark in Jerusalem.

By 1909, Mor Deevannasios, after serving the Church through turbulent days for four and a half decades, became bedridden due to rheumatic problems. He departed for heavenly abode on 11 July 1909 in his seventy sixth year. Many eminent people, the Maharajas, the Viceroy, and the British Resident sent condolence messages. Mor Osthatheos, the delegate of Antioch, offered the Holy *Qurbano* before his burial on the northern side of the Old Seminary Chapel. The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates him on 11 July.

## 95. Mor Deevannasios Michael

(A.D. 1879 -1956)

Michael was born on 15 June 1879 as the eldest son of evangelist John of Alummootil family and Kilileth Achamma. After his primary education in his native town, Kayamkulam he continued his English studies in M.D. Seminary High School, Kottayam.

He was ordained *Korooyo* by Mor Joseph Deevannasios on 7 January 1898, *Yaufdaikkino* by Mor Geevarghese Gregorius Chathuruthil in A.D. 1901/2 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 priest on 30 August 1908 at Parumala seminary with Mor Geevarghese Deevannasios as the chief celebrant along with Pulikkotil Mor Deevannasios, Mor Osthathos Sleeba (the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch) and Mor Coorlios Paulose as co-celebrants.

Fr. Michael worked in M. D. seminary from A.D. 1905 - 1910. 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 Qoro, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, to Jerusalem on 30 September 1926 in order to be consecrated as Metropolitans. They boarded S. S. Pilsana, an Italian ship, from Bombay on 6 October 1926.

They arrived at Port Saed on 20 October 1926 and continued their journey to Jerusalem by train. St. Ignatius Elias III was residing at the St. Mark's, 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 20 October 1926. On 27 October 1926 these two Rambans along with Michael Ramban, a native of Mardin and the nephew of the Patriarch St. Peter III, were ordained 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 11 February 1927, visited Mor Osthathos Sleeba, the delegate of Antioch, at Vadakara church and arrived at Kottayam on 12 February.

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 Dioscorus 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 Panampady 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 Mor Michael 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. Mor Phelexinos Paulose (later H. B. Catholicos Baselios Paulose II) led the prayers in his honour. Mor Yulios Elias Qoro 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 (Velloor) received priesthood from him. The feast of Mor Michael, known as the ‘roaring lion of Malankara’, is celebrated on 18 January.

## 96. Mor Deevannasios of Alexandria

(A.D. 190? – 265)

Deevannasios (Dionysius, the Great) 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 (Quasten, 1952).

He was ordained priest in A.D. 233 (Smith & Wace, 1877). After Heraclius became the metropolitan of Alexandria he served as the Head of a Theological school there (Douglas, 1978). From A.D. 247/248 to 265, until his death he served the Church as the Patriarch (Quasten, 1952; Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Eusebius, 1980).

He was banished to Kiphra, in Libya (A.D. 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 A.D. 260 (Douglas, 1978).

Mor Deevannasios 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 Deevannasios was an ardent spokesperson of this teaching.

In A.D. 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 departed for heavenly abode in A.D. 265 (Quasten, 1952; Douglas, 1978). He is commemorated on 3 October.

## **97. Mor Deevannasios Shem'un, Karavattuveetil (A.D. 1832 – 1886)**

Mor Deevannasios Shem'un the first Metropolitan of Cochin was born in A.D. 1832 to religious parents belonging to Karavattuveetil family in the parish of Martha Mariam church, Kandanad. His parents gave him the name of the noble ascetic, Shem'un, the Stylite.

He was ordained Deacon at Kandanad church by Mor Deevannasios Philipose IV, the Malankara Metropolitan, and Priest by metropolitan Mor Mathews Athanasius, Palakkunnath and Corepiscopo by Mor Coorilos Yuyakkim upon the orders of the Patriarch of Antioch.

Shem'un Corepiscopo had deep faith and led a life of constant prayers and an austere monastic life. Everyone held him in high respect due to these noble qualities. Those were turbulent times for Malankara Church. Under the leadership of Mathews Athanasius, Palakunnath reformation movements were set in motion and the Malankara Church was tossed about in this heavy storm of discord. Shem'un Corepiscopo was the chief among the many priests who gave strong and steady leadership without being staggered by conflicts.

In the Synod convened at Mulanthuruthy (1876 June 27-30) under the presidentship of Patriarch Ignatius peter III (IV) Corepiscopo Shem'vun was selected to the church managing committee. He was elevated to the rank of Ramban by the Patriarch on 5 September 1876 (24 Chingam M.E. 1052) at Mulanthurthy. Fr. Paulose Kochuparambil, Thozhupadan (later Mor Coorilos) and Corepiscopo Yacoub, Chalapurathu also were ordained Rambans along with him. Respected Ramban Shem'vun was appointed as Epithropo of the Patriarch and as the Superior of Vettikkal monastery.

The Synod presided over by the Patriarch decided to divide Malankara into various dioceses and to consecrate Bishops for the same. Shem'vun Ramban was appointed in charge of the Cochin diocese comprising the Arthat church and the nearby churches up to Cochin. According to the orders of the Patriarch Shem'vun Ramban and Paulose Ramban, Murimattathil were to be elevated to the rank of Metropolitans and they presented themselves at the District Registrar office, Kunnathunad, Perumbavoor on 26 March 1877 (15 Meenam M.E. 1052) to register the oath of allegiance (Salmoosa) to the Patriarch. Both of them were committee members of the managing committee of the Malankara association.

On Thursday 17 May 1877, the day of the Ascension of our Lord, Shem'vun Ramban was consecrated a Bishop at St. Lazarus church, Chiralayam, Kunnamkulam, under the name Mor Deevanasios Shem'vun by H. H. the Patriarch Peter IV, the Supreme Head of the Syrian Orthodox Church. He was given charge of St. Peter's church in Cochin Fort and other churches in the diocese. Mor Ivanios Paulose, Murimattathil was also consecrated along with him for the Kandanad diocese. Four Bishops who were consecrated earlier served as co-celebrants in the ceremony of their consecration along with the Patriarch.

Mor Deevanasios could not carry out the administration of the Cochin diocese satisfactorily as he fell sick and was rendered incapable due to rheumatism. He passed away on 2 October 1886 on



a Saturday. The funeral service was led by Mor Geevarghese Gregorius (Chathuruthil) and Mor Ivanios Paulose. He was interred at St. Paul's & St. Peter's Jacobite Syrian church, Kadugamangalam on 3 October. The feast of Mor Deevannasios Shem'vun is celebrated on 3 October by Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **98. Didimos, the blind**

**(c. A.D. 309 – 395)**

Didimos (Didymus) who lived in the fourth century was a revered Christian scholar and an intellectual spiritual leader of the theological seminary in Alexandria. He was born in A.D. 309/314? (Wace & Piercy, 1999). Even though he became blind at the age of four, he was a studious and intelligent student. His disciple Rufinus has witnessed to the fact that he used to pray in his youth not for physical eyesight but that his inner eyes should open to illuminate his heart. Despite his impaired vision, he studied with ardour and made a sincere effort to learn by heart the word of God to which he listened.

Didimos was a bachelor layman who knew the entire Bible by heart. He had deep knowledge in Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Maths and Music. Mor Athanasius (A.D. 295 – 373) appointed him the Head of the theological school in Alexandria (Wace & Piercy, 1999). Here blind children were given wooden blocks on which the alphabets were engraved. This can be considered as the precursor to the Braille alphabets discovered by Louis Braille (A.D. 1809 – 1852).

St. Antonios (d. A.D. 356), Palladius (d. A.D. 431), St. Jerome (d. A.D. 420) and Rufinus (d. A.D. 410) were eminent disciples of Didimos. Once he admitted woefully to Antonios about his loss of eyesight to which Antonios replied, “A scholar like you should not lament over the lack of physical sight which is shared by ants, flies

and human beings. You should rejoice you have spiritual eyesight that can see the glories of Heaven like the saints and apostles do”(Wace & Piercy, 1999).

St. Jerome referred to him as not blind but as a seer. Jerome spent some days with Didimos in A.D. 386 to unravel some difficult passages of the Scripture. Didimos had prophetic gift. He had a vision about the death of Julian who was persecuting the Church. Some historians refer to Didimos as being strongly influenced by Origen and adopting the controversial ideas propagated by him.

Libyanos remarked about Didimos, “It is impossible to be ignorant about Didimos who poured out his knowledge day and night in Alexandria.” He was one of the principal opponents of Arianism (Aphrem I, 2000). The Trinitarian doctrine showing the unity in the Trinity expounded by Didimos was more explicit than that of Athanasius (Chapman, 1908). He could do that because he combined the theological terms used by Athanasius (d. 373), St. Baselius (d.379), and Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 390).

Didimos’ treatise on the Holy Spirit is preserved in a Latin translation by St. Jerome. He always referred to St. Mary as ‘the mother of God’. He concluded his writings by glorifying the Trinity and seeking the intercession of saints (Wace & Piercy, 1999). Didimos the blind - The feast of Didimos is celebrated on 18 October.

## **99. St. Dimet of Persia**

**(A.D.? – 362?)**

The biography of Dimet (Dometius) is confusing as there are two saints by the name Dimet (Dometius). The two have many details in common including the date of commemoration, 24 September. Therefore, further research is necessary to delineate the two from one another. However, the date of death is different; one in A.D. 362 and

the other in A.D. 408 ([http://syroorthodoxchurch.com/english-Dateien/st\\_dimet.html](http://syroorthodoxchurch.com/english-Dateien/st_dimet.html)).

Dimet (Dometius) was a Persian convert who became a monk at Nisbis in Mesopotamia. He was ordained deacon and went to live in a cave and he converted many heathens of the neighborhood (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). People flocked to his retreat to request his blessings and to be healed. Emperor Julian, the Apostate, accused Dimet of courting popularity because Dimet had reproached Julian for his impiety. Dimet said: "If these poor harmless folk come to see me, I cannot send them away." Julian was so enraged that he had him stoned to death (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III, p. 275). The feast of St. Dimet is celebrated in the the Syrian Orthodox Church on 24 September.

**Note:** As per another account, St. Dimet, a man in the Middle East was serving Emperor Valens (364-378). Dimet who was a follower of Arianism was granted that grace by which he realized that he had displeased the Lord. Subsequently, he asked the Emperor to allow him to go to Cyrus, near the village Qelith (Turkey). Later Schabai baptized Dimet. Dimet lived there from A.D. 378 to A.D. 408. He departed for heavenly abode on 24 September A.D. 408. In 478, a certain woman who was healed from her illness by Saint Dimet, took off the relics of the saint and had them transferred to bishop Theodore of Amid (Diyarbakir). Later, St. Joseph, a disciple of Bishop Theodore, built over the relics of St. Dimet a well-known and large monastery ([http://syroorthodoxchurch.com/english-Dateien/st\\_dimet.html](http://syroorthodoxchurch.com/english-Dateien/st_dimet.html)). St. Dimet of Persia - The feast of Dimet is celebrated on 24 September in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **100. St. Dimetrios of Thessaloniki, the Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 303?)**

Saint Demetrius was born in the third century ([https://www.huffingtonpost.com/evangelos-sotiropoulos/saint-demetrios-the-myrrh\\_b\\_4163607.html?guccounter=1](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/evangelos-sotiropoulos/saint-demetrios-the-myrrh_b_4163607.html?guccounter=1)) as the son of a wealthy military commander of Thessaloniki ([https://orthodoxwiki.org/Demetrios\\_of\\_Thessaloniki](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Demetrios_of_Thessaloniki)). He received good education. The family belonged to the Province of Macedonia. He joined the army and became an officer. When he was young, he decided to get baptized secretly a Christian, something forbidden in those years, when idols were still worshiped.

When his father died, the Roman emperor Galerius Maximian ordered Dimitrios to chase and kill the Christians of Thessaloniki. Dimetrios refused to do so and revealed his faith (<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/57278.html>). He was asked to change his religious beliefs but refused once again and expressed his disgust for idolatry. Therefore, he was put to prison and was tortured. An angel of God appeared to Dimitrios saying, “Peace be with you, you sufferer for Christ; be brave and strong!” After several days, the Emperor sent soldiers to the prison to kill Dimitrios. The soldiers came into the cell finding the Saint at prayer, and killed him with their spears. Christians secretly took his body and buried it, and his relics began producing a healing fragrant myrrh. When Emperor Constantine, the Great ended the persecution of Christians (324 A.D.) and made Christianity the official religion of the Byzantine Empire, people built a small church on the place of the martyrdom of St. Demitrios in Thessaloniki, Greece. Leontius, a noble man, was completely cured by the relics of Dimitrios. He built a much larger church replacing the small one. Before Demitrios died, he had donated all his wealth to the poor through his servant Lupus. Later Demitrios’ servant Lupus was beheaded for using his master’s blood-stained tunic and signet ring to work many miracles.

When Emperor Justinian attempted to move the Saint's relics to Constantinople, flames flared out of the tomb and a voice commanded them to, "Leave them there, and don't touch!" and thus the relics have remained in Thessalonica. When a young man responsible for the candles of the church was stealing them and reselling them from his home, Dimitrios appeared to him and told him that he was harming himself and the church. The embarrassed man obeyed for a little while but soon returned to his old ways. One day, when he was about to steal some large candles that had just been lit near the tomb of St. Dimitrios, a booming voice said, "Are you doing this again!" He fell over unconscious, and when he awoke, he related the whole story. The feast of St. Dimitrios is celebrated on 26 October in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **101. St. Dionysius Areopagite**

**(A.D. 9? – 96)**

Saint Dionysius the Areopagite was converted to Christianity by Saint Paul (Quasten, 1949) in Athens. Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: 'to an unknown God'. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you" (Acts 17:22-23).

Some of those who heard the speech of St. Paul became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus ..." (Acts 17:34). The word Areopagus in Greek is Areios pagos which means 'the hill of Ares' located to the west of Acropolis in Athens (<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/areopagus>). It was at this place the council or court of justice met in the open air on the hill. The name Areopagite denotes that Dionysius

was a member of the court (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Areopagite>).

Dionysius was a highly educated philosopher of Greece, and one of the nine leaders of the city of Athens. He was born in the year A.D. 9. He had travelled to Heliopolis in Egypt to learn mathematics and astrology. There he saw for himself, in his early twenties, the eclipse of the sun contrary to all the laws of nature, which occurred at the death of the Son of God (Luke 23:44-45). His teachers could not explain it to him other than as a sign of changes in divine matters.

In his letters to Saint Polycarp of Smyrna (A.D. 69-155) he says that the astrologer he questioned had answered him rather by divine inspiration than by any natural knowledge. And he himself had cried out: Either the God of nature is suffering, or the entire mechanism of the world is going to be destroyed to return to its ancient state of chaos!

Dionysius made a number of journeys outside Greece and it is believed that he was present when the Apostles assembled at the glorious Assumption of the Mother of God. He wrote about the Mother of God and he became a friend of Saint John, the Disciple. He corresponded with St. Timothy, St. Titus, St. Polycarp and others of the Apostles' successors ([http://sanctoral.com/en/saints/saint\\_dionysius\\_the\\_areopagite.html](http://sanctoral.com/en/saints/saint_dionysius_the_areopagite.html)).

There are several prelates with the name Dionysius and there is a difference of opinion regarding the writings attributed to Dionysius Areopagite (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV). Moran Aphrem I has dealt with this controversy in his work. A liturgy and some prayers of the order of Baptism are ascribed to Dionysius Areopagite (Aphrem I, 2003).

Eusebius has recorded that St. Dionysius became the first bishop of Athens. A few historians have cited that he was burned alive at Athens under the Roman Emperor Domitian (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV). The feast of St. Dionysius Areopagite is celebrated on 19 November in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **102. Patriarch Dionysius I, Tell Mahre**

**(A. D. ? – 845)**

Dionysius Telmaharensis, also called Dionysius of Tell Mahre was born at Tell Mahre to a noble and wealthy Edessene family and became famous for his great contribution to the Church of Edessa.

At Qenneshrin, he studied philology, jurisprudence, philosophy and theology. On the destruction of Qenneshrin by fire and the consequent dispersion of the monks, he went to the Dayro of Mor Jacob at Kaisum in the district of Samosata (Wright, 1894). He was subsequently tonsured a monk. On Sunday the first August A.D. 817 (818?) forty-eight Bishops unanimously elected him to the Apostolic See of Antioch. He held three councils in 818, 828 and 834. He consecrated a hundred Metropolitans whose names are cited by Patriarch Michael, the Great (Aphrem I, 2003).

Moran Dionysius was the fifty-fourth Patriarch of Antioch (A.D. 817-845) and the author of an important source document on Eastern Christianity between the reigns of the Byzantine emperors Mauricius (582–602) and Theophilus (829–842).

Dionysius' chronicles, although uncritical and only partly preserved in manuscript, retain their value as source data on life in the pre-medieval Syrian Church. They were included in subsequent Syriac annals and contributed a distinctive stage in the development of its literary culture. The details are available in the work of Wright (1894).

Although Dionysius' position was contested by a rival schismatic group during his entire reign, he succeeded in effectively governing the Syrian community. Through cordial relations with the Muslim rulers, Dionysius prevented violent suppression of the Syrian Christians and wholesale sacking of their property. The persecution, however, resumed till the end of his life. Moran Dionysius departed for his heavenly abode on 22 August 845. The feast of Moran Dionysius is celebrated on 22 August in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **103. Moran Dionysius II, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. ? – 909)**

Dionysius II was the Patriarch of Antioch, and head of the Syriac Orthodox Church from A.D. 896 until his death in A.D. 909.

Prior to becoming Patriarch, Dionysius was a monk and studied at the Monastery of Beth Batin (Aphrem I, 2003). Soon after his consecration in April A.D. 896, Dionysius held a synod at the Monastery of Mar Shila, which was attended by thirty-five Bishops. During the synod he issued twenty-five canons.

During his tenure as Patriarch, Dionysius ordained forty-nine Metropolitans and Bishops before his death at the Monastery of Beth Batin on 18 April A.D.909.

## **104. Mor Dionysius Jacob Bar Salibi**

**(A. D. ? – A. D. 1171)**

Bar Salibi (Jacob) was born in Melitene (Malatya, Turkey) where he studied the sciences of language, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy and theology.

He was ordained deacon and later he was recognised as one of the eminent theologians, for his work refuting the argument of the book of John, Metropolitan of Mardin, in which the former maintained that the will of God had nothing to do with the calamities which afflicted Edessa. This work was acclaimed as one which is in conformity with the belief of the Church. As a result, Patriarch Athanasius VII (A.D. 1138-1166) rewarded him by ordaining him priest and then a Metropolitan for the diocese of Mar'ash (Germanicia) in 1148 (1145?), by name Dionysius (Aphrem I, 2003; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2001; Wright, 1894).



In 1155 the diocese of Mabug was annexed to his own diocese. In the following year an Armenian band of robbers attacked Mar'ash and robbed the people including Bar Salibi. He was transferred to Amid (Diyarbakir) in c. A. D. 1167. He renovated the church of Amid.

Bar Salibi was a very learned man and writer. He was a true Syrian who loved his own people and defended them with his tongue and the writing, until he went to receive his reward, leaving behind him a magnificent legacy. Patriarch Michael the Great (A.D. 1166-1199) and Bar Hebraeus (d. A.D. 1286) spoke highly of Dionysius Bar Salibi: "Bar Salibi was a master and logician. He was the star of his time. He wrote many books and commentaries, . . . The Church was overwhelmed with sadness over his loss" (Aphrem I, 2003, p. 432).

His works include poems, prayers, homilies, liturgies, a treatise against heresies, expositions of the Syrian Eucharistic service and doctrine, and commentaries on the Old and New Testaments (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2001). Bar Salibi wrote polemical treatises against not only the perennial theological enemies of the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Nestorians and Chalcedonians, but also against Jews and Muslims. He was known to his contemporaries as 'the eloquent doctor, the star of his generation and a philoponus (lover of work) like Jacob of Edessa'. He was one of the most learned and Syrian Orthodox writers of the 12th century (Wright, 1894).

The important works of Bar Salibi are: (1) A commentary on the Books of the Old Testament, (2) A commentary on the New Testament, (3) A book of Theology which deals with the Trinity, the mystery of the Incarnation, the Tree of Life, celestial beings like angels and devils, the rational soul, priesthood, the sun, the moon, resurrection and judgment, the Cross, the mysteries of the Church and the Chrism, Baptism, etc., (4) A commentary on the Liturgy, which he wrote while in Amid, in response to the request of Ignatius IV of Melitene, Metropolitan of Jerusalem, (5) A compendium of

Apostolic canons and the canons of the councils, which he presented to the Patriarch Michael, (6) Two liturgies, the first of which begins with: “Grant us Lord at this time love and harmony.” The second begins with: “Lord, who are true and ultimate love grant us, (7) Six husoyos ; for the sanctification of the church, the third hour of the feast of Christmas, the festival of Mor Barsoum, the Wednesday of the commemoration of King Abgar and the commemoration of the Forty Martyrs.

Mor Dionysius Bar Salibi is one of three towering literary figures in West Syriac tradition, responsible for what some scholars refer to as the Revival of Syriac Letters in the late 12th and early 13th centuries, with Michael the Syrian (d. 1199) and Gregory Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286). Bar Salibi composed works of such quantity and erudition that both his younger contemporaries called him “the star of his age” (Kurian, 2011).

Mor Dionysius Bar Salibi departed for his heavenly abode on 28 November 1171. He was entombed in the great church of Amid (Aphrem I, 2003). The feast of Mor Dionysius Bar Salibi is celebrated on 28 November in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **105. Mor Dionysius of Milan**

**(A.D. ? - c. 360 ?)**

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

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

## **106. St. Dioscorus, the Patriarch of Alexandria**

**(A.D.? – 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 A.D. 444 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

There was a dispute between Euthyches, the monastery head and his Episcopo, Flabianos of Constantinople about Christology (Aphrem, 1963). Euthyches was punished by the Synod of Constantinople in A.D. 448 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2001). In the light of this event Emperor Theodosius II with the approval of Pope Leo I convened a synod in A.D. 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 A.D. 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 A.D. 449 synod, among the members of monastery, prelates and administrators about the dual nature of Christ. As this dispute reached its height Emperor Theodosius died on 28 July A.D. 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 Dioscorus. 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 A.D. 454 when he was there (*The Encyclopaedia Americana*, 1988). He is remembered in the fifth diptych and his memory is celebrated on 4 September.

## **107. St. Drosis, the daughter of Emperor Trajan**

**(A.D. ? - 95?)**

St. Drosis was the daughter of Emperor Trajan (A.D. 98-117), a fierce persecutor of Christians. In A.D. 99, he revived an earlier law which forbade secret gatherings that was indirectly aimed at the Christians. In A.D. 104, he issued a special law against those who believed in Christ.

During this time, the bodies of martyred Christians often remained unburied in order to intimidate others. Five virgins, Aglaida, Apollinaria, Daria, Mamthusa and Thais, took up the task of burying the bodies of those holy martyrs. They secretly gathered up the bodies, anointed them with spices, wrapped them in shrouds, and entombed them. When she learned of this, Drosis, a secret Christian but not yet baptized, asked the holy virgins to take her with them.

On the advice of the court dignitary, Adrian, a guard was set over those who had been killed, to arrest anyone who tried to bury them. On the very first night, St. Drosis and the five virgins were

caught. Learning that one of the captives was his own daughter, Trajan gave orders to hold her separately, in the hope that she would change her mind.

The holy virgins were sentenced to be burnt in a copper furnace. They bravely accepted execution and were granted crowns of martyrdom. Emperor Trajan saw a dream in which the five virgins were resting in the paradise and that Drosis would also be brought to paradise. When he woke up, Trajan flew into a rage and ordered that two huge furnaces be heated. At the ovens, an imperial edict was posted: “You who worship the Crucified, must offer sacrifice to the gods. If you do not wish to do this, however, then let each of you voluntarily cast yourself into this furnace.” Many Christians willingly submitted to their martyrdom.

When she heard of this edict, St. Drosis also decided to accept martyrdom for Christ. In prison, she prayed to the Lord to release her from the prison walls. God heard her prayers, and the guards fell asleep. St. Drosis escaped and walked towards the ovens, but began to wonder, “How can I go to God without a wedding garment (i.e., without being baptized), for I am impure. But, O King of Kings, Lord Jesus Christ, for Your sake I give up my imperial position, so that I may be the lowliest handmaiden in Your Kingdom. Baptize me Yourself with your Holy Spirit.”

After praying in this manner, St. Drosis anointed herself with chrism, which she had taken along with her, and immersing herself in water three times, she said: “the servant of God Drosis is baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” For seven days the saint hid, spending her time in fasting and prayer. Christians found her and learned from her everything that had occurred. On the eighth day, the holy Martyr Drosis went to the red-hot ovens and cast herself into the fire ([www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org); <http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2011/03/saint-drosis-daughter-of-emperor-trajan.html>). The feast of St. Drosis is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 6 June.

## **108. Eleuthrius of Nicomedia**

**(Fourth Century)**

Eleuthrius was a soldier in the army of coEmperor Diocletian in Nicomedia (Butler, 1866). He was accused of setting fire to the emperor's palace and was burned to death after being tortured with his companions ([http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=3082](http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=3082)). There is another description that he was arrested for converting an imperial official. He was clubbed to death. The feast of Eleuthrius is celebrated on 2 October in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **109. Elias (Elijah) I, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A. D. 641 – 723)**

Elias was born in A.D. 641 into a Greek Orthodox family, but later embraced Syrian Orthodox faith (Aphrem I, 2003) after reading the works of Severus of Antioch (d. 538). He became a monk at the Monastery of Gubba Barraya, near Edessa, and was ordained as Bishop of Apamea in A.D. 691. He served the Church as Bishop of Apamea for eighteen years (Wright, 1894). Elias was consecrated as Patriarch in A.D. 709 following the death of Julian II (A.D. 686 – 708), and presented himself to Caliph Al-Walid I in the same year. The Patriarch financed and consecrated a new church in the city of Antioch in A.D. 721, and another church in Sarmada in A.D. 722. Elias led the Syriac Orthodox Church as Patriarch until his death in A.D. 723 at the age of eighty-two.

## 110. St. Epiphanius of Egypt

(A.D. 315 ? – 402/3)

Epiphanius was born in Besanduk village near Elethropolis, Palestine. Besanduk is in the neighbourhood of Gaza. It is inferred that his birth was somewhere around A.D. 315 (Cayre, 1936; Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1958; Wace & Piercy, 1999).

While very young, Epiphanius followed a monastic life in Egypt. He was attracted to the ascetic life that followed the model and advice of St. Hilarion. He founded a monastery near Besanduk when he was in his twenties and stayed there for thirty years (Cayre, 1936). Euty chius, the Metropolitan of Elethuropolis ordained him a priest (Wace & Piercy, 1999). He gained the ability to speak five languages; Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Coptic and Latin. St. Jerome called him ‘a pentaglot’ on account of this (Cayre, 1936).

He was a close associate of Patriarch St. Paulinos of Antioch who took a stern stand against the heresies of Arius and protected the Nicene Creed. He was consecrated Metropolitan of Constantia (the ancient Salamis in Cyprus) as he was renowned for his saintly life and erudition. He served as the Metropolitan of Salamis for thirty six years from A.D. 367 to A.D. 402/3. During this period many monasteries came up in the island of Constantia. Monks from Palestine and Eleuthropolis frequented these monasteries. In his letter (against all heresies) to the believers in Arabia he clearly asserted the perpetual virginity of Mary, ‘The mother of God’ (Smith & Wace, 1880).

Priests and many others in Pamphilia sought his help to resist and defeat the heresies of Arius. Even though he did not attend the Synod convened at Constantinople in A.D. 381, the declaration of the decisions taken in that Synod was a verbatim declaration of the Creed that existed in the Church of Salamis (Wace & Piercy, 1999).

Towards the end of A.D. 382 he worked in close association with St. Jerome and Paulinos of Antioch. The spiritual inspiration of



St. Jerome motivated a rich lady, Paula, to distribute her wealth among the poor and the sick. Epiphanius encouraged her to take up the monastic life. She went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in A.D. 383 and stayed in an abbey of Epiphanius for ten days.

St. Jerome visited Epiphanius on his way to Bethlehem. He was accompanied by many priests to whom Epiphanius was introduced as ‘the father of all episcopos and the remnant of ancient moral principles’.

Epiphanius described Origen as ‘the forefather of Arius’ heresies’. In A.D. 394 he hastened to Palestine on hearing that Origenism had reared its head there (the reasoning that the second and third persons in the Trinity were less than God, the Father). He could singularly refute and counter the heresies.

Epiphanius spoke vehemently against Origen in the church of Resurrection in Jerusalem in 392 (393?). Metropolitan John who was a sympathizer of Origen expressed his disagreement with Epiphanius through an Arch-Deacon. Following that Epiphanius discontinued his association with this Metropolitan. Jerome of Bethlehem and Rufinus of Mt. Olive, two eminent persons who were friends parted ways in the light of this argument. Jerome supported Epiphanius and Rufinus took sides with Metropolitan John (Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1958). Jerome’s brother Paulinos was ordained priest by Epiphanius in order to cater to the spiritual needs of the monks of Bethlehem (Cayre, 1936; Wace & Piercy, 1999). The appointment of a priest in an area under the authority of a Metropolitan was a transgression of Canonical laws, argued John. He approached many Metropolitans for the settlement of this issue. The arguments that ensued found no fruitful compromise.

In A.D. 402 Epiphanius travelled to Constantinople and argued against the heresies of Origen and he could successfully outwit him. He was considered a saint during his lifetime. Many people used to gather and wait patiently for hours to listen to his speeches (Wace & Piercy, 1999).

Among his literary compositions *Ancorates* written in A.D. 374 and *Panarion* in A.D. 377 are very important. *Ancorates* was composed when the believers in Pamphila asked for the teachings of the Church on the Trinity and the Holy Ghost. The book served as an anchor to stabilize those who wavered under the influence of Arius and other heretics (Cayre, 1936). Its hundred and twenty one sections deal with belief in the Trinity, the Humanity of Christ and Resurrection (Wace & Pirecy, 1999).

*Panarion*, considered as a ‘Medicine Chest’ was presented as an antidote for those bitten by the serpent of heresy (Cayre, 1936). It lists eighty heretical teachings (from the time of Adam) and quotes many basic records (Smith & Wace, 1880; Wace & Piercy, 1999). Origen is listed as a heretic in *Panarion*.

Epiphanius stressed the importance of the Church in his teachings. “The Church alone, he says, has received the content of tradition, and it is in her teaching and decision that the faithful finds the truth.” He teaches thus, ‘the Church is built upon the foundation of the unshaken faith of the rock, St. Peter’. His feast is celebrated on two dates by the Syrian Orthodox Church, 13 March and 12 May.

## **111. St. Epiphanius, the Martyr**

### **(First Decade of fourth Century)**

Epiphanius hailed from one of the most illustrious families in Lycia. His parents were wealthy and Epiphanius was sent to be educated in the city of Beirut. Epiphanius who had not yet attained the age of twenty withdrew from society and company of young men and practiced virtues (<http://www.syriacstudies.com/2016/09/22/bishops-of-the-city-of-harran/>).

When he had finished his education from Beirut, he left his family without taking care to carry with him the means of providing

sustenance and came to Caesarea. He conducted himself, however, in his travels, with purity, and by the power of God which accompanied him, he came to the city where the crown of martyrdom was prepared for him. He was instructed in the Holy Scriptures by Pamphilus, the martyr (d. 309).

All men admired him for his boldness of speech, at his daring, at his patience, at his words addressed to the governor, and his answers to the judge. For when the persecution had been proclaimed a second time, in the third year of this same persecution, the former edicts of Maximinus by which he gave command that the governors of the cities should use great pains and diligence in order to compel all men to offer sacrifice and libations to devils came into force (Eusebius of Caesarea, 1861). All the cities made a diligent proclamation, that the men, together with their wives and children, should assemble in the temples of the idols, and were compelled to offer sacrifice.

Epiphanius, a perfectly holy man, came to the governor of the place, and stood boldly before him and while Urbanus was offering libations, he came up to him and laid hold of his right hand, and held him back from offering the foul libation to idols, to persuade him to turn away from his error, saying to him: That it was not right for them to turn away from the one and only God of truth, and offer sacrifice to lifeless idols and wicked devils.

When this holy martyr of God had done these things, the servants of devils, together with the officers of the governor, struck him on the face, and when he had been thrown down on the ground they kicked him, and tore his mouth and lips with a bridle. He was imprisoned, where his legs were then stretched for a day and a night in the stocks. The next day they brought Epiphanius before Urbanus. And he ordered them to lacerate his sides until his bones and entrails became visible. This martyr of Christ, however, was strengthened both in body and soul. And when the governor interrogated him, he gave him no further answer than that he was a Christian. Therefore, the fury of the governor became more fierce, and he gave command

that his feet should be wrapped up in cotton dipped in oil, and then be set on fire. And the martyr was hung up at a height, in order that, the onlookers can be terrified.

They once again took him back to the prison, and on the next day they brought him forth again before that the judge, but he still continued the same confession as before. And then the governor and his officers, gave orders at last that he should be cast into the depths of the sea.

After this, the man of God had been cast into the depths of the terrible sea, with stones tied to his feet, forthwith a great storm and frequent commotions and mighty waves troubled the vast sea, and a severe earthquake made even the city itself tremble, and every one's hands were raised towards heaven in fear and trembling, for they supposed that the whole place, together with its inhabitants, was about to be destroyed on that day. The sea, vomited back the holy body of the martyr of God, and carried it with the waves and laid it before the gate of the city. Men and women of all ages with children went out to see this sight. And the whole city together, even the very children as well, gave glory to the God of the Christians alone, confessing with a loud voice the name of Christ, who had given strength to the martyr in his lifetime to endure such afflictions. This happened on the second of the month Nisan (April). The feast of Ehiphianius, the martyr, is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 14 July.

## **112. St. Eudocia, the Martyr**

### **(Second Century)**

The venerable martyr Eudocia lived in the Phoenician city of Heliopolis (Baalbek in present-day Lebanon), during the reign of Trajan. Eudocia was an idolater and led a licentious life (<https://www.goarch.org/chapel/saints?contentid=446>). She was very beautiful and had many lovers, and had acquired great riches.

Coming into the city on an assignment, Herman, a monk, resided at the home of a Christian whose house was adjacent to that of Eudocia. In the evening and according to monastic tradition, he began to recite the Psalter and to read a chapter on the dreadful judgment. Eudocia heard him attentively. Fear and terror overcame her, and she remained awake until dawn. At daybreak, she sent her servant to beseech the monk to come to her.

Through God's Providence the monk Herman (Germanus?) came and a lengthy conversation took place between them about faith and salvation in general. As a result of the conversation, Eudocia petitioned the local Bishop to baptize her. She repented and was baptized by Bishop Theodotus. Following her baptism, Eudocia distributed her wealth and entered a convent, giving herself up completely to the monastic life, obedience, patience, long vigils, prayer and fasting. (<http://www.orthodox.net/menaion-march/01-the-venerable-martyr-eudocia.html>).

After thirteen months, Eudocia was elected abbess. Eudocia lived in the convent for fifty-six years and was found worthy before God. He endowed her with much grace so that she raised even the dead. When the persecution of Christians began under (Governor?) Prince Vincent, St. Eudocia was beheaded. According to some, it was under Trajan, who reigned from A.D. 98 to A.D. 117. Meanwhile some others believed that it happened during the reign of Hardrian from A.D. 117 to A.D. 138 (<http://www.gometropolis.org/orthodox-faith/feast-days/the-righteous-martyr-eudocia-the-samaritan/>). Eudocia is a glorious example of how a vessel of impurity can be purified, sanctified and filled with the Grace of the Holy Spirit. The feast of Eudocia is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 1 March.

## **113. St. Eugenia of Rome, the Martyress**

**(Second/Third Century A.D.)**

Eugenia, the daughter of Philip and Claudia, was a Roman by birth. She lived in Alexandria, where her father Philip (Philippus) was sent by the Emperor Commodus (A.D.180-192) to be the Prefect of Egypt. Eugenia received a fine upbringing and was noted for her beauty. Many illustrious young men wanted to marry her, but she rejected them (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2000/12/24/103631-nun-martyr-eugenia-of-rome>).

Providentially, she became acquainted with the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. She yearned with all her soul to become a Christian, but kept this a secret from her parents. At that time, Christians were banished from Alexandria by the command of the emperor. Wishing to learn more about Christian teachings, she went outside the country in the company of her two servants Protus and Hyacinthus, dressed in men's clothes. She and her companions were baptized at a certain monastery by Bishop Elias. Thurston and Attwater (1990, Vol. IV) recorded the name of the bishop as Helenus of Heliopolis.

After a while the whole family received holy Baptism. But Philip, after being denounced by pagans, was dismissed from his post. The Alexandrian Christians chose him as their bishop. The new Prefect, fearing the wrath of the people, did not dare to execute Philip openly, but sent soldiers to kill him. They inflicted wounds upon St. Philip while he was praying, from which he died three days later.

Claudia, Eugenia's mother, went to Rome with her sons, daughter, and her servants. There St. Eugenia lived a monastic life, and brought many young women to Christ. Claudia built a wanderers' hostel and aided the poor. After several peaceful years, Emperor Galienus (A.D. 260-268) intensified the persecution against Christians, and many of them found refuge with Sts. Claudia and Eugenia.

Basilla, an orphaned Roman girl of imperial lineage, heard about the Christians and St. Eugenia. She sent a trusted servant to the saint asking her to write her a letter explaining Christian teachings. St. Eugenia sent to her her friends and co-ascetics, Protus and Hyacinthus, who enlightened Basilla, and she accepted holy Baptism.

Basilla's servant then told her fiancé Pompey that his betrothed had become a Christian. Pompey then complained to the emperor against the Christians for preaching celibacy and denouncing idolatry. Basilla refused to enter into marriage with Pompey, and so they killed her with a sword.

They dragged Sts. Protus and Hyacinthus into a temple to offer sacrifice to the idols, but just as they entered, the idol fell down and was shattered. The holy Martyrs Protus and Hyacinthus were beheaded. They also brought St. Eugenia to the temple of Diana by force, but she had not even entered it, when the pagan temple collapsed with its idol. They threw Eugenia into a pit, where she remained for ten days. Subsequently, the executioner put her to the sword. The feast of Eugenia and her parents is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 24 December.

## **114. Mor Eulogius, Episcopo of Edessa (Fourth Century A.D.)**

Emperor Valentius (A.D. 364-378), wishing to propagate the Arian heresy, fiercely persecuted the Orthodox. In the city of Edessa he removed St. Barses, a champion for Orthodoxy, from the bishop's throne. He sent him for confinement on the island of Arad. The Orthodox population there received the exiled saint with great honor. Later he was banished to the Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchos, but there also the warm welcome was repeated. Then St. Barses was banished

to the very frontier of the imperial realm, to the faraway city of Thenon where, exhausted by his exiles, he entered to eternal rest. (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2011/08/25/102395-st-eulogius-the-bishop-of-edessa-and-confessor>).

At Edessa the Emperor Valentius placed Lupus, an Arian pseudo-bishop in the episcopate. The Orthodox population of Edessa, both clergy and laity, ceased to attend their church, which had been seized by the Arians. They gathered outside the city and celebrated the divine services in an open area. When the Emperor learned of this, he ordered the eparch Modestus to kill all the Orthodox who met for divine services outside the city. He informed the Orthodox that they should not attend divine services. The Orthodox, fervent with the desire to receive a martyr's crown for Christ, attended the prayer service. Eparch Modestus, obeying his orders, went there with his armed soldiers. Along the way he saw a woman who hastened with her small child willing to receive the martyr's crown. Moved by the fervor of the woman, Modestus turned back with his soldiers. Appearing before the Emperor Valentius, he urged him to cancel the decree to kill all the Orthodox and to apply it only to the clergy.

They led persons of spiritual rank to the emperor with the oldest presbyter Eulogius in the lead. The emperor urged them to enter into communion with the pseudo-bishop Lupus, but none of them agreed. After this he sent eighty men of clerical rank in chains to prison in Thrace. The Orthodox met them along the way, revering them as confessors, and furnished them with all the necessities. Learning of this, the emperor ordered the martyrs to be taken two by two, and to disperse them to remote areas.

The holy presbyters Eulogius and Protogenes were sent to Thebaid the city of Antinous in Egypt (Smith & Wace, 1880, Vol. II). There, by their preaching, they converted many idol-worshippers to Christianity and baptized them. When the emperor Valentius died and was succeeded by the Emperor Theodosius (A.D. 379-395) the Orthodox confessors remaining alive after the persecution returned from exile.



The holy presbyters Eulogius and Protogenes returned to Edessa. In place of the dead and banished St. Barse, presbyter Eulogius was ordained Bishop of Edessa by Eusebius of Samosate, and the presbyter Protogenes was ordained bishop for Mesopotamian city of Carrhae. Eulogius attended the council held at Constantinople in A.D. 381. Eulogius guided his flocks until his death, which occurred at the end of the fourth century. The feast of St. Eulogius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 21 June.

## **115. St. Euphemia, Virgin and Martyr**

**(A.D. ? - 303?)**

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

Many miracles happened through the intercession of St. Euphemia. People of all ranks thronged to Chalcedon to receive blessings through her intercession. A great church was constructed at Chalcedon in her name (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). It was in this church the synod of Chalcedon was held in A.D. 451. The feast of St. Euphemia is celebrated by the Syrian Orthodox Church on 16 September.

## **116. Eusebius of Caesarea, the Church Historian**

**(A.D. 263/264 – 339/40)**

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

He was tutored by an eminent priest Pamphilus (A. D. 240-309) and he in turn helped his mentor a lot in his writing endeavours (Abdul Ahad, 1948). Pamphilus inherited the books in the library of Orogen (*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 (A.D. 303-311). In the seventh year of persecution on 6 February A.D. 310 (309?) Pamphilus suffered martyrdom (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; *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 priest (Cayre, 1935).

Eusebius had escaped to Tyre and then to Egypt after the martyrdom of Pamphilus but was imprisoned. In A.D. 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 A.D. 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 (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1988): (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 Sebelianism (God was manifested in progressive modes).

His greatest contribution is the composition of the Church History and known as 'father of church history' (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). The content deals with events from the beginning till the end of A.D. 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*, *An account of persecution of Diocletian between 303 and 310*, of which he was an eye witness, *Life of Constantine*, and philosophical books (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; 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 A.D. 317 was republished in A.D. 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 A.D. 337 he had the honour of delivering the funeral speech.

Bishop Eusebius passed away two years after the death of the Emperor in A.D. 339 (*Encyclopaedia Americana*, 1988). The Church Historian and Metropolitan of Caesarea is commemorated on 29 February.

## **117. Eusebius of Samosata, the Martyr**

**(A. D.? – 380?)**

Eusebius, Bishop of Samosata (Shmeshath), stood firmly for the orthodox confession of faith proclaimed at the first ecumenical council at Nicea in the year 325. For this he underwent persecution by the Arians, being repeatedly deprived of his See and was banished (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2008/06/22/101779-hieromartyr-eusebius-the-Bishop-of-samosata>). Emperor Constantius (337-361), patron of the Arians, learned that Eusebius has the custody of the synodal acts (decree) regarding the election of the Orthodox Patriarch Meletius to the See of Antioch (d. 381). Patriarch Meletius was elected since Arians believed him to be a supporter of their heresy (Butler, 1866). Emperor commanded him to give up the decree. The saint boldly refused to do as ordered. The enraged emperor sent a message that if he did not give up the decree, then his right hand would be cut off. Saint Eusebius stretched out both hands to the emissary saying, “Cut them off, but I will not give up the Decree of the Council, which denounces the wickedness and iniquity of the Arians.” Emperor Constantius marvelled at the audacity of the Bishop, but did not harm him (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Eusebius-of-Samosata>).

During the reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363), even more difficult times ensued. Saint Eusebius, having concealed his identity,

went about in the garb of a soldier across the whole of Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine, urging Christians to the Orthodox Faith. He established priests and deacons in desolated churches, and he consecrated Bishops who renounced the Arian heresy. On his journey from Thrace to Samosata he was instrumental in the appointment of numerous orthodox Bishops, among whom were Acacius at Beroea, Theodotus at Hierapolis, Isidore at Cyrrhus, and Eulogius at Edessa. After Julian the Apostate's death, he was succeeded by the pious emperor Jovian (363-364), during whose reign the persecutions stopped. Returning from exile, Saint Meletius convened a local Council at Antioch in the year 379 on the advice of Saint Eusebius. Twenty-seven Bishops participated, and it reaffirmed the Orthodox teaching of the First Ecumenical Council.

After the death of Jovian the Arian Valentius (364-378) came to power. The Orthodox were again subjected to persecution. Saint Meletius was banished to Armenia, Saint Pelagius to Arabia, and Saint Eusebius was condemned to exile in Thrace. Having received the imperial decree, Saint Eusebius left Samosata by night so as to prevent tumult among the people that esteemed him. Having learned of the Bishop's departure, believers followed him and with tears entreated him to return. The saint did not heed to the entreaty of those who had come, saying that he had to obey the authorities. The saint urged his flock to hold firmly to Orthodoxy, blessed them and set off to the place of exile. The Arian Eunomios became Bishop of Samosata, but the people did not accept the heretic. The Orthodox would not go to the church and avoided meeting with him. The heretical Arian perceived that it was impossible to attract the independent flock to him.

Emperor Gracian (375-383) ascended the throne, and all the Orthodox hierarchs banished under the Arians were brought back from exile. Saint Eusebius also returned to Samosata and continued with the task of building up the Church. In the year A.D. 380 he arrived in the Arian city of Dolikhina (Dolicha) to establish the Orthodox Bishop Marinus (Maris?) there. An Arian woman threw a

roof tile at the holy Bishop's head (thrown from the roof of her house). As he lay dying, he asked her for wine and requested those around not to do her any harm. He died of his wounds a few days later.

The body of Saint Eusebius was taken to Samosata and was buried by his flock. The saint's nephew, Antiochus, succeeded him and the Samosata Church continued to confess the Orthodox Faith, firmly spread through the efforts of the holy martyr Eusebius. It is on account of this untiring zeal of Eusebius that St. Gregory Nazianzen calls him "A pillar of the Church" and "a gift of God", (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05614c.htm>). The feast of Eusebius of Shmeshath is celebrated on 24 May and 21 June in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **118. Eustathius, his wife and two sons**

### **(First & Second Century)**

Eustathius was a great Roman general during the reigns of Emperors Titus (79-81) and Trajan (98-117). Though he was a pagan, Placidus (for that was his pagan name) was a just and merciful man. One day, he went out for hunting and pursued a stag. By God's providence, a cross appeared between the antlers of the stag and the voice of the Lord came to Placidus directing him to go to a Christian priest and to get baptized. Placidus was baptized along with his wife and two sons. At baptism, he received the name Eustathius; his wife, Theopiste ( meaning 'faithful to God'); and his sons, Agapitus and Theopistus. After his baptism, he returned to the place where he had experienced the revelation of the stag and, kneeling, gave thanks to God that He had brought him to the truth. Just then, the voice of the Lord again manifested itself to him, foretold that he would suffer for His name, and strengthened him (<http://www.gometropolis.org/orthodox-faith/feast-days/eustathius-the-great-martyr-his-wife-and-two-children-2/>).

Then Eustathius secretly left Rome with his family, intending to hide among the common people and serve God in humility and in unknown surroundings. Arriving in Egypt, he was immediately beset by trials. An evil barbarian (ship owner) abducted his wife, and both of his sons were seized by wild beasts and carried away. However, the barbarian soon lost his life, and the children were saved from the wild beasts by shepherds.

Eustathius settled in the Egyptian village of Vadisis (Badessos) and lived there for fifteen years as a hired laborer. Then barbarians attacked the Roman Empire, and Emperor Trajan grieved that he did not have the brave General Placidus, who had won all his battles. The emperor sent two of his officers (Antiochus and Acacius) to seek the great commander throughout the empire. By God's providence, these officers (who were once companions of Eustathius), came to the village of Vadisis, found Eustathius and brought him back to the emperor. Eustathius amassed an army and defeated the barbarians. On the way back to Rome, Eustathius found his wife and both sons. Meanwhile, Emperor Trajan had died and Emperor Hadrian was on the throne.

When Hadrian (A.D. 117-138) summoned General Eustathius to offer sacrifices to the gods to celebrate the victory, Eustathius declined, declaring himself a Christian.

The emperor asked: "Why don't you want to worship the gods? You, above all others, ought to offer thanks to them. They not only preserved you in war and granted you victory, but also they helped you find your wife and children." Saint Eustathius replied: "I am a Christian and I glorify and give thanks to Him, and I offer sacrifice to Him. I owe my life to Him. I do not know or believe in any other god than Him."

In a rage, the emperor ordered him to take off his military belt and brought him and his family before him. They did not succeed in persuading the steadfast confessors of Christ to offer sacrifice to idols. The whole family of Saint Eustathius was sentenced to be torn apart by wild beasts, but the beasts would not touch the holy martyrs

(<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2018/09/20/102674-greatmartyr-eustathius-eustace-placidus-with-his-wife-and-childr>).

Then the cruel emperor gave orders to throw them all alive into a red-hot brass bull, and Saint Eustathius, his wife Theopiste, and their sons Agapius and Theopistus endured a martyr's death. Before being placed in the bull, Saint Eustathius prayed, "Grant, O Lord, Your grace to our relics, and grant to those who call upon us a place in Your Kingdom. Though they call upon us when they are in danger on a river or on the sea, we entreat You to come to their aid."

Three days later, they opened the brass bull, and the bodies of the holy martyrs were found unscathed. Not one hair on their heads was singed, and their faces shone with heavenly beauty. Many seeing this miracle came to believe in Christ. Christians then buried the bodies of the saints. The feast of St Eustathius, his wife and two sons is celebrated on 21 September in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **119. St. Eutychius, the Disciple of Apostle John (First/Second Century A.D.)**

The Hieromartyr Eutychius, a disciple of the holy Apostles John the Theologian and Paul, lived from the first century into the beginning of the second century, and was from the Palestinian city of Sebastea.

Although Saint Eutyches is not one of the 72 Apostles, he is called an Apostle because of his labors with the older Apostles, by whom he was made bishop. After hearing about Christ the Savior, Saint Eutyches first became a disciple of Apostle John the Theologian. Later he met Apostle Paul and preached together with him on the early journeys (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2013/08/24/102383-hieromartyr-eutyches-the-disciple-of-st-john-the-theologian>).



Saint Eutyches underwent many sufferings: they starved him, beat him with iron rods, threw him into the fire, and then cast him among wild beasts to be devoured. Once, a lion was let loose upon the saint, which astonished everyone because it praised the Creator with a human voice. The hieromartyr Eutyches completed his labors in his native city, where he was beheaded with a sword at the beginning of the second century. The feast of St. Eutychius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 29 May.

## **120. Evagris, Ascetic and writer**

**(A.D. 344? - 398)**

Evagris, ascetic and writer, was born at Ibora, in Pontus Galaticus in c. A.D. 344. He was ordained 'reader' by St. Basil, the bishop of Caesarea. After the death of St. Basil, Gregory Nazianzen ordained him deacon (Palladius, 1898; Smith & Wace, 1880, Vol. II; Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Malaty, 2005). Deacon Evagris accompanied Gregory to the great synod of Constantinople in A.D. 381 and left him with bishop Nectarius, since Evagris was skilled in argument against all heresies (Wace, 1911).

Evagris was troubled by temptations of flesh by the wife of an ex-prefect (Wace, 1911). This resulted in a prolonged illness (fever) lasting for about six months. Physicians were at a loss and could find no way to cure him. He moved to Jerusalem where Melania the Elder nursed him and said: "Son, your long illness does not please me. Tell me therefore what your thoughts are. ..." Then he confessed to her the whole matter. But she said to him: "Give me your word before the Lord that you will keep the monastic life; and, sinner though I am, I will pray that you may be granted reprieve." Fearing God and respecting his own conscience he consented. So within a few days he got well, and travelled to the mount of Nitria, Egypt in c. A.D. 382

where he became a friend and disciple of St. Macarius (A. D. 310-390) of Egypt (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Malaty, 2005).

He lived there two years and in the third year he entered the desert. So he lived fourteen years in the place they call Cellia. In the course of fifteen years, having purified his mind, he composed three holy books for monks, called Antirrhetica in which he taught the arts to be used against demons. He also wrote on *asceticism, stillness in the solitary life* and *a treatise on 'the eight evil thoughts'* (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). Theophilus of Alexandria wanted to ordain Evagris a Bishop which he refused (Wace, 1911). He once said: "Always keep your death in mind and do not forget the eternal judgment, then there will be no fault in your soul" (Malaty, 2005, p. 239).

Evagris in his chapters on prayer wrote: "Prayer is the flower of gentleness and of freedom from anger. Prayer is the fruit of joy and thankfulness. Prayer is the remedy for gloom and depression. Go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and take up your cross so that you can pray without distraction. ... Prayer is an ascent of the spirit to God. If you long for prayer, renounce all to gain all" (Malaty, 2005, p. 239).

To one of his disciples he told the things that would happen to him after eighteen years. And he said: "From the time that I moved to the desert, I have not touched lettuce or any other green vegetable, or any fruit, or grapes, or meat, and nor have I taken bath." And later, in the sixteenth year of his life without cooked food, his flesh felt a need, owing to the weakness of the stomach, to partake of something cooked. However, he did not take bread even then having fed on herbs or gruel or pulse for two years. He attended the church on the Epiphany and passed away after a few days. Shortly before his death in A.D. 398 at the age of fifty-four (Smith & Wace, 1880, Vol. II) he told the disciples: "For three years I have not been troubled by fleshly desire after so long a life and toil and labour and ceaseless prayer." The feast of St. Evagris (surnamed Ponticus) is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 16 January.

## **121. St. Evodius, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. ? - 68)**

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

Saint Evodius was a pagan who converted to Christianity due to the apostolic work of Saint Peter. According to the Book of Acts, the first communities to receive evangelism were the Jews and pagans of Antioch. The city was opulent and cosmopolitan and there were both Hellenized Jews and pagans influenced by monotheism. The term “Christian” was coined for these Gentile (mainly Syrian and Greek) converts and St. Peter became the bishop of Antioch to lead the church there. Evodius succeeded Peter, the Apostle, as the bishop of Antioch when Peter left Antioch for Rome, most probably in A.D. 60. The difficulty in fixing the date of accession of Evodius is described in detail by Smith & Wace (1880). The difficulty in fixing the date of accession of Evodius is described in detail by Smith and Wace (1880). After the martyrdom of St. Peter at Rome in A.D. 67, Evodius became the Patriarch of the Holy See of Antioch. St. Evodius wrote several compositions. In one of them he writes that the Most Holy Virgin Mary gave birth to the Savior of the world at the age of fifteen.

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

## 122. St. Febronia, the Martyress

(A.D. 284? – 304?)

Febronia is believed to have suffered persecution and became a martyr during the reign of Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 284 – 305). The biography of Febronia was made available by Thomais (in Syriac *Thaumasia*), a nun of her convent (Smith & Wace, 1880). Febronia of Nisbis is also known as Febronia of Sebapte.

Febronia was born in Ouryana in Mesopotamia in A.D. 284. She grew up from the age of two in a convent, in Sivapolis in Assyria region, where her aunt, Bryene was an abbess. There were fifty nuns in the convent who ate only one meal a day at dinner. Febronia was an extremely beautiful girl and the abbess gave her a harsher life by providing food only once in two days.

Everyone spoke highly of her learning, beauty, humility and gentleness. She had never met a man and neither had a man ever seen her (Harvey, 1990). Hieria, a pagan, the widow of a senator came to the convent to visit her. She wanted to give up her heathen way of life and learn the path of salvation. Bryene said, “I do not allow Febronia to have association with laywomen. Nevertheless, I will consider your eagerness, tears and love for God and allow you to meet her wearing a nun’s clothing.” When Bryene introduced Hieria to her, the latter on seeing the monastic habit fell down at her feet (it was the custom of the day to greet another nun likewise).

After they had greeted one another, Febronia read various passages from the Bible. The whole night was spent in reading the Holy Book and by morning Hieria’s soul was so filled with sorrow and compunction that she groaned and sighed before leaving the convent. Febronia asked Thomais, “Who is this strange sister who has never before listened to the word of God?” When Febronia was ill Hieria nursed her until she regained health. She was also present at the scene of the martyrdom of Febronia.

During this time Selenos, Lysimachus and Primus, the military generals of Emperor Diocletian arrived at Nisbis. They compelled all Christians to offer sacrifice to idols and threatened to murder those who defied the orders. Soon all the Christians in town, including the clergy and monks left their homes and fled. Febronia when she heard of their plans said, "I have offered myself to Christ. Therefore, I will not resort to flight. Let whatever God wills take place."

Prokla who had been brought up along with Febronia hugged her before taking leave of her, "Farewell, Febronia. Pray for me." Febronia tried to stop her by her appeal, "Fear God, Prokla. Do not leave me. I am still unwell. What happens if I should die? Our Abbess, Bryene and Thomais cannot carry me to the grave alone. Stay with us to help them." But an unconcerned Prokla left them.

The convent was emptied of sisters. Bryene went into the prayer room and groaned in grief. Thomais sat with her trying to console her, "God will effect a way out of affliction and temptation. Who has had faith in God and regretted it? Those who have persevered in Him are never abandoned." Bryene agreed with her but her concern was for Febronia, "What am I to do with Febronia? Where can I hide her to keep her safe? How can I watch if she is taken captive by the barbarians?" Thomais replied, "Have you forgotten what I told you? He who can raise the dead can certainly strengthen Febronia and save her."

When they reached her bedside Bryene was more grief stricken. Febronia told them, "Just pray for me." Thomais said, "If the tyrants arrive they will arrest and kill both of us who are old. They will try to seduce you seeing you are young and beautiful. Do not pay attention to their promises and do not lose the rewards of your past spiritual life. Remember the crown of success of all those who fought and were martyred."

The next morning there was an uproar with shouting. Selenos and Lysimachus had taken control of the city and the soldiers had seized a large number of Christians and thrown them into prisons. Some pagans informed them about the convent. As soon as they

entered, they seized Bryene and drew their swords. Thereupon Febronia threw herself at the soldier's feet, "I plead you in the name of God, kill me first so that I need not see my mistress' death."

When the Commander Primus arrived, he ordered the soldiers out of the convent. He then asked them, "Where are the other nuns? Why didn't you also escape?" He informed Lysimachus, "All the women living in the convent have fled. There are only two old women and one young girl. Had she not been poor and wretched she would have made a suitable wife for you." Lysimachus replied, "I will never harm a woman who is a nun." (He had some sympathy for Christians, as his mother was also a Christian).

Selenos was informed of this matter and he soon arrived there and dragged Febronia out of the convent. Bryene and Thomais requested the soldiers to allow them to speak to her and to follow her. They were ordered to bring only the young girl but they acceded to their supplication and allowed them some time. "My daughter Febronia, remember the Heavenly Father watches over your trail. Hosts of angels are awaiting you with the crown of victory. Let me hear the good news that "Febronia has met her end and is reckoned amongst the martyrs of Christ." With these words of prayer, she sent her on her way. Thomais put on a laywoman's clothing to follow and to watch Febronia's ordeal.

Selenos wanted her to recognize Lysimachus as her husband. She was not to be influenced by threats or coaxing and answered their questions boldly and strongly. He was exceedingly angry and ordered the soldiers to tear off her clothes. She had to stand there undressed, an object of shame. She was then subjected to the most brutal persecutions, like using iron nails on her body, squeezing her on wheels, cutting off her tongue and beating down her teeth. Later all her limbs were severed one by one. Hieria who was present there cried aloud, "Are you not satisfied by the terrible torments you have brought upon the girl?" She was also tied up and brought before the judge but was not publically tortured. Febronia was then beheaded.

Lysimachus was distressed and issued orders to guard her dismembered body. Very soon, Selenos met with death and Lysimachus exclaimed, “Great is Febronia’s God.” He arranged for her burial. Her mutilated body was carried to the convent for burial. Lysimachus and Primus accepted Christianity and got themselves baptized.

According to the commands of the metropolitan of Nisbis, it was decided to shift her relics to another place prepared for it. When her coffin was opened there was an earthquake, which made them put off the plan and only one of her teeth was transferred (Brock & Harvey, 1998). Her martyrdom is believed to have happened in A.D. 304 (Aphrem I, 2000).

In A.D. 363, her relics were shifted to Constantinople. She has become the patron of divine blessings for those who intercede on her behalf. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates her feast on 25 June.

## **123. St. Felicitas of Rome and her seven sons, Martyrs**

**(A.D.? - 164?)**

St. Felicitas (Felichithas) was a noble pious Christian widow in Rome born of a rich family. She brought up her seven sons (Januarius, Felix, Philip, Silvanus, Alexander, Vitalius and Marcial) in Christian virtues (Wace, 1911). After the death of her husband she spent her time in prayer, fasting, and works of charity. Many embraced Christianity due to the edifying example of Felicitas.

Priests of idol worshippers complained to Emperor Antoninus Pius about the boldness with which Felicitas publicly practiced the Christian religion and how she withdrew many from the worship of the gods (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2015/01/25/100300-martyr-felicitas-of-rome-and-seven-sons>). They added that in order to

appease them, it was necessary to compel this lady and her children to sacrifice to gods. Antoninus sent an order to Publius, the prefect of Rome, to take care that the priests should be satisfied, and the gods appeased in this matter (Wace, 1911).

Publius ordered the mother and her sons to be apprehended and brought before him. When this was done he took Felicitas aside, and used the strongest inducements to make her offer sacrifice to the gods, that he might not be obliged to proceed with severity against her and her sons. But she returned him this answer: "Do not think to frighten me by threats, or to win me by fair speeches. The spirit of God within me will not suffer me to be overcome by Satan, and will make me victorious over all your assaults." Publius said in a great rage: "Unhappy woman, is it possible you should think death so desirable as not to permit even your children to live, but force me to destroy them by the most cruel torments?" "My children," said she, "will live eternally with Christ if they are faithful to Him; but must expect eternal death if they sacrifice to idols."

The next day the prefect, sitting in the square of Mars before his temple, sent for Felicitas and her sons, and said: "Take pity on your children, Felicitas; they are in the bloom of youth, and may aspire to the greatest honours and preferment." The holy mother answered: "Your pity is really impiety, and the compassion to which you exhort me would make me the most cruel of mothers." Then turning herself towards her children, she said to them: "My sons, look up to heaven where Jesus Christ with His saints expects you. Be faithful in His love, and fight courageously for your souls." Publius being infuriated at this behaviour, commanded her to be cruelly buffeted, saying: "You are insolent indeed, to give them such advice as this in my presence, in contempt of the orders of our princes" (Butler, 1866).

The judge then called the children to him one after the other, and used many artful speeches, mingling promises with threats to induce them to adore the gods. Januarius, the eldest, encountered his



assaults first, but resolutely answered him: “You advise me to do a thing that is very foolish, and contrary to all reason; but I confide in my Lord Jesus Christ, that He will preserve me from such an impiety.” Publius ordered him to be stripped and cruelly scourged, after which he was sent back to prison. Felix, the second brother, was called next, and commanded to offer sacrifice. But the generous youth replied: “There is only one God. To him we offer the sacrifice of our hearts. We will never forsake the love which we owe to Jesus Christ. Employ all your artifices; exhaust all inventions of cruelty; you will never be able to overcome our faith.”

The other brothers made their answers separately, that they feared not a passing death, but everlasting torments; and that having before their eyes the immortal reward of the just, they despised the threats of men. Marcial, who spoke last, said: “All who do not confess Christ to be the true God, shall be cast into eternal flames.” The brothers, after being whipped, were remanded to prison, and the prefect, hopeless to be able ever to overcome their resolution, laid the whole process before the emperor. Antoninus having read the interrogatory, gave an order that they should be sent to different judges, and be condemned to different deaths. Januarius was scourged to death with whips loaded with plummets of lead. The next two, Felix and Philip, were beaten with clubs till they died. Sylvanus, the fourth, was thrown headlong down a steep cliff. The three youngest, Alexander, Vitalis, and Marcial, were beheaded, and the same sentence was executed upon the mother four months after in about A.D. 164. St. Felicitas is commemorated on 10 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **124. Flavian I, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. 320? – 404)**

Flavian was born in an affluent family in about A.D. 320 in Antioch. As his father died very early in his childhood he had to look after the immense family property by himself. Still he did not fall into worldly temptations or vices. His palatial residence was a shelter for the sick and the suffering (Smith & Wace, 1880).

Flavian spent a life of solitude with Diodorus, later bishop of Tarsus. Both of them stood firmly against the heresies of Arius. Their followers divided themselves into two groups standing around the tombs of martyrs and reestablished the antiphonal singing practice introduced by Mor Ignatius (Wace & Piercy, 1999).

Patriarch Moran Meletius ordained Flavian priest in A.D. 361. Emperor Valens a strong supporter of Arius settled down in Antioch in A.D. 370. Until his death in A.D. 378, he persecuted the believers of the True Faith. On the death of Patriarch Meletius, Flavian was chosen to succeed him in A. D. 381 (Smith & Wace, 1880). The rulers in Rome and Egypt refused to acknowledge him as the Patriarch.

Through the intervention of John Chrysostom, ‘the Gold Tongued’, soon after his installation as the Patriarch of Constantinople in A.D. 398 and the influence of Emperor Theodosius, Patriarch Flavian was universally acknowledged.

The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates Moran Flavian who became the twenty-sixth patriarch of Antioch (A.D. 381 – 404) on 14 November. The feast is also celebrated on 26/27 September.

## 125. Forty Martyrs of Sebastea

(A. D. 320)

Martyrs are those who sacrificed their lives for their faith in Jesus Christ. The word “martyr” comes from the Greek word ‘*martyrs*’. Martyrs means witness (Nelson’s encyclopaedia, 1913; Encyclopedia Americana, 1988). Originally, the word martyr was used for those who witnessed Christ. Later, the word came to be used for those who laid their lives in witness of Christ. Martyrs are baptized in blood. Their intercession is precious to God. The feast of Forty Martyrs is celebrated during the forty-day lent of the Syriac Orthodox Church (actual date - March 9).

Sebastea is a town in the middle Turkey, Armenia Minor. It is the capital of Sivas. It is located in the Valley of Kizil River. Sabastea became famous towards the close of the 3rd century A. D. during the reign of Diocletian.

In the prayer for the feast of Forty Martyrs of Sabesteia, those martyrs are compared to forty palm trees by the side of streams which Ezekial, the prophet saw; the forty stars that dispelled the darkness of idol worship; the forty torches that glowed all night in the sea of Sebesteia and lighted up the whole world and the forty diamonds that are studded in the crown of the Church.

The forty-martyrs were soldiers in Sebasteia and they were martyred in A. D. 320. They were from different countries and belonged to the twelveth legion stationed at Armenia. The chief of the soldiers was Likkianos and the Governor was Agricalavos. King Liciniyoos ordered that all soldiers should offer sacrifices to idols. Those forty-martyrs refused to obey. Therefore, they were imprisoned.

After a few days, they were re-examined on the charges but they steadfastly held on to their contentions. Then, they were stripped and made to stand in the lake (river) of Sebasteia all night. They died of

the chilling cold. The assurance of Jesus Christ, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Mathew 10:32) gave them strength to face the trials and tribulations. They sang with King David that they would not forsake His Holy name even in hardships. These saints entered into the heavenly bliss through water and fire.

The names of the forty-martyrs are given in the *Sedro* of morning and evening prayers of the feast day of these saints, which falls on 9 March.

**Note:** The feast is celebrated on 9 March if it falls on Saturday, Sunday or Wednesday of the middle of the Great Lent. Otherwise the feast is moved to the Saturday nearest to 9-14 March (Aphrem I, 2017).

## **126. St. Gabriel, the Bishop of Thur’abdeen (A.D. 574? – 648?)**

Several ascetics lived in Mesopotamia (Bes’nahrin) from the fourth to eighth century. Gabriel is one the brightest star among those ascetics. He was born in Besqusthan in A.D. 574/594. He was selected to be a deacon in the church of his village (JSC, 2014). His parents wanted to get him married which he refused.

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

Gabriel wanted to go to a distant place so that his parents and relatives may not visit him frequently. The head of the monastery agreed to his request and he left the monastery and joined the ascetic, Shem'voon. After a few years, Gabriel was elevated to the rank of the chief of the monastery (A.D. 612/613?). Mor Gabriel instructed the inmates of the monastery that they must sit together to eat and no one should bring any food to the table. Two of the inmates who disregarded the instruction and brought salad and other food items died at the dining table.

The intercession of Gabriel was well known while he was alive. Once, a man from Arabia came to the monastery when Gabriel was the chief of the monastery. The man came with a lot of slaves, camels, and other belongings. He entrusted one thousand gold coins to Yoohanon, an elderly inmate of the monastery. The man was traveling to the North and told Yoohanon to hand over the coins to him if he returns alive and if he does not to the one who will come with a note from him. (The coins were buried in a place known to Yoohanon and the man).

After three years the man came back to the monastery, but Yoohanon was dead two years ago. Yoohanon's disciples was called and interrogated about the gold coins. But, the disciple was not aware of the gold coins; he was tortured and the matter came to Gabriel. Gabriel said: "We will ask the departed Yoohanon." They all went to the tomb of Yoohanon and Gabriel prayed to save the innocent Yoohanon's disciple. A voice was heard saying: "It is where it was buried." The man wanted to open the tomb and see whether it is the Yoohanon whom he had met. The tomb was opened, the cloth that covered the body was removed; the man kissed the body and confessed that the God of Christians is the true God. The man collected the coins and distributed a part of it among his servants. The rest of his possessions were given to the monastery and he received baptism and took the name of Yoohanon. He also became a monk in the monastery.

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

Intercession of Gabriel gave life to Singoon (Singhun?/ Yacoub), the son of a widow. A similar miracle happened in the village of Oolin where a young man was called to life. He performed several miracles during his life. Knowing that his time to depart was at hand, Mor Gabriel called all his disciples and advised them about the ascetic practices and departed for his heavenly abode on 23 December 648 at the age of seventy-four. The funeral was attended by Iwannis of Amid, Ignatius of Mayperqat, Gregory of Arzon, Basil of Jazira, Polycarp of Beth Araboye, Dioscoros of Singara and Haburo, Epiphanius of Nisibis, Sisinnius of Dara, John of Kfar Tutho and Jacob of Sawro ([https://everipedia.org/wiki/Mor\\_Gabriel/](https://everipedia.org/wiki/Mor_Gabriel/)).

In A.D. 775, ninety-five inmates of the monastery of Thur'abdeen died of an epidemic (plague?). About thirty monks died on a single night. The body of Saint Gabriel was taken out of the tomb and put out in the church for the intercession and they could survive from the epidemic. On another occasion, the right hand of Saint Gabriel was cut and taken to the town, Hah and inhabitants were saved from a difficult situation. The feast of Saint Gabriel is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 23 December and 1 May.

## **127. Moran George I, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. ? - 790)**

Moran George (Gewargis or Geevarghese), is the fifty-first Patriarch of Antioch. He is one of the most famous Patriarchs of Antioch, distinguished in his age for his knowledge, understanding, literary productions and sober opinions. Moreover, he was amiable, humble and patient in overcoming hardships. He was born at B'altan near Josya in the province of Homs, and studied and mastered Syriac and Greek as well as philology, theology and jurisprudence at Qinnesrin. There he was ordained a Deacon and led an ascetic and pious life. He also corresponded with Theodore, Bishop of Samosata, who predicted that God would entrust him with a high position in his church (Aphrem I, 2003).

Theodore also encouraged him to be faithful to his monastery. As George was a man of virtue and noble character, he was chosen by the Holy Council to ascend the Apostolic See of Antioch. He was consecrated a Patriarch in A.D. 758. Soon after his consecration, he had to put up with envious and malignant Bishops like John, Bishop of Callinicus and David, Bishop of Dara and others, assisted by a wicked and intriguing monk to whom they yielded.

Consequently, both John and David usurped the See of Antioch. In A.D. 766 Moran George suffered in prison, went to Baghdad and for nine years he and other captives had to bear with patience the injustice of Abu Ja'far al-Mansour, the stingy and greedy Abbasid Caliph. With him was also imprisoned the Patriarch of the Malkites and the Nestorian Catholicos. They were all released after the death of Abu Ja'far in A.D. 775. He was honored and received by the Church as if he were an angel descending from heaven. Immediately, he began gathering scattered flocks and repairing the damage which had befallen the church. He journeyed to Antioch where, in the same year,

he ordained ten Bishops. In A.D. 785, he held a synod at Kfar Nabu near Sarug, in which he enacted twenty-two canons, preceded by a universal letter.

Mor George wrote an eloquent commentary in two volumes on the Gospel of St. Matthew, in which he cited Ignatius, Africanus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Jacob of Sarug, Philoxenus of Mabug, Severus of Antioch and George, Bishop of the Arab Tribes. There is also a distinguished letter written by him, mentioned by Michael the Great, addressed to Gauriya, the deacon of Beth Na'ar, a village in Lebanon, on the phrase, "we break the heavenly bread."

He wrote poetry, characterized by clarity and charm. During his imprisonment, he composed beautiful hymns and metrical discourses, some of which, we believe, were added to the Church services. Of these hymns, we find one to the tune of "Rise up, O! Paul," in which he laments his condition. It is in "*Qum Phaulos*" tune, and starts like this: "May it do me much good, if I am informed that Babylon, city of the giants, has fallen and that the gates of prisons have been opened in order to go out victorious like Peter, and like Zachariah sing with delight: 'Behold, the sun shines over the blind from on high'. O, daughters of Zion, weep for Daniel, and O, monasteries weep for George."

Moran George administered the Church wisely until his death on 1 December, A.D. 790. He was buried in the Monastery of Mar Barsoum in Melitene and is commemorated by the Church on 7 December.



## **128. Metropolitan George of Basibrina**

**(A.D. ? – 1495)**

George became a monk at the Qartmin Monastery (Aphrem I, 2003). In 1450, he was consecrated a Metropolitan with the name John. He was the most prominent among the Bishops of his time. Twice he went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and bought a house for two hundred golden dinars and made it an endowment for our St. Mark's Monastery in Jerusalem. He died at Mor Hananya Monastery in 1495.

In 1462, he compiled a liturgy from nine liturgies by doctors of the church, all of whom share the name John, including him. To this compilation he contributed five pieces. The compiled liturgy begins thus: "O Lord the giver of safety and the Lord of peace." It contains four prayers by a Bishop named John Bar Butahi, who may be a fourteenth-century Bishop from Tur 'Abdin. The compositions of both [John (George) of Basibrina and John Bar Butahi] are good. John also compiled a liturgy from seven liturgies written by seven fathers of the church, all of them named Jacob.

## **129. Mor George, Bishop of the Arab Tribes**

**(c. A.D. ? – 725)**

Mor George (Georgi), Bishop of the Arabs was a scholar, a church dignitary, a student of philosophy, an excellent critic and an authority on liturgy. He studied at Qinnésrin under Severus Sabukht (d. A.D. 667) shortly before the latter's death, and later under other professors (Aphrem I, 2003).

Wright (1894), examining the British Museum Manuscript (MS Add. 12154) on the exposition of the rites of baptism, the Holy Eucharist and the consecration of the Chrism, identifies Mor George as “the pupil and friend of Athanasius II and Jacob of Edessa (d. 708).” He studied the Syriac philological sciences as well as philosophical, astronomical, theological sciences and history. He assumed the monastic habit and pursued godliness. He was ordained priest and then a Bishop of the Arab tribes of Tay, Uqayl and Tunukh, on 21 November, A.D. 686. Thus, he came to be known as the Bishop of the Arabs.

Some of the important works of Mor George are the following: (1) Commentaries on some Books of the Bible which were cited by the commentators Patriarch George, the monk Severus, Bar Salibi and Bar Hebraeus, (2) A short commentary in fifteen pages on the Sacraments of the Church concerning Faith, Baptism, the celebration of the Eucharist and the Chrism, (3) A supplement of the Book of the Six Days by the learned Jacob of Edessa in ten pages, (4) Compilation of a large scholion on the homilies of Gregory Nazianzen, (5) Six long homilies in the twelve-syllable meter, the first of which is on the holy Chrism; the second comprising twelve large pages on the life of Severus of Antioch, praising his virtues; the third on solitary monks (in four pages); the fourth on the Calendar; the fifth on Palm Sunday, beginning with: “O Son of God whose glory hath filled the heights and the depths, fill thou mine soul with praise appropriate of thy exaltedness and humbleness;” the sixth on the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, and a charming sughith in heptasyllabic meter on Abraham and his sacrifice.

Mor George has written several letters in reply to questions of contemporaries about heresies and practices of the Church regarding the Holy sacraments of the Church. These letters also exhibit the author’s ability, intelligence and erudition.

The seat of his diocese was Aqula, which is the town of al-Kufa. He also had a monastery in which he resided and from where he

administered his diocese. He supervised his diocese in the best manner for thirty-two years (?) until he died in February 725 or 726.

## **130. Saint George, the Martyr**

**(A. D. 283? – 303)**

George (Gurgis/Jurjis) was born in Cappadocia, East Asia Minor in c. A. D. 283. His parents were of royal origin as described by Meta Frastres (Moothedan, 2001). His Father is thought to be an army chief of Emperor Diocletian. George was also a high-ranking military officer in the army of Diocletian.

There are several legendary and historical descriptions about St. George and it is difficult to distinguish between the two. However, most of the books refer to an incident which is described here. One day George was riding a horse in the province of Lybia in North Africa. He came upon a city named Sylene. Near the city was a marsh, in which lived a dragon. The people had attempted to kill it but were poisoned by the creature's fetid breath. To placate the dragon, they offered it two sheep a day, but when they began to exhaust their supply of sheep, they were forced to substitute a human each day instead, casting lot to choose the victim.

At the time of George's arrival, the lot had just fallen to the King's daughter Andromeda (Sophia?). No one volunteered to take her place, so she was dressed in bridal finery and sent to meet the dragon. Riding upon this scene on a (green) horse George attacked the dragon and speared it with his lance. He then fastened the princess's girdle around its neck, and the girl led the dragon into the city. The people were frightened and started to run away, but George told them not to be afraid – that if they would believe in Jesus Christ and be baptized, he would slay the dragon. The King and the people agreed. George killed the dragon, and it was carried away on four ox

carts (White, 1991). George accepted no reward for his service, but he asked the King to build churches, honour Priests, and to be compassionate towards the poor.

George was martyred during the persecution of Diocletian at Nicomedia in the beginning of the 4th century. The persecution lasted for about seven years. During that period about seventy Kings were associated with Diocletian and historians mention different Kings in their account of the persecution. The persecution was as a result of George's refusal to worship Appalon and Hoclis, the pagan Gods.

George performed several miracles. Diocletian's wife Alexandria and his daughter Valeria believed in Jesus Christ. . This resulted in the beheading of Alexandria on April 8 at Diospolis in Palestine (now, Lod, Israel). George was beheaded at the same place on 23 April (*Britannica*, 2001; *Encarta*, 2001).

St. George is the patron saint of England. The reason for this may be that George was a Knight in the army or that he went to England as a delegate of an army, the truth of the matter is hard to ascertain. The coins of England bear the emblem of St. George. The reason for this may be that Richard I, Edward III, Edward IV, and Henry VII considered St. George in high esteem and their soldiers were believed to be under the protection of the saint. "St. George's arms" became the basis of the uniform of the British soldiers and George's red cross appears on the Union Jack.

The writings of two Syrian churches, which date back to A. D. 494, suggest that George was martyred at Lydha (now, Lod, Israel). There were churches in the name of St. George during the time of Constantine, the Great, at Nicomedia, Ludia, and Thessalonica. The feast of St. George is celebrated on 23 April.

## **131. Mor Gregorios Dodho**

**(A.D. 530- 609)**

Dodho was born in Sidos, a village in Iraq. His parents Simon and Helen were wealthy and well known for their strong faith. They were childless for a long time. Their faith led them to a monastery in Mt. Tabriz, Iraq. They stayed with the abbot Mor David spending their days and nights in prayers. Dodho was born to them in A.D. 530 because of their fervent prayers ([http://wikivisually.com/wiki/Mor\\_Dodo](http://wikivisually.com/wiki/Mor_Dodo)).

Mor David baptized him and they returned to their native place, Sidos. The villagers named the little boy Dodho according to the Christian tradition. He attended school in the village and grew up as a clever and good student.

Dodho's parents wanted to arrange a marriage for him but he was against the idea, as he wanted to dedicate himself fully to Jesus. He carried the Bible always with him, read and meditated upon it. After the death of his parents, he distributed all their earnings and wealth among the poor. He followed literally, what Jesus had taught. "If you will be perfect, go and sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

Dodho went to Mor David's monastery. He observed rigorous penance. He desired to serve God leading a virtuous life. On mount Tabriz, he lived a solitary life for twelve years. The Abbot saw in a dream that Dodho's life was in danger and set out in search of him. He was brought back to the monastery severely ill.

After regaining his health, he visited the Holy land. On his return journey, he visited a village seven kilometers from Azakh in the northeast direction, a place infested with thieves. Dodho called upon his uncle and forty hermits and stayed with them. With everyone's cooperation, he could construct a church there. The village soon became a beautiful place to live.

When the metropolitan of Tigris passed away in A.D. 589, the Patriarch Peter III (A.D. 581 – 591) nominated Dodho as his successor. Even though he tried to evade it he had to accept the position and was consecrated under the name Mor Gregorius. As a Metropolitan, he ordained one thousand three hundred Priests and one thousand seven hundred Deacons. Mor Gregorius Dodho passed away in A.D. 609. His burial service conducted at Tigris Cathedral was attended by an enormous crowd of believers and one thousand eight hundred priests.

Mor Issahac, a relative of Mor Dodho transferred his relics from Tigris to Thurabdin in A.D. 629 and it was interred at Basibrin, Turkey. A church was constructed over his tomb. His memory is celebrated by the Syrian Orthodox Church on 20 May.

## **132. St. Gregory of Armenia, the Illuminator**

**(A.D. 257? – 331?)**

Gregory (Mor Gregorius), the Illuminator, the apostle and patron of Armenia was born about the year A.D. 257 in Armenia ([https://orthodoxwiki.org/Gregory\\_the\\_Enlightener](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Gregory_the_Enlightener)). Gregory is also known as ‘the Sun of Armenia’ (Smith & Wace, 1880, Vol. II). Armenia was always the exposed frontier state between Rome and Persia.

(Prince?) Anak , Gregory’s father, a Parthian, at the instigation of the Sassamid Ardashir, murdered King Khosrov I as part of a political rivalry. Gregory was an infant at that time. Anak, while trying to escape, was drowned in the Araxes River with all his family except two sons who were saved by their nurses. One son was carried off to Persia; the other son Gregory was taken by his nurse (foster mother Mary) to Caesarea in Cappadocia (modern Kayseri, Turkey) where he was raised as a Christian.

Gregory got married and had two sons. One son, Orthanes (Bardanes/Vertanes), later became a priest. The other son, Aristages (Aristakes) became a monk, and later was ordained bishop who attended the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325.

A son of the King Khosrov, Tiridates, who escaped the assassination, was trained in the Roman army, and eventually came back to drive out the Persians and restore the Armenian Kingdom ([http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07023a .htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07023a.htm)). In c. A.D. 280, Gregory returned to Armenia in the midst of a Christian persecution encouraged by King Tiridates III, the son of the assassinated Khosrov.

Tiridates was a zealot for the regional idols and was intolerant of Christianity and demanded that Gregory must renounce his Christian faith which he refused. Gregory was imprisoned in a burial pit (in a pit with venomous snakes?) for about thirteen years. During these times, Tiridates developed a serious ailment and suffered disfiguration. However, his heart softened after he was cured by the prayers of Gregory. In A.D. 297, Tiridates in gratitude, released Gregory from prison. Gregory observed fast for seventy days after his rescue from the pit. He then began to preach the Gospel to the people, urging them to reject the worship of idols and to follow Christ. Tiridates, repented and most of the people of Armenia, answered Gregory's call to accept Christianity. Tiridates was baptized by Gregory in A.D. 301. In that year, Tiridates adopted Christianity as the State religion. With the conversion of Armenia, the temples were destroyed and churches were built. This happened while Diocletian was emperor (A.D. 284-305). Tiridates then became the first monarch in history to impose Christianity on his people. He did so about 20 years before Constantine I. Gregory and Tiridates upon hearing about Constantine's conversion set out with an army of 70,000 men to congratulate him.

In A.D. 302, Gregory was consecrated bishop of all the Armenians with his residence at Ashtishat in the province of Taron. In 303, Gregory built the Cathedral of Etchmiadzin near Mount Ararat.

In A.D. 318, Gregory named his son, Aristages, as his successor and entrusted his grandson, Grigoris, with the duty to spread the Gospel of Christ throughout the Caucasus and Anatolia. Gregory then retired to (a mountain cave?) a monastery near Mount Sebuh in the Daralia province of upper Armenia. He passed away in c. A.D. 331 and was entombed at Thortan ([www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Gregory-the-Illuminator](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Gregory-the-Illuminator); [https://orthodox-wiki.org/Gregory\\_the\\_Enlightener](https://orthodox-wiki.org/Gregory_the_Enlightener); <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07023a.htm>).

The feast of Mor Gregory (Gregorius) of Armenia, the illuminator, is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 30 September.

### **133. St. Gregorius Abdul Jaleel**

**(A. D.? - A. D. 1671)**

Mor Gregorius Abdul Jaleel was sent to India in A. D. 1665 at the request of Thoma Arkadiyakon of Malankara (Kerala, India). A formal letter of request was sent to the Patriarch Ignatius Shemvun I (A. D. 1640-1659) through Deacon Stephen Aspar of Amid. The request was granted by Patriarch Abdul Masih I (A. D. 1662-1686).

Abdul Jaleel was born at Mosul, Iraq. He was ordained Priest upon completing his theological studies. In 1654, Patriarch Ignatius Shem'vun (Simon) I ordained him Bishop by name Themotheos. Until 1664, Mor Themotheos Abdul Jaleel served the diocese of Amid. Subsequently, Mor Themotheos was appointed Bishop of Jerusalem and the ecclesiastical name Gregorius was given as was the tradition. The father of Mor Gregorius was a rich man. Mor Gregorius had brought a share of his property with which he bought the Thorakkal property at Paravur (Kerala, India). This property later became the asset of St. Thomas Syrian Church, North Paravur which was founded in A. D. 1566.



The Canon of Bar Ebroyo (1994) stipulates that there should be four Patriarchs - - Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople and Antioch. The Metropolitan of Jerusalem shall be called the fifth Patriarch. Thus, Jerusalem although comes under the see of Antioch, shall be known as a Patriarchate, a special status accorded for various reasons.

The Diamper Synod, the Oath of Slanting Cross, and the circumstances in Malankara (Kerala, India) in A. D. 1653 were known to the Holy See of Antioch. It is at this juncture that the Patriarch deputed Mor Gregorius Abdul Jaleel to Malankara. Mor Gregorius landed at the coastal village of Ponnani, in North Kerala in A. D. 1664. He spent a few days at Ponnani in disguise for fear of the enemies of the Church. A few days later he met some Christian businessmen and revealed that he was a Syrian Bishop and started his journey to Kottayam (Curien, 2003).

On 1 July (*Midhunam* 17) 1665, Mor Gregorius ordained Thoma Arkdiyakon episcopa by name Marthoma I. Mor Gregorius and Marthoma I ordained Marthoma II.

Mor Gregorius Abdul Jaleel was working in the vineyard of the Church since his arrival in A. D. 1665. He visited churches, preached the true faith of the Syriac Orthodox Church, insisted on the use of leaven bread for the Holy Eucharist, allowed the marriage of Deacons before Priesthood and removed statues erected in the church. Mor Gregorius is known as the Ya'cub Bardaeus of Malankara for he saved the Church from the Roman impositions. Fortyfive of the sixtynine churches received Mor Gregorius with all respect and honour due to a prelate (Curien, 1982).

Mor Gregorius spent his last days at St. Thomas Church, North Paravur. Forseeing his death, he took a bath and dressed and with the vestments entered the church and slipped into eternal life on 27 April (*Medam* 14) A. D. 1671. The church bell rang on its own and an unusual light spread all around.

The handcross used by Saint Gregorius had relics of saints in eleven cavities and one contained a portion of the cross on which

Jesus was crucified. This handcross is set out for public veneration on the feast day. His Holiness Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I was declared Mor Greogorius a Saint vide Apostolic Bull No. 71/2000 dated 4 April 2000. Later, the name of St. Gregorius Abdul Jaleel was included in the fifth diptych of the Holy Qurbano vide Apostolic Bull No. E50/2006 dated 7 February 2006. The feast of Saint Gregorius is celebrated on 27 April.

## **134. St. Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil**

**(A. D. 1848 - 1902)**

Gregorius was born at Mulanthuruthy on 15 June 1848 (M. E. 1023 *Midhunam* 3). His parents were Chathuruthil Mathew and Kallarackal Mary. Gregorius was called Geevarghese (Kochyppora). He had two brothers (Kurian and Varkey) and two sisters (Mary & Eli).

Mary, mother of Geevarghese, died when he was two years old. His elder sister Mary took care of him. He had preprimary education at the feet of Onakkavil Ayya and later with Mani. After the primary education his theological studies were with Rev. Geevarghese who was his father's brother.

After the death of Rev. Geevarghese (in 1865, because of smallpox) he continued his theological studies under Rev. Mathen Konatt and more notably under His Grace Mor Koorilos Yuyakim, the delegate of Holy See of Antioch (1846-1874).

Geevarghese belonged to Mulanthuruthy Marthoman Church. At the age of ten, on 14 September 1858, he was ordained subdecan (*Kooroooyo*) by His Grace Palakkunnath Mathews Athanasius at the St. George church, Karingachira. On 18 Thulam 1865 he was ordained full deacon by His Grace Mor Koorilos Yuyakim. In the same year he was ordained Priest and subsequently was ordained Corepiscopo.

On 7 April M.E. 1047 *Meenam* 27, at the age of twenty four, V. Rev. Geevarghese Corepiscopo was ordained Ramban by His Grace Mor Deevannasios Joseph Pulikkottil II at Marthoman Church, Mulanthuruthy. On 10 December 1876 (M. E. 1052 *Vrischikam* 27) H. H. Moran Mor Ignatius Peter IV (III) ordained Ramban Geevarghese, Metropolitan at the St. Thomas Church, North Paravar and called him Gregorius. On 26 *Vrischikam* 1876 (M. E. 1052) Ramban Gevarghese executed and submitted a deed to H. H. Peter IV, the Patriarch of Antioch. The eleven clauses of the registered deed detail the terms of relationship. "If I defy any of the clauses, His Holiness has the right to notify the same and I shall pay 2850 British Rupees and shall take back this deed."

On 5 May 1877, H. H. Peter IV appointed Mor Gregorius Geevarghese Metropolitan of the Niranam Diocese. On 17 May 1877, H. H. Peter IV ordained Karavatt Mor Dionysius Shemvun and Murimattathil Mor Ivanios Paulose Metropolitans at the St. Lasarus church, Chiralayam, Kunnankulam, at which time His Grace Mor Gregorius Geevarghese was also present.

H. H. Peter IV used to call Mor Gregorius, Yoohanon for His Grace was the youngest of all the Metropolitans and the one whom he loved the most. His Holiness stayed in Malankara for about two years. His Grace Gregorius was a Ramban during the Synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1876 but was a close associate of H. H. in the consecration of Holy Chrism. The Bull of H. H. Peter IV written on 15 Makaram 1877 from Fort Kochi church regarding the correct practices of sacraments and discipline was translated and published by His Grace Mor Gregorius Geevarghese.

On 13 *Karkkidakam* 1872, Arikupuram Mathen executed a deed in favour of the Metropolitan who will be ever loyal to the Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius seated on the Holy Throne of Antioch. Then onwards construction of a church was initiated at Parumala. The construction of the church was completed and consecrated with Holy Chrism on 15 *Makaram* 1895. On 19 February His Grace Gregorius

started for the Holy Land tour. The group consisted of Deacon Sleeba (later the delegate of the Holy See, Mor Osthatheos), V. Rev. Kochuparambil Paulose Ramban, Vattasseril Geevarghese Kathanar, V. Rev. Thoppil Lukose Corepiscopa (South Paravur), Karingathil Skariah Kathanar (Thumpamon) and Puthenpurackal Geevarghese Kathanar (Kadmmanitta).

As per the directions of H. H. Peter IV, on 29 July 1889 His Grace Gregorius ordained Rev. Fr. Alvaris (a Jesuit Priest from Goa) Ramban. Ramban Alvaris was ordained Metropolitan by name Julius at the Old Seminary, Kottayam. On that occasion in which, Mor Athanasius Paulose Kadavil was the main celebrant. Mor Ivanius Paulose Murimmattathil and Mor Gregorius Geevarghese were the other two participants. As per the bull of H. H. Peter IV, on 29 May 1892, Rev. Fr. Reni Vilathi was ordained Metropolitan by name Themotheos at the church of Our Lady of Good Health, Sri Lanka. Mor Athanasius Paulose Kadavil, Mor Julius Alvaris and Mor Gregorius Geevarghese were the celebrants.

H. G. Mor Gregorius Geevarghese founded a few schools to facilitate the education of Syrian Christians and to withstand the influence of C. M. S. Missionaries. Mor Ignatius High School, Kunnankulam (now, Govt. Model Girl's H. S.S.); St. Thomas School, Mulanthuruthy; Middle School, Thumpamon are a few of them.

H. G. Mor Gregorius Geevarghese was a man of prayer and fasting. His Grace emulated the example of St. Antony of Egypt. His Grace was suffering from piles, which became acute by August 1902. On November 2 (morning) His Grace was anointed for the sick and received Holy Qurbano. His Grace was called to eternal rest on 2 November 1902 (M. E. 1078 *Thulam* 20) Sunday (1.00 a. m. Monday?) at Parumala. Mor Dionysius Joseph was in deep sorrow and was not able to stand during the funeral prayers. The Holy remains were interred at Parumala on Tuesday 4 November 1902. As per the Bull No. E 265/87 dated 20 October 1987 of H. H. Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, the Patriarch of Antioch, the name of Mor Gregorius was added

to the fifth Diptych of Holy Qurbano. The feast of Saint Gregorius is celebrated on 2 November in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

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

**(A.D. 1933 – 1999)**

Varghese (Kunjukunju) 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 Parayakulath (later Mor Themotheos Yacoub) and Rev. Ramban Yacoub Madappad (later Mor Yulios Yacoub) from his early childhood helped him to gain deep knowledge in Syrian traditions.

He was ordained deacon in 1958 by the delegate of Antioch to India, Mor Yulios Elias Qoro. He was ordained priest on 1 August 1959 and subsequently was appointed as the vicar to St. George Simhasana Church, Perumpally on 9 September by Mor Yulios Qoro. He started his journey to Perumpally bidding farewell to Rev. Kuriakose Ramban, Vanchthattil and Rev. Yacoub Madappad Ramban then staying at Manjanikkara. Mor Yulios Elias blessed

Rev. Fr. P. M. Varghese and presented him a black habit of St. Elias III 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 January 1974 in which Rev. Fr. P. M. Varghese was selected to the post of the Metropolitan (the meeting on 8 December 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 to 1999 are unequalled. H. G. Mor Gregorius Gheevarghese initiated and organised numerous institutions in Kerala like Soonoro church, Elamkulam; St. Joseph Cathedral, Kottyam, the renovated St. George Simhasana Church, Perumpally, the Cupola in the name of St. Gregorios Chathuruthil 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 Manjari, 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. .

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 Kuriakose passed away 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 p.m. On 23 February (Tuesday) the funeral service was

officiated by the Archbishop of Sweden, Mor Dioscorus Bennyamin Akthash who had come to attend the feast of St. Elias III, Mor Yulios Kuriakose, secretary to the Patriarch and other bishops. As he had desired, the steel trunk containing the black habit and silver coin (with which he came to Perumpallil from Manjinikkara) is kept in front of the tomb of His Grace. The death anniversary of Mor Gregorios Perumpally is celebrated on 22 February.

### **136. Mor Gregorius Geevarghese, Vayaliparambil (A.D. 1899 - 1966)**

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

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

During his study in UC College, an inmate was stabbed to death in his hostel room. The room remained vacant since no student had the courage to stay there. The principal announced that anyone willing



to occupy that room could stay for free. Geevarghese volunteered and stayed in that room throughout his education saving the hostel rent for his charitable activities (<http://sor.cua.edu/>).

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

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

On 26th June, 1946, Fr. Geevarghese, along with *Dayroyo* 'Abdul Ahad (later Patriarch Ya'qub III), Fr. Yacob Thakadiyil of Chingavanam and Mulayirikal Paulose Ramban (later bishop of Cochin diocese entombed at Kunnamkulam Simhasana church) left for Jerusalem and Syria. On arrival at St. Mark's Monastery, Jerusalem, he laid a marble epitaph in Syriac for three Syrian Orthodox priests from Kerala who were entombed at the monastery - - Fr. Mattai of Vadakara church (d.1927); Pulikottil Ramban Yacob of Kunnamkulam Simhasana church (d. 1927) and Deacon Gewargis of Mattancherry (d. 1929).

On 4 August 1946, Fr. Geevarghese was consecrated bishop by H.H. Patriarch Mor Ignatius Afrem I Barsaum, at Homs, Syria with the name Gregorios for the Ankamali diocese (along with Very Rev. Mulayirikkal Paulose Ramban by name Severios). Bishop Gregorius Geevarhese travelled as a pilgrim throughout the holy places in Iraq,

Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Israel, and Turkey. He published a detailed book on his pilgrimage. He records in the book that the learned Patriarch Afrem I Barsaum told him that Apostle St. Thomas preached the gospel in Mosul, Baghdad, Basra and Persia before his visit to India (in AD 52). The Patriarch also stated that St. Thomas was followed by the Syriac bishop of Basra, Daweed Episcopa a fact which no Western historians have recorded.

Mor Gregorios expanded his diocese by constructing forty new churches across the diocese. He renovated the Aluva Thikunnath Seminary and implemented schemes for its financial self-reliance by planting rubber and coconut trees. Mor Gregorius built many educational institutions such as Mar Athanasious Engineering College and Mar Athanasious Arts College at Kothamangalam and served as the chairman of the Mar Athanasious College Association. His inheritance went towards the construction of St. George's church and Mar Athanasious High School at Nedumbassery.

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

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

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

## 137. Mor Gregorius Paulos Behnam

(1914 - 1969)

Sarkis, a monk with three others were tonsured at the ancient Monastery of St. Matthew near Mosul, Iraq on 15 August 1935 (Matti Moosa, 2014).

At the end of the celebration of the Eucharist, Dionysius Yuhanna Mansurati, metropolitan of the monastery, assisted by Athanasius Tuma Qasir, metropolitan of Mosul, vested Sarkis and his companions with monastic habits, and changed Sarkis' name into Bulus (Paulos).

In 1938, Paulos was appointed a teacher at St. Ephraim Seminary in Zahle, Lebanon, a position he took after spending three years as a monk in the monastery. In 1945, the Patriarch Aphram I Barsoum (d. 1957) transferred Paulose from St. Ephraim Seminary, Zahle, Lebanon to Mosul, Iraq. He chose as its principal the dynamic and learned young monk, Bulus Behnam, who became instrumental in the religious and cultural awakening of the Syrian Church in Mosul. Paulos was fully aware of the past glory of the Syrian Church of Antioch and its fathers and made efforts to epropage the history and culture of his church. As a result a magazine titled *al-Mashriq* was published in the spring of 1946.

It was only one year after the end of World War II, that Behnam found acquiring paper for the publication of his magazine was truly difficult and he had to travel to Baghdad to get paper which he did with much enthusiasm.

Rev. Bulus Behnam who was ordained bishop in 1952, under the name of Gregorius, was a man of many talents. He was a proficient writer in both Syriac and Arabic, a poet, a scholar and a dynamic orator. In the field of Syriac literature, his objective was to present a selection of the literary and philosophical writings of ancient Syrian fathers to his readers. Mor Gregorius once remarked: "I cherished the idea of carrying this torch, but I was distracted by multiple chores.

However, when I read the Introduction of the author of *The Cause of all Causes*, I determined to translate it as well as other books into Arabic to prove the greatness of the graceful Syriac legacy which I have the honor to be one of its faithful servants.”

In 1946, young monk Bulus Behnam published his book in a rather florid Arabic title of *al-Banafsaja al-Dhakiyya fi Khlasat al-Ta'alim al-Masihyya li al-'ilatwa al-Madaris al-Orthodoxiyya* (The Fragrant Violet: Concise Christian Teachings for the Use of the Orthodox Families and Schools (Mosul, 1946) which was translated into English under the title *Concise Teachings of Christianity for Orthodox Families and Schools* (Beth Antioch Press and Gorgias Press, 2013). Behnam has translated *Ethikon of Bar Hebraeus* (Book of Ethics) which is a demonstration of his erudition and scholarship. The *dhukrono* of Mor Gregorius Paulose Behnam is celebrated on 19 February in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **138. Mor Gregorius Yuhanon**

**(A.D. 1695 – 1773)**

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

Yuhanon was consecrated Bishop with title Gregorius for Mor Behnam monastery and parish in 1747 by the hundred and ninth Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Geevarghese III (A.D. 1745 – 1768). Mor Gregorius Yuhanon accompanied Mor Basalius Shakur Allah 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 Shakar Allah Maphrian (this venerable father passed away 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 passed away 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 Yuhanon 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 Shakar Allah Maphrian when Thoma V was to be ordained) (Philip, 1992). It was written in the *Susthathikon*, ‘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 Mor Gregorius's eyesight started weakening. Very Rev. Ramban Abraham Kattumangad treated him for some time. The venerable prelate passed away on 10 July 1773 and he was entombed on the north part of the sanctuary of the Marthoman church, Mulamthuruthy. Later on 24 December 2006 his relics were transferred to the northern wall of the sanctuary. The feast of Mor Gregorius Yuhanon is celebrated on 10 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **139. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the Younger**

**(c. A.D. 301? – 389/ 90)**

Gregory was born in Arianzus near Cappadocia town in A.D. 301. Some historians note the year of birth as 329/330. Nonna, his mother who was a Christian converted her non-Christian, husband to Christianity (Smith & Wace, 1880; 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 Nyssa (335 – 394), was also referred to as 'Gregory, the Theologian'. His higher education was in Alexandria and Athens (A.D. 351-356). Mor Baselios was a fellow student of Gregory in the University of Athens during A.D. 350 - 52. He worked as a teacher in Rhetoric for many years before returning to Nazianzus (a small town in the south-west of Cappadocia) in A.D. 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 A.D. 360 (*Encarta Encyclopaedia*, 2004). He received Christian education and training from his mother from childhood (Cayre, 1935). He was ordained priest by his father in A.D. 362 and started rendering help to his father (Ferguson & Wright, 1988). In A.D. 372 Gregory was consecrated the Bishop of Sasima, a small town (*Nelson's Encyclopaedia*, 1913; *Britannica Encyclopaedia*, 2001) 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 A.D. 374 he had to take up the responsibility of the Nazianzus congregation. In A.D. 378 - 379 he was appointed the Archbishop of Istanbul and continued in that position till A.D. 381 (*Nelson's Encyclopaedia*, 1913; Hoever, 1989; *Encarta Encyclopaedia*, 2004). Jerome was his disciple during the period, A.D. 379 – 382 (*Britannica Encyclopaedia*, 2004).

He spent a few years combating Arianism. The five speeches (theological orations) delivered by him in the church of Anastasia countering the heresy and defending the doctrine of the Trinity are famous (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; 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 A.D. 381 and retired to his native place, Arianzus. He spent his time in a monastery in Isauria, in south-central Anatolia. He spent his time in prayer and fasting until he expired on 25 January A.D. 389/390 at the age of 90 or more (Smith & Wace, 1880). This Holy Father's memory is celebrated on 25 January and on 7 November by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **140. Gregory of Nazianzus, the Elder**

**(c. A. D.276 – 374)**

Gregory of Nazianzus, the Elder, was the bishop of Nazianzus in the Roman province of Cappadocia (now in Turkey). Gregory was convinced by his wife Nonna to convert to Christianity in 325. Both Gregory and Nonna came from wealthy families, and Gregory was able to personally finance the construction of a church in the region. In 328, Gregory was selected as bishop of Nazianzus, a position he held until his death. At one point, Gregory subscribed to an Arian



understanding of the Trinity. However, this was for a very brief time and he quickly renounced that position.

Four children were born to Gregory and Nonna. Two daughters, Saint Gorgonia and Sophia; and two brothers, Caesarius and Gregory. Their younger son, Caesarius of Nazianzus, studied in Caesarea Mazaca and at Alexandria and became a physician (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Gregory-of-Nazianzus>).

He served in Constantinople as the court physician for both Constantius II and Julian the Apostate, and died in 368. Their elder son, also named Gregory (the Younger is more famous and often known as ‘the Theologian’), served alongside his father first as a priest, and then as coadjutor. Gregory the Younger would later become the Patriarch of Constantinople. The feast of Gregory of Nazianzus, the Elder is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 25 January.

## **141. St. Gregory of Nyssa**

**(A. D. 335 - 394)**

Gregory was born at Caesarea, Cappadocia (now Kayseri in Turkey) in A. D. 335. He is the younger brother of Basil of Caesarea. After a brief spell as Reader in the church, he became a teacher of rhetoric and thereby incurred the displeasure of his brother Basil for his entering into a secular life (Douglas, 1978). He married Theosebia but later returned to monastic life (Graff, 1954). This may be the result of the influence of his friend Gregory of Nazianzus, and Basil, his brother.

In A. D. 371/72 he accepted Basil’s invitation, although rather unwillingly, to become the Bishop of Nyssa (Secunda, now Niksar in Turkey). He was exiled in A. D. 376 by the synod of Arian Bishops, which made the accusation that he was elected by unfair means and that he misappropriated funds. Emperor Valens, a pro-Arian, died in A. D. 378 and Gregory returned from exile (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

Gregory was in charge of the diocese of Sebaste for a few months in A. D. 380. After the death of Basil, Gregory was one of the leading figures at the synod of Constantinople in 381. The doctrine regarding trinity is succinctly expressed in his treatise, that we should not think of saying there are three Gods. The emphasis is that the three persons (*hypostasis*) are distinctive but each act towards the created world is common to all three, having its origin in the Father, adored with the Father and the Son and being perfected by the Spirit. He also suggested that we ought not to speak of three gods sharing the same substance of deity (or Godhead), because it is actually inaccurate and misleading to speak of three men when the ‘man’ in them is one and the same (Ferguson & Wright, 1988, p. 282).

Gregory has written on different themes, which include Trinity, Incarnation, the Sacrament of Baptism, treatise on virginity, Christian perfection, on the life St. Macrina, the Lord’s Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, Atonement, and Eucharist (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). His doctrine of Eucharist explains that salvation is communicated to the body through the Eucharist. The bread and wine become the elements of the body of Christ through the words of consecration so that as we receive them our bodies share divine immortality. Gregory departed for the heavenly abode in A. D. 394. The feast of St. Gregory is celebrated along with that of his brother St. Basil on 1 January.

## **142. St. Gregory, the Wonder-worker**

**(c. A.D. 213? - 268)**

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

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

Gregory returned to Pontus as a missionary but he was soon ordained bishop. The charismatic bishop with his great zeal converted the whole population of the city in a few years. The apostolic work of Gregory was carried on in very adverse situations such as war, plague and persecutions (of Decius which broke out in A.D. 250).

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

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

Shortly before his death Gregory prayed for the remaining unbelievers which were seventeen in number and asked his followers not to arrange any special place for his burial as he lived as a pilgrim

in the world claiming nothing for him, so after death he might enjoy the common lot. His body was taken to a Byzantine monastery in Calabria. The feast of St. Gregory is celebrated by the Syrian Orthodox Church on 16 November.

## **143. Deacon Habib of Urhoy, the Martyr**

**(? – A.D. 320)**

Habib (Abibus) was born in Telzeba, a village in Edessa (Smith & Wace, 1880; Wace & Piercy, 1999). Details about his life are known from the books *The acts of the Martyr Habib* written by Mor Theophilus and *Homily on Habib* written by Mor Jacob of Sarug (A.D. 451 – 521).

Gurias, the ascetic and his friend Samona were two victims of the cruel persecutions during the reigns of Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 284 – 305) and Emperor Maximian (A.D. 305 – 311). These two saints were put through endless torments and were beheaded on 15 November. Deacon Habib was the next saint to be martyred after them (Smith & Wace, 1880).

Deacon Habib preached the Gospel secretly in villages and churches. Wherever he ministered, he strengthened many by faith. Lysanias, the Governor of Edessa, came to know about the missionary work of Habib. He released an order on 13 June A.D. 313 to hack to death by sword those who disobeyed the commands of Emperor Licinius (A.D. 311 – 324) and those who refused to offer sacrifices to their God, Zeus. The initial order did not mention punishment for those who disobeyed the royal commands, as there were numerous Christians in Edessa. Soon severe punishments were imposed on those who disregarded the royal commands.

When rigorous punishments started to be implemented Deacon Habib was visiting Zeugma, fifty miles across the river edifying

people about their faith and stabilizing them in it (Redington, 1994; Wace & Piercy, 1999). As he was unavailable, his mother and some villagers were arrested and incarcerated. The unfortunate turn of events set him thinking, “I will find myself in great shame if I hide and others are crowned with martyrdom due to it.” Hereupon he presented himself before Theotecna (Theotaenus), an aide of the Governor and proclaimed, “I am Habib of Telzeba whom you search.”

The officer desired to save Habib and said, “If so let nobody know that you have approached me. Continue to live in the same place until the heat of the persecution is over. Do not be anxious over the villagers. They will stay in the prison for some days but none will harm them. They will be released, as the Emperor has not commanded anything alarming against them. On the contrary, if you don’t act accordingly you will not escape death by fire. I will be clear of your blood.”

Habib persisted in surrendering. He said he was not at all perturbed about his family members and villagers but of his own salvation. He was distressed as he was not present there when the search party came for him. He wanted to be taken to the governor immediately. The exasperated governor spoke to him like this “He who has shown disrespect and scoffed at me does not deserve any mercy. There is no need to hasten his death. Let bitter torment be inflicted on him which will deter others from fleeing.” He then asked Habib, “Where do you come from? What is your name? Who are you?”

Habib answered him calmly but the Governor was still enraged and said, “You are impudent in posing as a Deacon, disobeying the orders of the Emperor and refusing to offer sacrifices to Zeus.” To which he replied, “We are Christians. We do not worship manmade idols. If I had insulted Zeus how much more would those who used chisel and hammer on him have insulted him?” The Governor threatened to scourge him and to throw him to fire if he refused to worship Zeus. The unshaken Habib responded that he had anticipated those sufferings prior to making his appearance before the Governor.

He had to undergo brutal tortures. They insisted upon him offering sacrifices to the Roman Gods. Habib maintained those who do that were cursed. He was again tortured on Friday 2 September (Ilool). He reiterated he had never worshipped any other gods and he would never do it. He expected to receive the glorious crown woven for the persecuted martyrs. The Governor's next question was, "If you have no problem worshipping and honouring a man why should you refuse to respect and adore Zeus?" Habib corrected him to say, "I do not worship a man but the incarnated God." Consequently, his mouth was strapped and it was decreed to burn him in slow and lingering fire to increase his torment. He was soon taken out through the west fort built by Absalma, son of King Abgar of Edessa.

Undaunted, his dying prayer was, "Christ, my Lord, I will not run away from this tribulation for thine is this world and the world to come. Will I not be spared from the last judgment? As I burn in this fire, I will be redeemed from the undying fire. O! Glorious Son of the adorable Father, receive my spirit unto Your presence through the Holy Spirit." The assembled crowd sighed and requested, "Pray to our Lord for us, for peace among His people and to restore the churches which are overthrown."

The evil perpetrators dug a hole and tied him to a stake within it. Habib reminded them, "I will not stir from here. Therefore, there is no need to tie me up. You can burn me." They arranged logs of wood around his body and set him aflame. His soul flew heavenward. His mother and relatives found his dead body unscathed when the fire burned down. The believers applied fragrant oil on his body and covered it in white cloth. He was laid to rest in a tomb next to the tombs of martyrs Gurias and Samona in Baith Allah Cucla hill. This event is believed to have happened on 2 September A.D. 320.

Mor Jacob of Sarug has described the burning of Habib in his homily. "Habib the martyr adorned by flames called me from his pyre. I do not know if I can number him with Hanania. Who is more glorious

Assariya or Habib? Habib fought against the sword and fire. His love was warmer than that of fire. Hence, he was not scared. Habib taught us to embrace death not fearing fire or sword.”

Habib the martyr was light itself. This light lit up Edessa, the town of the believers. His affectionate mother was not grief stricken. She was happy. Instead of mourning him, she gladly accompanied him clad in white to the stakes.

The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates the martyrs Deacon Habib, Gurias and Samona on 2 September. Their intercession is requested by believers to settle the disagreements and problems of marital life. The feast of Deacon Habib (Abibus) is celebrated on 7 May and 2 September in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **144. Hananiah, who baptised St. Paul**

**(First Century)**

Hananiah in Hebrew means “favoured of the LORD.” He was a disciple of Jesus at Damascus. According to Acts 9:10 Hananiah (Ananias) was living in Damascus. In Paul’s speech, he describes Ananias as “a devout man and was highly respected by all the Jews living there” (Acts 22:12).

During his conversion Jesus had told Saul (later St. Paul) to go into the city and wait. Jesus later spoke to Ananias in a vision and told him to go to the street which is called Straight and ask “in the house of Judas for Saul of Tarsus” (Acts (9:11). Ananias answered, “Lord, many people have told me about this man and about all the terrible things he has done to your people in Jerusalem. And he has come to Damascus with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who worship You” (Acts 9:13-14). But the Lord told him Saul was “a chosen vessel to serve me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15)

When Ananias went to Saul and laid his hands on him, immediately something like scales fell off from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized (Acts 9:18).

There is a different opinion among scholars about Ananias that he was a prophet despite being mentioned as a disciple in the New Testament. Hippolytus of Rome (A.D. 170-235?) and a few others have listed him as one among the seventy-two emissaries (Luke 10:1, 17). Hippolytus refers to Hananiah as the Bishop of Damascus. Ananias is believed to be martyred in Eleutheropolis. The feast of Hananiah (Ananias) is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 1 October.

## **145. Queen Helen, mother of Constantine**

**(A. D. 248 - 328)**

Queen Helen (Helena) is the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine who by the edict of Milan gave freedom of worship to Christians. Church historians of England have recorded that Helen is the daughter of King Cole (e. g., Hoever, 1989; Day, 2002). The birthplace of Helen is either York in England or Drepanum in Bithynia, Asia Minor. A few suggest that she is the daughter of an innkeeper in Drepanum (Smith & Wace, 1880; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2001; *Encarta encyclopedia*, 2001; White, 1991). In honour of Queen Helen, Drepanum was later known as Helenopolis.

Constantine Chlorus married Helen when he was an officer in the Roman Army (Hoever, 1989). When Constantine Chlorus was named as the successor of the Roman Empire in A. D. 293, he divorced Helen for political reasons. Helen had a child (probably born in the year 274) who later became Constantine, the Great. Constantine Chlorus re-married Theodora the daughter (step daughter?) of emperor Maximian (Day, 2002; White, 1991).



In A. D. 306, the son of Helen, Constantine the Great, came into power. Then, Helen was given the privileges of the widow of a king. Emperor Constantine won the war against Maximian. This is remembered in the evening prayer for Friday and on the feast of Holy Cross on September 14. After the incident, Constantine was very kind to Christians. Helen embraced Christianity at the instance of Constantine at the age of sixty-three (*Britannica*, 2001; White, 1991).

Queen Helen was very considerate to the poor and needy. She was very kind to prisoners and army personnel. She constructed three churches - - one at the site of the sepulchre, the second over the cave at Bethlehem, where Christ was born and the third on the mount of His Ascension a few churches (Smith & Wace, 1880; Hoeber, 1989; White, 1991; Socrates, 2013). Queen Helen was eager to discover the cross on which Jesus was crucified. This is evident from the song recited during the procession in the middle of the Fifty-day Lent.

Queen Helen went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The object of her visit was to pray for the prosperity of her son and to search for the cross. Three crosses were discovered on March 24 while preparing the site for constructing the church at Golgotha. Those who embraced the Christian faith after the period of His passion, greatly venerated the tomb; but those hated Christianity, covered the spot and erected a temple on it in the name of Venus (Socrates, 2013). The Bo'outho of Mor Yacoub of Sarug (the Prayer of the third hour for Friday) describes the anecdote vividly:

*“Judas stood up and girded his loins manfully and dug and found three crosses which lay together; the mother of the king was sad because of this, because she did not know which was the cross of the Son of God.*

*Judas said to her: do not be grieved, blessed one, the Lord lives who will show you which is his cross. The Father was pleased to show the cross of light by means of a dead youth, who was being accompanied on the way to the grave.*

*When they placed them one after the other on the dead man, the people cried: living cross, show your power; the dead man saw the cross of light and rose from the bier and all who saw him gave glory to him who raised him up” (The Book of Common Prayer of the Syrian Church, 1965, p. 235).*

Socrates (2013) describes that Bishop Macarius of Jerusalem sought a sign from God to identify the cross on which the Jesus was crucified. A certain woman of the neighbourhood had been long afflicted with a disease and was in her death-bed. When the cross on which Jesus was crucified touch the woman she was immediately healed (Smith & Wace, 1880). Two nails were obtained from the site which were used by the emperor, one being fixed on his crown and the other employed as a bit for his bridle (the equipment to control horse).

This happened during A. D. 324-328. The portions of this cross were considered to be very precious and prelates used pieces of this cross in their handcross during the fourth century. A portion of the cross is inserted in the handcross of Saint Gregorius Abdul Jaleel (d. 1671) of North Paravur.

The last days of Queen Helen were spent at Palestine and her dead body was taken to Rome (White, 1991). Some others content that Helen returned to Rome (Moothedan, 2001) and died at Rome at the age of eighty in August A. D. 326/328 (Hoever, 1989, Socrates, 2013). The feast of Queen Helen is celebrated by the Western Church on August 18 and the Eastern Church on 20 May along with the memory of Constantine, the Great.

## **146. Hermas, the Evangelist**

**(A.D. ? - 162?)**

The Holy Apostle Hermas was a bishop in Philippiopolis (Philippi, Greece). He was a Greek, but he spent some time in Rome. The holy Apostle Paul greets him in the Epistle to the Romans (Rom

16:14) –“Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them.” Apostle Hermas endured much grief from the pagans for preaching the Gospel, but he died in peace or as a martyr ([http://www.spc.rs/eng/apostle\\_hermas\\_seventy](http://www.spc.rs/eng/apostle_hermas_seventy); [https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=3736](https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=3736)). The feast of Hermas is celebrated on 8 March in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **147. Hesychius of Antioch, the Martyr**

**(A.D. ? - 305 ?)**

The Holy Martyr Hesychius (Hessakiya) of Antioch lived in Antioch during the reign of Maximian Galerius (305-311), and he occupied a high official position. Maximian issued an edict by which all Christians were to be deprived of military rank and expelled from military service. Those who would not renounce Christianity were stripped off their soldier’s belt and military insignia, and degraded to the level of hired servants. Saint Hesychius was one of these.

Maximian ordered Hesychius to remove his robes of office, put on common attire, and to be placed among the women servants. After several days he summoned Hesychius and asked, “Are you not ashamed to remain in such dishonor? Or maybe you don’t know that the Christians, whose way of life you preferred, have no power to restore you to your previous great honour and office?” The saint replied: “Your honour, O king, is temporary but the honour and glory which Christ gives is eternal and without end.” Because of these words the king got angry and ordered his men to tie a great millstone around the saint’s neck and then to throw him in the middle of river Orontus (near Antioch, which lies in Coele, Syria and which is commonly called Oronge). Thus, the blessed man received the crown of martyrdom from the Lord. The feast of Hesychius is celebrated on 29 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **148. St. Hesychius of Constantinople, the Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 302 ?)**

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

Hesychius was a witness when St. Julius of Durostorum in Moesia (the present Silistria in Bulgaria) was being led to his execution (Thurston, & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II). Hesychius said to Julius:

“I pray, Julius that you may happily complete your sacrifice and receive your crown; and that I may follow you.” Julius embraced Hesychius and replied: “Brother, make haste to come. They have already heard your message.” The execution of St. Hesychius took place soon after that of his friend. The feast of Saint Hesychius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 19 May.

## **149. St. Hilaria, the daughter of Emperor Zeno**

**(5<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.)**

Emperor Zeno (A.D. 474-491) was an orthodox believer, who loved the Church. He was well known for the Henoticon written in A.D. 482 in favor of the orthodox faith. He had two daughters, Hilaria and her sister, Thaeopesta (<http://st-takla.org/books/en/church/synaxarium/05-topah/21-toba-hilaria.html>).

Zeno brought up his daughters in the fundamentals of the orthodox faith. Hilaria, since her young age loved to live a solitary life. When she was eighteen years old, she left her father’s court and travelled to Egypt, disguised in men’s clothing.

On her way, Hilaria, prayed at the churches of Saint Peter and Saint Mark. Theodorus, the deacon, accompanied her to the monastery. She first met St. Menas and then St. Pambo. The ascetics did not recognize her as a woman, for she was only eighteen. She stayed there and learned the monastic practices (Wensinck, 1913; Drescher, 1947).

Three years later, Pambo came to know through a revelation that Hilaria is a woman and asked her not to reveal herself, in order to avoid any scandal. Nine years later, still being beardless, she became known as Hilarion, the eunuch ([http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/hilaria\\_02\\_intro.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/hilaria_02_intro.htm)).

Thapesta, her younger sister, who was at Constantinople, was afflicted by a demon. Emperor Zeno, not knowing what to do, left the matter to the monks of Scetis. Thapesta was brought before Saint Pambo. To everyone's astonishment, the eunuch Hilarion's reaction was extreme. She cried a lot. Moved by the cry, Pambo entrusted the afflicted young woman to Hilaria. Hilaria prayed for a week by which her young sister recovered. Thapesta did not recognize her sister. Then Thapesta received the sacraments and returned to her father in the palace.

When Thapesta arrived home, all those who were in the palace rejoiced in her safe return and offered many thanks to the Lord Christ. Her father asked her about her stay in Skete. She said that St. Hilaria, who healed her by her prayers, kissed her very often and slept in the same bed with her. When the Emperor heard this, he had some doubts about this monk. He then sent his servants to the elders in Skete asking them to send St. Hilaria, who healed his daughter, on the pretext that there was another person to be cured at Constantinople (in order to receive 'his' blessings). When the elders ordered Hilaria to go to the emperor, she wept bitterly and requested to spare her. They told 'him' that the emperor was a righteous man who loved the holy Church and that it was only proper not to disobey him.

To avoid any scandal, Hilaria revealed herself to her father on condition that he would let her go back in peace to her monastery.

For an hour the emperor Zeno remained stunned. Then Zeno requested her: “Pray to the Lord for me to keep me in the faith of my fathers.” Only the empress and the younger sister were informed and they both cried with joy. St. Hilaria stayed with them for three months and returned to the monastery in Skete.

Emperor Zeno wrote to the Governor of Egypt, demanding him to send hundred bushels of wheat and six hundred measures of oil and all that the monks needed in the wilderness on a yearly basis. Also, many cells were built for the monks. Since then, the number of monks increased in the wilderness. After her return to Skete, St. Hilaria departed for heavenly abode after five (twelve?) years. No one knew that she was a woman until after her death. The biography of St. Hilaria was written by St. Pambo. The feast of St. Hilaria is celebrated on 27 November in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

**Note:** All reference books mention that Hilaria had only one sister, Thaopesta. The Calendar of saints makes mention of St. Hilaria, daughter of Emperor Zeno with her brother Lazar, the feast of whom is celebrated on 13 January. This is yet to be sorted out.

## **150. St. Hilarion, Abbot**

**(A.D. 291 ? – 371)**

St. Hilarion was born in the village called Tabatha, to the south of Gaza, Palestine. He was the son of pagan parents (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). They sent him to study at Alexandria where he came to know about Christian faith and was baptized when he was about fifteen (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Walsh, 1985).

Hilarion visited St. Anotny of Egypt (A.D. 251-356) and stayed with him for two months. Later he retired into the desert seven miles from Majuma, towards Egypt in c. A.D. 306/7 (Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997). His clothing consisted of a sackcloth shirt, and

a leather tunic which St. Antony gave him, and an ordinary short cloak. His food was fifteen figs a day, which he never took till sunset (Smith & Wace, 1882). His occupation was tilling the earth and in imitation of the Egyptian monk, making baskets, whereby providing for the necessities of life. Hilarion spent twenty years in the wilderness.

During his first years he had no shelter other than woven reeds and rushes. Afterwards he built a cell which was four feet broad and five feet in height. It resembled a tomb rather than a house. St. Hilarion had a revelation in A.D. 356 of the death of St. Antony when he was sixty-five years old. (Thus we can reckon his birth to be around A.D. 291). He set out to St. Antony's mountain and found two cells to which St. Antony often retired to avoid visitors. He and two of the disciples of St. Antony wanted to see the place where St. Antony was entombed. The disciples said that St. Antony had given strict injunction that his grave should be concealed. Hilarion returned to Aphroditopolis (Atfiah) where he spent his time in abstinence and silence (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). It had not rained there for three years, ever since the death of St. Antony and people considering Hilarion as the successor of St. Antony requested him to pray for rain. The saint lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, and immediately there was a downpour.

He had performed many miracles; a barren woman of Eleutheropolis brought forth a son by the intercession of St. Hilarion. He was very popular in that place as many labourers and herdsmen who were stung by serpents and insects were cured by their wounds being anointed with oil which he had blessed. He moved out to Sicily and later to Epidaurus (on the Dalmatian coast) with his disciple Hesy chius. To be in seclusion, finally he fled to Cyprus and settled at a place two miles from Paphos.

St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (c. A.D. 315 – 402), visited Hilarion in his last days of illness. Hilarion passed away at the age of eighty and was entombed near Paphos. Later his relics were

transferred to Majuma. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Hilarion on 21 October.

## **151. Hippolytus of Rome, the Martyr**

**(c. A.D. 170 ? - c. 235)**

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

The important works of Hippolytus are - - (a) *Treatise on the Anti-Christ*, probably written in A.D. 202, (b) *Commentary on the book of Daniel* (the earliest known commentary on the Holy Scripture ?), an important source to understand the worship, discipline and customs of Christians of early third-century Rome (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I) and (c) *Philosophoumena*, the most celebrated writing of Hippolytus in which he refuted a number of heretical teachings. This work was discovered at Mount Athos in 1842 (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I). The details of other writings can also be found in Smith and Wace (1882) and Cayre (1935).

Hippolytus was exiled with Callistus to the pestilent island of Sardinia during the persecution of Maximinus where he died a martyr (Smith & Wace, 1882; Farmer, 1997). The tyrant was torturing Christians by beheading, crucifixion, burning alive and drowning. Though not very certain, it is stated that Hippolytus was brought



before the ruler who was then in Ostia. Hippolytus was sentenced to be torn into pieces by wild horses. The holy remains of Hippolytus were entombed in the cemetery Via Tiburtina. The feast of Hippolytus of Rome is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 30 January and 10 December.

## **152. Mor Hosius (Ossius), Bishop of Cordova (c. A.D. 257 - 357)**

Mor Ossius (Hosius) was ordained Bishop of Cordova in c. A.D. 296 and suffered persecution under Maximian (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). He has earned the name 'the Athanasius of the West' (Cayre, 1935). From A.D. 313 to 325, Mor Ossius seems to have acted as ecclesiastical advisor to Emperor Constantine. In the early stages of Arian controversy he was sent to Alexandria to investigate the Arian controversy. It was in consequence of his report Emperor Constantine summoned the Nicene Council. In A.D. 355 he was banished to Sirmium for his support of St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria (d. A.D. 373). He had to succumb to the pressure to sign the 'blasphemy' and in return he was allowed to return to his diocese. However, he repudiated his action before his death in c. A.D. 357. The feast of Ossius is celebrated on 1 October in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **153. St. Ignatius Elias III Shakir (1867-1932)**

Mor Ignatius Elias III, the second son of Chorepiscopus Abraham and Maryam, was born in Mardin, Turkey. He was called Nasri. He had four brothers and three sisters. After the death of his

mother, Nasri was brought up under the care of his elder sister Helena. He worked as a shoemaker in his teens and served the government for about three months. At the direction of Patriarch Peter IV, Nasri joined the theological school of the forty martyrs. In 1887, he joined Deir al-Za‘faran and was ordained Deacon by Patriarch Peter IV. He became a novitiate (*sharwoyo*) in 1888 and a monk in 1889 upon which he came to be known as Elias. Elias was ordained Priest (*qashisho*) in 1892 by Patriarch Peter IV. (<http://sor.eua.edu>).

In the waning years of the 19th century, numerous Armenian and Syriac Christians were massacred in Turkey. Qashisho Elias endeared himself to the Armenian Christians providing refuge for about 7000 in the monastery of Mor Quryaqos. He was later appointed the Chief of the Monastery (*reesh dayroyo*) of the Mor Quryaqos as well as Deir al-Za‘faran. In 1908 Qashisho Elias was consecrated Bishop of Amid (Diyarbakr) by Patriarch ‘Abded Aलोहो II and was named Mor Iwanus. Mor Osthathos Sleeba, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch to India, was also ordained along with Mor Iwanus.

In 1912, he was transferred to Mosul. Patriarch ‘Abded Aलोहो passed away on 9 December, 1915, and Mor Iwanus was elected Patriarch and assumed the throne in 1917. The decree (*firman*) was issued to Patriarch Elias III by the Ottoman Sultan Muhammad Rashid. The Sultan conferred the Ismania medal to the Patriarch. In 1922, when civil war broke out in Turkey and Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha assumed leadership of the newly formed democracy. During this period Moran Mor Elias III spent a few months in Jerusalem and laid the the foundation stone of the church of Our Lady at Jerusalem on 22 March 1926. Moran established a printing press there and began publication of journals in Syriac and Arabic.

Mor Elias III was the last Patriarch to reign at the Kurkmo Dayro (Deir Za‘faran) in Mardin, Turkey, the seat of the Patriarchate for most of the second millenium. He was received by Ataturk, the father of the Turkish Nation, and attended the first Parliament session in Ankara. Following the massacre of the Syriac Christians in South

East Turkey in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, and during World War I, the Patriarch was forced to leave Mardin. In the aftermath of the *sayfo* massacres, Mor Elias III undertook pastoral tours to the Middle East, the first in 1919 and the second in 1925 to Aleppo and Jerusalem. Mor Elias III held a synod at Dayro d-Mor Matay, Mosul, Iraq in 1930.

Lord Irwin, then British Viceroy to India wrote to the Patriarch on December 1, 1930 requesting his intervention in person or through a delegate in resolving the schism that had erupted in the Malankara Church. His Holiness responded to the Viceroy's letter, on December 15, 1930 accepting his invitation with certain conditions. Given his cardiac problems, his doctors attempted to dissuade him from the trip. His 75-year old sister also discouraged the proposed trip. His Holiness said to her, "Death is inevitable whether here or in India; I would rather sacrifice my life for the sake of our children in Malankara."

Mor Elias III left Mosul on February 6, 1931 accompanied by Mor Clemis Yuhanon Abbachi (who was ordained Bishop in 1923 for the Monastery of Mor Mathai, Mosul, Iraq). Rabban Quryaqos (later Mor Osthathos Quryaqos), and Rabban Yeshu' Samuel (later Mor Athanasius Yeshue Samuel of North America), his secretary Zkaryo Shakir (his brother Joseph's son) and translator Advocate Elias Ghaduri. They set sail to India on February 28, 1931 from Basra on the ship "Warsova" and disembarked at the Karachi port on March 5, 1931. They were received at Karachi by the Patriarchal Delegate Mor Yulius Elias Qoro, Mor Athanasius Paulos of Alwaye, and several clergymen and faithful. On 6 March 1931, the Patriarch and his entourage proceeded to Delhi by train reached Delhi on 8 March, and visited Lord Irwin. On 14 March, the Patriarch arrived in Madras and stayed as a guest of the British Governor Sir George Stanly. From there, he arrived at the Thrikkunathu Seminary, Alwaye on 21 March, and offered the Divine Liturgy there on 22 March.

H. H. Moran Mor Elias III convened conciliatory meetings at Alwaye, Karingachira and Panampady. The Patriarch led the Passion

Week services at St. George church, Karingachira. A church delegates' meeting was held at Kuruppumpady on 5 July 1931. The Epiphany (*denho*) services in January 1932 were at the St Thomas church, Pakkil, Kottayam. Moran stayed at St. Ignatius church, Pallom for a week.

On 11 February 1932, at the invitation of Father Kuriakose Elavinamannil, the Patriarch arrived at the Manjinikkara Mor Stephanos church from Kallissery. The inability to bring about reconciliation in the Church had weighed down heavily on the Patriarch; moreover, the hardships of the long travel had taken its toll of His Holiness. On arriving at Manjinikkara, the Patriarch said, "This place offers us much comfort; we desire to remain here permanently." On 12 February, His Holiness requested the priests who came to visit him not to leave for a couple of days. In the evening, the Patriarch recited many prayers of the unction (*qandilo*) and contemplated on the departed. On 13 February, Mor Clemis Yuhanon Abbachi offered the Holy *Qurbono*; His Holiness gave the sermon during the liturgy.

After the noon prayers and lunch, as was his routine, the Patriarch spent time recording events in his journal; he asked for a dictionary to get clarification for the meaning of a word. Following that, he complained of pain in his head. Soon he fainted and was placed on a cot by the monks. He slipped into eternal rest at 2:30 p.m. Many eyewitnesses recount the deep gloom that cast its spell on the area that evening and the wails of the monks who accompanied the Patriarch.

Different opinions arose regarding the final resting place for the Patriarch — a situation that the Church in Malankara never had to confront before. The decision was in favour of interring the mortal remains in a plot of land to the north of the Mor Stephanos church, the title deed of which was transferred to the Patriarchate. On 14 February, the funeral services of His Holiness were held there. Mor Dionysius Michael consoled the gathering.

Mor Ignatios Dayro church attached to the tomb of the late Patriarch was built by the Patriarchal delegate Mor Yulius Elias Qoro.

Later in 1954 the tomb was rebuilt by Mor Yulios Elias Qoro. The memory of the holy Patriarch is revered throughout the Church and especially in Malankara where thousands of pilgrims reach the tomb by foot on the annual feast day, 13 February, from various parts of the Kerala State, India.

Mor Elias III is the only Patriarch of Antioch whose remains are interred in Malankara and his tomb stands as a towering symbol of the sacrifices made by the Syriac fathers to nurture the Church in Malankara. On 20 October 1987, Patriarch Mor Zakka I, through the encyclical E 265/87, permitted the Church in Malankara to remember his name in the fifth diptych. The feast of St. Elias III is celebrated on 13 February.

## **154. St. Ignatius Noorono, the Patriarch**

**(A. D. 35 - 107)**

St. Ignatius is the successor of St. Peter. He was the third Patriarch of Antioch for forty years, i. e., from A. D. 68 to A.D. 107 (Eusebius, 1980). St. Evodius preceded him for about two years. He was the son of non-Christian parents, as inferred from his own letters (Ignatius of Antioch, 1968). It is opined that he was the disciple of John, the Baptist (*Encarta encyclopedia*, 2001). Some suggest that he was a persecutor of Christians (e. g., White, 1992).

Mor Ignatius is also known in Greek as *Theophorus* and *Noorono* in Syriac, which means ‘the Fiery one or one clothed in fire’. The meaning of *Theophorus* is interpreted in two ways - - (1) God-borne and (2) God-bearer. The interpretation, God-borne is based on Mathew 18:2-3. “Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them. And said, verily I say unto you unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of

heaven.” The child who was held in the arms of Jesus was the St. Ignatius of Antioch (Cayre, 1935; Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Ignatius of Antioch, 1968). The other interpretation, God-bearer is because of the virtue practiced by Ignatius in witnessing God as is expected of every true believer.

St. Ignatius had to face two groups with erroneous teachings. One group wanted the Church (after Christ) to be in tune with the Judaistic traditions and practices. They wanted to keep the Old Testament Sabath, though were ready to discontinue circumcision. The adherents of this group were the Christians who were Essenes of Qumran. The other group was known as Docetist. Docetism can be summarized as follows: Christ had not had a real or natural body during his life on earth, but only the appearance and that all his acts and sufferings including crucifixion and resurrection were consequently illusions. It had been held that the Godhead descended upon the man Jesus at baptism, endowing him with miraculous powers and left him again before his death on the cross (Ignatius of Antioch, 1968).

St. Ignatius stood against these heresies. The details of his teachings against the heresies are described in his letter to the Church in Smyrna/Ephesus (modern Izmir in Turkey). “And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God” (1 John 4:3). Against Docetism St. Ignatius stresses Christ’s true humanity and identifies it with the healing food of the Eucharist (Douglas, 1978); the Body of Christ, the “medicine of immortality,” without which we have no life within us (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994). Further, he describes: every time this mystery is celebrated, “the work of our redemption is carried on” and we break the one bread that provides the antidote for death and the food that makes us live for ever in Jesus Christ. By the Eucharist we unite ourselves to Christ who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body. It is the bread of angels, the bread from heaven, the viaticum. St. Ignatius has prepared a liturgy, which is rather

lengthy. The theology of St. Ignatius is detailed in Quasten (1949).

Polycarp welcomed St. Ignatius on his way to Rome (to be executed) under armed guard. Several Syrian Christians and delegates from other churches at Smyrna received him. He wrote to churches at Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles and Rome. Later from Troas, he wrote to the Philadelphian and Smyranean congregation and to Polycarp (Quasten, 1949; Douglas, 1978).

In A. D. 107 he was thrown to hungry lions in an amphitheater (colosseum) with his companions Sosimos and Roppos (Quasten, 1949; Aphrem, 1963). During Trajan's reign (A.D. 98-117), as he often wished: "The wheat of Christ (was) . . . ground by the teeth of beasts" (Cayre, 1935). He wrote from Smyrna to the members of the Church at Rome, begging them to take no steps that might deprive him of his most ardent desire - - to die for Christ, for death to Him was but the beginning of true life: "How glorious to be a setting sun - away from the world, on to God" (Quasten, 1949, p. 64). He ended his saintly life exclaiming, "May I become agreeable (the pure) bread to the Lord" (Quasten, 1949; Hoever, 1989). The earliest witnesses recorded that only the hardest bones of his body remained. His remains were carried to Antioch where they became the object of pious veneration (Cayre, 1935; Hoever, 1989).

St. John Chrysostom in his oration mentions that the martyrdom of St. Ignatius was on 17 October (Smith & Wace, 1882; Cross & Livingstone, 1974). In the reign of Theodosius II (A. D. 408-450) the holy relics were transferred to another church within the city on 20 December (Smith & Wace, 1882). The feast of St. Ignatius *Noorono* is celebrated on 20 December in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

## **155. Moran Ignatius Nuh (Noah), the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. 1451 – 1509)**

Nuh (Noah) was the son of Georges from Damascus, Syria. He was born at the village of Baqufa of Tripoli, Lebanon in A.D.1451(?) The family was Maronites. At an early age, Noah and his brother were converted to Syriac Orthodoxy by the bishop of Syria, Mor Dioscurus. As a result, Noah became a monk and priest, at the Monastery of Saint Moses the Abyssinian where he studied the Syriac language and religious sciences under Thomas of Homs (Aphrem I, 2000).

In A.D. 1480, Noah was ordained metropolitan of Homs, upon which he took the name Cyril. Subsequently, he taught among the Maronites and converted many priests and their congregations to Syriac Orthodoxy. In A.D. 1489, Mor Cyril was ordained Maphryono of the East, and in A.D. 1493 was consecrated Patriarch of Antioch, and adopted the name Ignatius.

Patriarch Nuh has written an anthology in ninety-two pages, containing rhymed odes and verse pieces in the twelve –syllabic meter, some of which are arranged according to the alphabet. They are on supplication, repentance, the state of the soul and how to control it, complaint against vicissitudes and the injustices of the rulers who are the descendants of the Huns and Kurds, description of roses, sojourn and communication with friends. Among these are two odes which he delivered to Homs and Mountain of Lebanon, as well as an eulogy of the ascetic priest Tuma of Homs. Another ode declares that the Lord is life and that He offers it to those who believe in Him; yet another, consists of 136 lines on the universal and particular natures, which he composed in response to the request of Malke, metropolitan of Ma'dan (Turkey). A number of manuscripts in his neat handwriting has survived, as well as a hymn in Arabic on the Virgin and a very brief historical tract.



During his tenure as Patriarch Noah ordained thirteen metropolitans and bishops. Moran Nuh departed for heavenly abode at Hama, Syria on 28 July A.D. 1509. The feast of Moran Ignatius Nuh is celebrated on 28 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **156. Irenaeus of Sirmium**

**(A.D. ? - 304)**

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

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

## **157. St. Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons**

**(c. A.D. 130 – 202)**

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

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

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

He produced treatises on doctrines of the Church based on the teachings of Apostles and the text of Holy Scriptures, to counter the heretic viewpoints of Gnosticism. He wrote the ‘rule of faith’ that

encompasses all ‘the riches of Christian truth’ (Paul, 2014). There was another dispute regarding the date of Easter between Pope and a group of Christians in Asia Minor in which Irenaeus acted as a mediator to settle the issue (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). His principal work is the *Refutation of Heresies*, a defense of Orthodox Christianity against its Gnostic rivals. A shorter work is his *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, a brief summary of Christian teaching, which is largely concerned with Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. A detailed discussion about his writings against heresies can be found in Smith and Wace (1882).

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

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

## **158. St. Iriini, the Martyress**

**(A.D. ? – 384?)**

Iriini (Erini/Irene) was born during the reign of Constantine the Great in the Persian city of Magydus. The name Irene in Greek means peace ([http://www.antiochian.org/111681\\_4202](http://www.antiochian.org/111681_4202)). Irene was the daughter of Licinius, governor of the region. Licinius brought up his only child, Irene, in the palace in their tradition. At the age of eight

she began her education and continued for ten years under the tutelage of Apelianos (Appelianus), an educator renowned for his wisdom and intellect.

According to Apelianos, who was also Irene's biographer, an angel of the Lord appeared to Irene in a dream (Smith & Wace, 1882) when she was a young woman and told her that she had been chosen to be the voice of the Messiah among her own people. When she told the venerable Apelianos of her dream, he stood in awe. When he saw it in its proper perspective, he warned the girl that the road ahead would have obstacles and that the journey would be an arduous one. She knew that her faith would sustain her.

Licinius at first attributed her new eagerness for Christianity to the whim of youth, and he advised her to give up this madness. When her declarations for Christ continued unabated, he sternly warned her that he could tolerate no more. When she failed to comply he flew into a rage, threatening to have her trampled down in the arena by wild horses. Apelianos recorded that while Licinius was at the arena arranging the stampede to take his daughter's life, he himself was accidentally trampled upon.

Irene hurried to the side of her father, and as he lay mortally wounded she prayed to the Lord that he be spared. Her prayer was answered. Licinius recovered, repented, and was baptized into the Christian faith. For this he was promptly removed from office by the Persian King, Sedecian.

Turning to Irene, whom he considered a sorceress (witch?), Sedecian stated that he would restore her father to his post and allow her to go free if she disavowed Christ. She declined and was thereupon cast into prison. There she was subjected to inhuman torture and was given just enough food to sustain her until the next flogging. After Sedecian's death, she was released.

Miraculously regaining her health, she carried the message of the Messiah throughout the land, converting thousands to Christianity. Three consecutive successors to Sedecian: Savor, Numerianus and

Saviorian, all failed to halt Irene's advancement (propagation?) of Christianity. After imprisonment, torture, abuse of mind and body and making her physically incapacitated, it was decided that Irene should be put to death. She was beheaded on the 5th of May, 384. The feast of St. Irene is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 5 May.

## **159. Mor Isaac of Nineveh**

**(c. A.D. 613 – c. 700)**

Isaac of Nineveh who was an anchorite and bishop was by birth a Syrian (Smith & Wace, 1882). When still quite young, he and his brother entered the great monastery of St. Matthew at Nineveh. His learning, virtue, and ascetic life came to the attention of the Catholicos George (A.D. 659 – 680), who ordained him Bishop of Nineveh (Wace, 1911). However, he resigned seeing the crude manners and disobedience of the inhabitants of the city. The saint felt that it was beyond his ability to guide them, and moreover, he yearned for solitude.

One incident is recorded in this regard, that is, once two Christians came to him asking to settle a dispute. One man acknowledged that he owed money to the other, but asked for a short extension. The lender threatened to bring his debtor to court to force him to pay. St. Isaac, citing the Gospel, asked him to be merciful and give the debtor more time to pay. The man said, "Leave your Gospel out of this!" St. Isaac replied, "If you will not submit to the Lord's commandments in the Gospel, then what remains for me to do here?" After only five months as bishop, feeling that functions of the bishop interfered with the ascetic life, St. Isaac resigned his office and retired to the desert (south to the wilderness of Mount Matout, a refuge for anchorites) of Scete (<http://www.roca.org/OA/137/137d.htm>; <http://saintsresource.com/isaac-the-syrian/>).

He composed volumes on spiritual guidance, which include God's providence, prayer, obeying God, love towards your neighbor, judgments, and government (Wensinck, 1923; Sebastian, 2006; Hagman, 2010). The treatises on the behavior of excellence are much quoted by the old Syrian writers. His style teems with metaphor; his matter is often interesting, both theologically and historically. He treats mainly the ascetic life, its rules and spiritual experiences. Watching, fasting, silence, and solitude are means to self-mastery (Wace, 1911). The worth of actions is gauged by the degree of the love of God which inspires them. By the thoughts which stir within, a man may learn to what grade of holiness he has risen. There are three methods by which every rational soul can approach God, viz., love, fear, and divine training.

One of his writings is directed against those who asked, If God be good, why did He create sin, Gehenna, Death, and Satan? Elsewhere Isaac says that there is a natural faculty whereby we discern good from evil, to lose which is to sink lower than one's natural state; and this faculty precedes faith, and leads us thereto. There is also a faculty of spiritual knowledge which is the offspring of faith. He explains the "many mansions" of heaven as the different capacities of the souls abiding there, a difference not of place but of grace (Wace, 1911, p. 872).

Mor Isaac lived in solitude for many years, eating only three loaves a week with some uncooked vegetables. Eventually blindness and old age forced him to retire to the monastery of (Rabban) Shabar, where he entered to eternal rest after attaining a high degree of spiritual perfection and was entombed. At the time of his death he was nearly blind, a fact attributed to his devotion to study. The feast of Mor Isaac of Nineveh is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 13 May.

## **160. Isaac, Doctor of the Church**

**(A.D. ? - 491?)**

Isaac was a priest born in Edessa (Amid?) and settled down in Antioch (Antakya), Turkey (Aphrem I, 2000). Zenobius, the teacher of Isaac was the disciple of Ephrem, the Syrian. The chronicles of Edessa record that he had been the Abbot of a monastery in Gabala, Phoenicia (Smith & Wace, 1882).

Some historians have committed an error by identifying Isaac, the doctor of the Church with Isaac of Amid. They have wrongly recorded that Isaac was born in Amid, (Erzurum), Turkey and died in A.D. 460 (Smith & Wace, 1882; Wright, 1894; Cayre, 1935). Patriarch Aphrem I has distinguished between Isaac Malphono & Isaac of Amid and pointed out that the mistake was committed by some eastern writers. The assumption is that the period of Isaac of Amid was from A.D. 363 to A.D. 418.

The claim of eastern writers that Isaac died in A.D. 460 cannot be right because it is confirmed that Isaac of Amid stayed with Ephrem, the Syrian in A.D. 363 when he was around twenty years old. Then his year of birth must be A.D. 343. Even if it is accepted for argument's sake that he died in A.D. 460, he would have lived till one hundred and seventeen years. There is no mention of such an old priest in any record. Moreover the description of Yacoub, the historian of Edessa, is more acceptable among the conflicting evidences.

Isaac, the doctor of the Church, was a blessed writer like Mor Aphrem. Some historians have described him as 'Isaac the Great'. Mor Yacoub, the historian of Edessa, qualified him as a priest, a malphono (teacher/doctor) and a poet. He was present at the Synod at Ephesus in A.D. 431(Aphrem I, 2000). During the period of Patriarch Peter (Peter the Fuller) he travelled to Antioch (Cayre, 1935).

He is the author of a wealth of theological literature. Of his works only two hundred books were published (Cayre, 1935). Some

of them are books written refuting the arguments of Nestor and Yuthicos. He has written on various topics; like the devastation of Antioch by an earth quake as an elegy (Smith & Wace, 1882; Aphrem I, 2000), about ascetic life, veneration of relics, observing the holy days, the inevitability of infant baptism to ward off evil and Satan's powerlessness to test man without divine sanction. He advocates that when priests order repentance they should not expel any one from the church but only prescribe physical penitence. His memory is celebrated on 14 October by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **161. St. Isaiah, the Solitary**

**(A.D. c. 370 – 491?)**

Isaiah, the solitary was a monk in Scetis and was a contemporary of St. Macarius, the Great (A.D. 300-390). He moved to Palestine after 431 and died there at great old age in c. A. D. 491 as a hermit near Gaza. He is known for 27 texts on guarding the intellect against demonic deception, some of which are: without anger a man cannot attain purity: he has to feel angry with all that is sown in him by the enemy. Unless a man hates all the activities of this world, he cannot worship God. What then is meant by the worship of God? It means that we have nothing extraneous in our intellect when we are praying to Him: neither sensual pleasure as we glorify Him, nor malice as we sing His praise, nor hatred as we exalt Him, not jealousy to hinder us as we speak to Him and call Him to mind. For all these things are full of darkness; they are a wall imprisoning our wretched soul, and if the soul has them in itself it cannot worship God with purity.

When the intellect rescues the soul's senses from the desires of the flesh and imbues them with dispassion, the passions shamelessly attack the soul, trying to hold its senses fast in sin; but if the intellect then continually calls upon God in secret, He, seeing all this, will send His help and destroy all the passions at once.



When a man severs himself from evil, he gains an exact understanding of all the sins he has committed against God; for he does not see his sins unless he severs himself from them with a feeling of revulsion. Those who have reached this level pray to God with tears, and are filled with shame when they recall their evil love of the passions. Let us therefore pursue the spiritual way with all our strength, and God in His great mercy will help us. Examine yourself daily in the sight of God, and discover which of the passions is in your heart. Cast it out, and so escape His judgment.

At the time of prayer, we should expel from our heart the provocation of each evil thought, rebutting it in a spirit of devotion so that we do not prove to be speaking to God with our lips, while pondering wicked thoughts in our heart. God will not accept from the hesychast a prayer that is turbid and careless, for everywhere Scripture tells us to guard the soul's organs of perception. (Palmer, Sherrard & Ware, 1979, pp. 22-28).

## **162. St. Isidore of Chios, the Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 251?)**

Isidore was a native of Alexandria. He was an officer in the army of Emperor Decius. He went to Chios with the fleet which was under the command of Numerius. Isidore was identified as a Christian by the captain and it was communicated to Numerius (Thurston & Attwater, 1990. Vol. II).

Isidore was examined and he was threatened but he was steadfast in his faith. Since he refused to offer sacrifice to gods his tongue was cut off and he was beheaded. His body was sunk in a well but was recovered by Christians. The body was interred by a soldier called Ammianus, who was later martyred at Cyzicus. Myrope, a woman, is said to have been flogged to death because of her charity in giving Christian burial to martyrs.

The feast of Isidore is celebrated on 14 April and 14 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **163. Mor Ivanios Hidayathulla, Delegate**

**(A.D.? – 1694)**

Mor Ivanios hails from Bakkudaïda, the native village of Maphrian Mor Baselios Yeldho entombed in Cheriyaipally, Kothamangalam. His father's name was Shammo. He offered himself for missionary work at Mor Bahnam Sahada monastery in A.D. 1661 and became an inmate. During this time, he accompanied Mor Baselios Yeldho Maphrian to Malankara to offer protection to Syrian Christians. He was deputed to help the venerable father in administrative matters. Mor Gregorios Abdul Jaleel (A.D. 1665) arrived in Malankara after the oath of slanting cross at Mattancherry, Cochin ('*Koonan Kurissu Satyam*') and defended the Holy Faith.

After the demise of the Mor Gregorios Abdul Jaleel in 1683, the then Arch-deacon, Thoma II sent a petition to Patriarch Abded Mishih I through a merchant, Joseph. The petitioner praised the ardour of Mor Gregorius who tried to free the Syrians from Latin servitude and described the slew of persecutions employed by the Latins to compel the Syrians to join their fold after the death of his predecessor. The petition made an appeal to send a metropolitan and four efficient teachers (malphone) to Malankara for the protection of the believers. A deputation started out from the patriarchal presence for this purpose.

H.H. the Patriarch was upset about the problems faced by the believers in Malankara. He conducted the consecration of holy chrism and discussed the grave situation in Malankara with all episcopos. Maphrian of the east, Mor Baselios Yeldho on realizing the lamentable situation in Malankara expressed his willingness to relinquish his administrative powers and to go to Malankara to take care of the

shepherdless folk. Mor Ivanios was consecrated an episcopo and was sent along with Maphrian Mor Yeldho for his assistance. He traversed a route via Basra in 1685 along with his brother Juma of Mor Mathai monastery, Ramban Jocko of Mor Behanam monastery, Ramban Mathai and Episcopo Mor Ivanios Hidayathulla . Fearing the Portuguese rulers, they travelled incognito and after a laborious sojourn across difficult terrains like forests and mountains, they arrived at Kothamangalam. They started as a company of five. But historical records show that only Maphrian Mor Yeldho, Mor Ivanios and Mathai Ramban arrived here safely.

The Maphrian who arrived thus in Malankara raised Mor Ivanios to the order of a metropolitan on 14 in the month of Eloom (September) on the day of the feast of the Holy Cross. The saintly Maphrian breathed his last at Cheriya Pally thirteen days after his arrival on 19th Eloom and was laid to rest at Cheriya Pally on 20th Eloom A.D. 1685. Mor Ivanios had to take up the entire apostolic work of protecting the true faith in Malankara. He constructed new churches and renovated many old ones with the money he had brought with him. He also trained the priests to be scholars in the use of Syriac language and in the laws of the Church and to impart spiritual advice.

He wrote books and spoke vehemently and directly against the prohibited customs and new ideas introduced by Alexis Menzes, a Latin. He convened a synod at Chengannor church in A.D. 1686 to protest against the reformative ideas decided upon in the Diamper Synod in A.D. 1599. Many priests and laymen from the southern churches participated in the Synod. After detailed discussions, there was reading of books of prelates and teachers and citing of the canons of the universal and local synods. Mor Ivanios issued an edict, which affirmed that the faith, customs and rituals of the Syrian Orthodox Church from the time of the disciples had been true and blameless. The Romans in the past eighty years had forcefully introduced alien principles. He exhorted the believers to observe lent as per the norms of the Syrian Orthodox Church and to celebrate the Holy Qurbano using the leavened bread.

A youth from Pakalomattom family was given priestly education and was ordained a deacon, a priest and then an episcopo under the name Mor Thoma III in A.D. 1687. When he passed away on 9 *Medam* A.D. 1688 Mor Ivanios ordained Mor Thoma IV to take up the spiritual authority.

Mor Ivanios continued his hard work for the progress of the Church. The foes of the true faith could not appreciate his work and they looked for an opportunity to put an end to his life. The Bishop on knowing about this evil plot spent many a night atop trees (Aphrem Paulose, 1964). Though, he lived only for nine years in Malankara his service and contributions to the Church are glorious. The Holy Father departed for the heavenly abode on 16 August A.D. 1694 (3 *Chingam* M.E. 869) at Marthoman church, Mulanthuruthy and he was entombed on the south side of the sanctuary. His tomb has been henceforth known as the bishop at the south tomb (*Thekke Kabarunkal Bava*). The tomb was opened on 24 December 2006 and the relics were interred on the southern wall of the sanctuary. His feast is celebrated on 16 August.

## **164. Mor Ivanios Philipose, Parappallil**

**(A.D. 1924 – 1988)**

Philipose was born on 24 May 1924 of Chacko Cherian and Sosamma of the famous Parapallil family in Pampady, Velloor. He did his higher studies in Mar Ivanios College, Trivandrum and S. B. College, Changanacherry. After obtaining his degree from St. Joseph's Training College, Mannanam, he served as a teacher for many years. He was an active member of the Evangelical Association of the East and worked in the forefront while establishing P. E. M. High School at Thiruvanjoor, Kottayam.

He was ordained Deacon in 1949 by Mor Michael Deevannasios and Priest in 1953 by Mor Clemis Abraham. He was the General

Secretary of Mor Gregorius Students' Association in 1952 and represented the Jacobite Church in the international youth conference held at Kottayam in 1953. He was appointed the Secretary of the Kottayam diocese in 1954 and the General Secretary of the Malankara Syrian Christian league in the same year.

In 1959, Fr. Philipose was selected as the Vice-President of Antiochian Movement and served as the committee member of Evangelical Association of the East for many years. In 1964, he was the Secretary of the Association of priests of Kottayam diocese. He established St. Mary's Mission Hospital, Kurichy and was its director until his consecration as a Bishop. On 2 September 1973, a committee was formed with Rev. Fr. Philipose as its President at St. Mary's Puthenpally, Kurichy, to frame the initial administrative structure of the youth association.

He was the Headmaster of P. E. M. High School, Thiruvanjoor, St. Thomas High School, Kelakam and St. Mary's High School, Kandanad. He also served as the vicar of St. Thomas church, Velloor, St. Thomas church, Kelakam and Puthenpally, Kurichy. As the founder President of the youth association, the youth remember him most reverentially.

He was consecrated Ramban in 1978 at Puthenpally, Kurichy by Metropolitan Mor Yulios Yacoub Madapattu. He was elevated to the rank of Metropolitan by the Catholicos H. B. Baselios Paulose II on 19 April 1978 at St. Simon's church, Velloor. Mor Yacoub Themotheos (Thrikothamangalam) and Mor Thomas Theophilus (Vettical Seminary, Mulanthuruthy) were also consecrated on the same occasion. Mor Ivanios Philipose participated in the patriarchal enthronement of Moran Zakka I in 1980.

Mor Ivanios Philipose took up responsible positions for the Church. He was the diocese Bishop of Idukki and later of the diocese outside Kerala with Bangalore as the headquarters (South region). In 1982 when he took up charge as the assistant Metropolitan of Kandanad diocese, Piravam seminary was his headquarters. He

became a diabetic patient and took two years of rest while he was engaged in this work. Mor Ivanios Philipose passed away in his sixty fourth year on 8 May 1988. He was entombed in St. Thomas Jacobite Syrian church, Velloor, Kottayam. The anniversary of Mor Ivanios Philipose is celebrated on 8 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **165. Mor Ivanios Yuhanon**

**(? – 1794)**

Mor Ivanios Yuhanon was born in Mosul, Iraq. The Patriarch, Ignatius Shukar Allah (A.D. 1722 - 1745) ordained him Ramban at Saffran monastery and he was ordained priest in A.D. 1724. Patriarch Ignatius George III (A.D. 1745-1768) sent him to Malankara along with Maphrian Shukar Allah in A.D. 1749. Mor Baselios Shukar Allah Maphrian consecrated him an episcopo at Kandanad church on 30 *Medam* 1752. He was to discharge his apostolic and administrative duties from Pallikkara church but as it was an important center of Mor Thoman VI, the natives caused him a lot of trouble. The Maphrian had trained and inspired him to suffer and tolerate all tribulations and hence he could endure all the difficulties and continue his life there. When he fell ill, the Maphrian sent him to Cochin and after his recuperation, he was appointed at Kandanad. After the demise of the Maphrian, he assisted Mor Gregorios Yuhanon in administrative matters.

His brother Abraham arrived from Mosul in A.D. 1769 to take him back to their native place. He refused to accompany him as he wished to restore peace in the congregation. He wanted to advise Mor Thoma VI and bring him back to the Church and to ordain him and he could achieve that after concerted efforts. After the demise of Mor Gregorius, ecclesiastical duties were rendered with the co-operation of Mor Divanasios I. Together they could resolve problems related to a fake ramban, Abraham Kattumangad who had appropriated the

Episcopal powers. They filed a petition against him before the Rajas of Cochin and Travancore. The royal court transferred the case to the Dutch company. Their twelve judges examined the case and passed the verdict against Abraham Ramban. Mor Gregorius had not ordained him. He had merely seized the crosier and the Episcopal vestments of Mor Gregorius. As soon as the verdict was passed, he rushed to the Latin Bishop at Varapuzha who was a friend but he was followed and caught at Ponjikkara (Rajan, 2007).

Four soldiers presented him before the Divan who ordered him to be taken to Mor Deevannasios and Mor Ivanios. Hence, he was brought to Kandanad where they were residing. On a Sunday at the church in the presence of all believers and priests, they questioned him. The bishops were seated at one side of the table placed before the altar. The interrogation was carried out before lighted candles, with the Book of Gospels and a Cross placed on the table. Abraham Ramban confessed to committing sins. They asked him to remove and place his Episcopal vestments, cross, crosier and mitre on the table and to repeat the following prayer and to request for mercy. He consented and repeated the prayer, 'I have sinned against Heaven and God and not worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your hired servants in your house'. He stayed at Kandanad for three months and when his health was impaired, he requested permission to leave for treatment. On receiving permission, he proceeded to Anjhoor (Thozhiyoor) in Malabar under the jurisdiction of the Dutch and again proclaimed himself an episcopo (Aphrem Paulose, 1964). The illegal Episcopal order of the Anjoor congregation started thus. (However, there is a different view about these events).

Mor Ivanios continued his Episcopal and related activities along with Mor Deevannasios I until his death on 7 *Medam* (*Neeson*) 1794 and he was entombed in the Old Syrian church at Chengannoor. The feast of Mor Ivanios Yuhanon is celebrated on 18 April in the Syrian Orthodox Church. The feast of Mor Ivanios is celebrated on 18 April.

## **166. Mor Jacob of Bartelli**

**(A. D.? - 1241)**

Jacob is son of ‘Isa, son of Mark Shakko (Aphrem I, 2003). He was born at Bartelli near Mosul and became a monk at St. Matthew Monastery. There he studied to become a member of the religious order and was elevated to the priesthood. He became famous for his erudition. Bar Ma’dani, Maphryono of the East, consecrated him a Metropolitan for his own monastery and named him Severus in 1232. He died in 1241 and was buried in his monastery. Bar Hebraeus praised his intelligence and learning.

The important works of Mor Severios Jacob are: (1 ) The Book of Treasures, in four parts, which he wrote in 1231 in response to the request of Matthew, the monk. It is a concise theological book containing a discussion of the Trinity, the Incarnation, opposition to heresies, the mysteries of the church and its rituals, the substantiation of the true Christian religion, Divine Providence, fate and destiny, the angels, the creation of the world, the soul, paradise, the resurrection and eternal punishment. It also contains profound information on geography and the shape of the universe, (2) An exposition of church offices, prayers and church mysteries, (3) The Book of Evident Truth on the Authenticity of Christianity in which he expounded the Nicene Creed, (4) The Book of Church Music in which he discussed hymns, church melodies, their types, composers and the dates from which they were in use in the church.

## **167. St. Jacob of Edessa**

**(A.D. 633? - 708)**

Jacob was born about the year A.D. 633(?) in the village of Ayndaba (Indobo) in the district of Gumyah, in the province of Antioch (Smith & Wace, 1882, Vol. III). He studied the principles of



the sciences, the books of the two Testaments and the books of the doctors of the Church under the visiting clergy Father Kyriakos.

Then he went to the Monastery of Aphthonios at Qinneshrin (Kenneshre, on the left bank of the Euphrates, opposite Carchemish) where he became a monk and studied the literature of the Greek language under Mor Severus Sabukht (d. A.D. 667). Together with his companion Athanasius of Balad, he completed his studies and became well versed in philology and theology. He became well-trained in the ascetic and virtuous life as well. Then he journeyed to Alexandria for higher studies in philosophy. He returned to Damascus and proceeded to Edessa (Urhoi/orfah) and there he studied Hebrew. At Edessa, he became well known and was sought after by scholars (<http://www.socwus.org/ourchurch/St.%20Jacob%20of%20Edessa.htm>).

In A.D. 672 he was ordained a deacon and then a priest. In A.D. 684, he was ordained metropolitan of Edessa by his friend Athanasius II (A.D. 683-686), the Patriarch of Antioch. He remained in Edessa for four years, during which time he became very strict with the monks and clergy concerning the observation of laws that had been neglected. He expelled those who disobeyed him. In the meantime, Julian II (A.D. 686-708), the Patriarch of Antioch, and the bishops advised him to treat the clergy patiently. This suggestion made him more furious and, thereupon, he openly burned a copy of the neglected canonical rules. He resigned and left the diocese, taking with him his pupils Daniel and Constantine to the Monastery of St. Jacob in Kesum (near Samosata) while the more lenient Habib succeeded him as metropolitan of Edessa.

Shortly afterwards he accepted the invitation of the monks of Eusebona (in the Diocese of Antioch) to reside at their monastery. There he taught for eleven years the Sacred Scriptures in the Greek text. After a short period, he was appointed a teacher of the Greek language at the same Monastery of Eusebuna. And when some of the monks showed their dislike of learning Greek, he left for the

Monastery of Tel'ada accompanied by seven pupils. He remained at Tel'ada for about nine years, devoting his time to the revision of the translation of the Old Testament. The Book of Kings which he had translated in A.D. 705 is preserved at the library of Paris.

St. Jacob was a zealous and saintly man but was hot-tempered. He was a man of great determination and showed no leniency; thus, he was unable to administer the affairs of his congregation amicably. Mor Jacob was a man of unique knowledge, a poet, a translator, a historian, a philosopher-theologian and a commentator (Aphrem I, 2000).

The major works of Mor Jacob of Edessa are: (1) Revision of the Old Testament, (2) Division of the Sacred Books into chapters, prefixing to each chapter a summary of its contents and providing notes which contain extracts from the writings of Severus of Antioch, and (3) his unfinished "*Hexameron*" (a work on the six days of creation), which is divided into seven treatises, and which opens with a dialogue between the author and Constantine (one of his disciples). Further, as a liturgical author, Jacob of Edessa drew up an *anaphora*, revised the Liturgy of St. James, wrote the celebrated "*Book of Treasures*", and composed orders of baptism, the order of the blessing of water on the eve of the Epiphany, and of the celebration of matrimony, and translated *Severus' order of Baptism* (Smith & Wace, 1882, Vol. III). He also compiled and revised the order of burial (Aphrem I, 2003).

Numerous canons, important homilies, a valuable "Chronicle" which he composed in A.D. 692, and a translation of the "*Homiliae Cathedrales*" written in Greek by Severus of Antioch, are a few of the works authored by him (Cross & Livingstone, 2003; <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08277b.htm>).

Towards the end of A.D. 707, upon the death of Mor Habib, the congregation of Edessa sent an invitation to Mor Jacob to return to them which he accepted in about A.D. 708. He resided in that city for four months, and then went to Tel'ada to fetch his library and his

pupils, and he entered to eternal rest there on 5 June A.D. 708. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Jacob of Edessa, on 5 June.

## **168. St. Jacob of Nisbis**

**(? – A. D. 338)**

Jacob (Yacoub) was born at Nisbis (Nusaybin, a city in South East Turkey). At an early age he embraced solitary life. He was dressed in sheepskin and ate leaves and underground roots. Yacoub (Jacob) of Nisbis is known as the Moses of Mesopotomia (Smith & Wace, 1882; Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Douglas, 1978). Jacob was ordained bishop in c. A.D. 308. Ephrem, the Syrian, attended the Nicene Synod along with Mor Yacoub in A. D. 325.

Mor Yacoub was popular among the faithful of Nisbis. He was tortured under emperor Maximin. After the Nicene Synod, Arius, the heretic, took refuge under emperor Constantine. In A. D. 336 emperor promulgated an order by which the aged Alexander Metropolitan of Constantinople was asked to accept the heretic Arius (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). On receiving the order the Metropolitan knelt before the altar and prayed, “O Lord, take my life before I see Arius entering this church” (Aphrem, 1963, pp. 82-83).

At the above-mentioned difficult times, Mor Yacoub requested the faithful to observe fasting for seven days. Arius fixed a time to enter into the church. Several supporters of Arius assembled at the church compound. Before he could enter the church Arius died of pain in his stomach and a sudden illness. In A. D. 338, Sapor II, the Persian king, was almost to attack the city of Nisbis. However, the prayer and wisdom of Mor Yacoub caused Sapor II to retreat. Mor Yacoub established a higher seat of learning at Nisbis in A. D. 303. During A. D. 313-320, he constructed a beautiful church in Nisbis.

Mor Jacob is known to have performed many miracles. Christians were being persecuted in the Persian Empire, so they asked St. Jacob to visit them in order to strengthen their faith and cheer their courage. On his way there he passed a river where he saw a few young women who were washing their clothes and taking bath. When they saw him, they mocked and insulted him because of his outward appearance. He used this opportunity to make the local villagers believe by performing a miracle. Then he ordered the river to dry up, and he made the hair of young women become gray. When they saw it, they immediately rushed to their village and told the other villagers what had happened to them. As the residents came and asked the saint to pardon; then he prayed to God, and at once they saw how the river began to flow again (Theodoret, 1990; <http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/St.%20James%20of%20nisibis.htm>; [http://syorthodoxchurch.com/english-Dateien/st\\_jacob\\_of\\_nisibis.html](http://syorthodoxchurch.com/english-Dateien/st_jacob_of_nisibis.html)).

Another miracle occurred when he was passing by certain people who stretched a man on the ground and covered him as though he was dead. They asked the saint for some money for his burial. When they returned to the man, they found him dead. They came back to the saint and repented for what they had done. St. Jacob prayed to God, and the man came back to life.

The chronicle of Urhoy reveals that Mor Yacoub died in A. D. 338 (Douglas, 1978). He was entombed in the church, which he built. A few churches were built in the name of Mor Yacoub. In 1929 a small church was built in the name of Mor Yacoub at Kameshle. On 30 August 1936 oil came out like springs from different parts of the church. Many faithful and non-Christians collected this oil. This oil was used for blessings and Patriarch Mor Aphrem I Barsoum issued an Apostolic Bull about the event in February 1937. Mor Julius Elias, the delegate, brought the oil to Manjinikkara.

In 1952, the small church in the name of Mor Yacoub at Kameshle, Syria was demolished and a magnificent church was built in its place. Several miracles are being reported from this church. The feast of Mor Yacoub is celebrated on 11 May and 15 July.

## 169. Mor Jacob of Serugh

(A. D. 451 - 521)

Jacob (Yacoub), was born as the son of a Priest, at Serugh in the village Kurtom which is very close to the Mesopotomian village Edessa (Urhoy), modern Urfa in SE Turkey is also known as Kurtak.

A few authors have mentioned about the inspiration of the child Jacob. At the age of three, while in the church, the child got out of the hands of his mother and went up to the altar during the time of epiclesis (during the invocation of Holy Spirit at the Qurbono). At the altar the child was given a drink by an angel (e.g., Aphrem, 1963; Jacob of Serugh 1997). He then returned to his mother joyfully.

He was a student at Urhoy at the age of twenty as can be inferred from one of his letters. King Zeno closed the school at Urhoy in A. D. 489. Jacob completed his education at the age of twenty-two and was ordained Priest. He served the village Hawra near Urhoy as Priest and corepiscopo. He composed most of his poetry (*memre*) when he was a corepiscopo.

The *memre*' focusses on practices rather than principles. Seventeen of those homilies were translated into English by Rev. Fr. Thomas Kollamparambil CMI (Jacob of Serugh, 1997). Bar Hebraeus recorded that he employed seventy amanuenses (copying secretaries) in writing his homiletic poems of which 760 exist (Smith & Wace, 1882).

After the Chalcedon synod, the faithful had to suffer a lot. However, Jacob of Serugh joined hands with Mor Severius, Patriarch of Antioch (A. D. 460-538) and Mor Philexinos of Mabug (A. D. 450-523) to protect the true faith. Jacob was ordained Bishop of Batnae in c. A. D. 519 when he was sixty-seven and a half years old (Smith & Wace, 1882; Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

He was a voluminous writer. His writings include those about *the great men of the Old Testament, about angels, and the mysteries*

*of the Son of God, two anaphoras, an order of baptism, and six homilies - - on Nativity, Epiphany, Lent, Palm Sunday, The Passion, and the Resurrection. Apart from these he has written the biographies of Mor Daniel and Mor Hananiah* (Smith & Wace, 1882; Aphrem, 1963).

After Ephraim, says Prof. W. Wright, “we may mention three writers of verse, Balai, Cyrillions, and Issac of Antioch. These, however, are cast into the shade by Jacob of Batnae or Sarug, one of the most prolific and at the same time most readable authors of his class.” “In the wealth of words and ease of expression he ranks next to Ephraim”- Assemani (Cited in, Smith & Wace, 1882).

On 29 November 521, Mor Jacob departed for his heavenly abode in the midst of writing a poem on *Mary and Golgotha*. The holy remains were interred at the church in Serugh. The plaque on the tomb reads: “The Syrian Mor Jacob of Serugh, the Doctor and Consolidator of the true faith.” The feast of Mor Jacob of Serugh is celebrated on 29 November in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

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

**(24 BC? – A.D. 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 A.D. 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.

## **171. St. James, the First Archbishop of Jerusalem**

**(?- A. D. 62)**

Our Lord's brother, James (Yacoub), is the son of Joseph's (first) wife (Mark 6:3; Abdul Ahad, 1948, p. 217; Joseph, 2005, p. 21). The Eastern Fathers interpreted "brothers" as stepbrothers, sons of Joseph by a previous wife; while the Western Fathers understood them to be first or second cousins. Never are they called sons of Mary (*The Orthodox Study Bible*, 1993). James and the other brothers were not among the disciples of Jesus for they did not believe in Jesus before the resurrection (John 7:5).

James ate only vegetables. He neither drank wine nor ate meat. He did not use sandals or cut his hairs (Abdul Ahad, 1948). Hegesippus describes him as ‘James, the Just’ because of his virtue and righteousness (cited in, Cross Livingstone, 1974). St. James was in the habit of being alone in the church and was frequently found on his knees. This caused his knees to turn hard like that of a camel (cited in, Eusebius, 1980).

Several biblical references suggest the role of St. James (Jacob) in the early Church. Jesus appeared to James after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). St. Paul met St. Peter and St. James at Jerusalem probably in A. D. 38 (Gal. 1:18-19). James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, in a synod in A. D. 51 spoke authoritatively: “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the gentiles who are turning to God, but that we should write a letter telling them not to eat any food that is ritually unclean because it has been offered to idols; to keep themselves from sexual immorality; and not to eat any animal that has been strangled, or any blood” (Acts. 15:19-20). After this synod everybody left for different countries except James. When St. Paul came to Jerusalem in A. D. 58 for the last time, only James was there.

Persecutors of James demanded a denial of his faith in Jesus Christ in public. He, then affirmed his faith that Christ, Our Lord and Saviour, is the Son of God. They threw him down from the top of the church. Even though he survived the fall, he was subsequently beaten to death with a fuller’s club (club of laundrymen). He suffered martyrdom in A. D. 62 (Abdul Ahad, 1948).

He formulated the divine liturgy of St. James. He celebrated the first holy Qurbono. He wrote the general epistle of St. James in A. D. 61 at Jerusalem. The fifth diptych of holy Qurbono remembers him saying: “The venerable St. James, the first Archbishop of Jerusalem, apostle and martyr.” The feast of St. James, brother of Our Lord is celebrated on 19 June.



## 172. St. James, the Disciple, the son of Zebedee

(? – A. D. 44?)

James is the son of Zeb'-e-dee, a fisherman (Mathew 4:21), and Salome. Salome is the sister of St. Mary. James, the Lord's brother, the first Bishop of Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19), is known as the James, the Just. James, the son of Zeb'-e-dee, is known as James, the greater. Some historians infer that James, the Greater was called Greater, because he was called by Jesus ahead of James, the son of Alphaeus. James, the Greater is at least twelve years older than James, the Lesser. James, the son of Alphaeus who is younger is known as James, the Lesser.

James, the son of Zeb'-e-dee, is also known as Bo-a-ne'r-ges. The Greek word Bo-a-ner'-ges means the sons of thunder (Mark 3:17). The impetuosity of James and John is the reason for the name (*Nelson's Encyclopaedia*, 1913). Samaritans did not receive Jesus because he was going to Jerusalem. Then, James and John said: "Lord will you command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elia did?" (Luke 9: 52-56). This indicates the quick temper of James and John, which earned them the name Bo-a-ne'r-ges (White, 1991). It is also suggested that Bo-a-ne'r-ges is an unknown Aramaic title (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1988).

James was with Jesus Christ to witness many important events - - at the mountain of transfiguration (Mathew 17:1-2), when the only daughter of Ja-i-rus (a ruler of the synagogue) was raised from the dead (Luke 8:42, 49-56), at Geth-sem'-a-ne (Mathew 26:37) for prayer, and when Peter's mother-in-law was healed (Mark 1: 29-31). He was always in the company of Jesus Christ.

James preached the Gospel at Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9) and Judea. St. Paul speaks of James as one of the pillars of the Church. James is the first martyr among the disciples. He was killed with a

sword by King Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1-2) in c. A. D. 44. The body of James was entombed at Jerusalem. Later, the holy relics were transferred to different places. The feast of James, the Greater, is celebrated on 1 May in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

## **173. Sts. Joachim and Hannah**

(? - ?)

St. Mary's parents, Joachim and Hannah belonged to the royal race of David. They were a rich as well as a pious couple (Smith & Wace, 1877).

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 (Smith & Wace, 1877; Abdul Ahad, 1948). Both husband and wife prayed and fasted before God to bless them with a child as they lived more than twenty years without any child (Smith & Wace, 1877).

Books like '*The Gospel of James*' (*The protoevangelium 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 entombed in Jerusalem (White, 1991). Soon Hannah also died and she too was entombed 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. The feast of Joachim and Hannah is celebrated on 9 September by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **174. John (Ivannis) of Edessa, Priest**

### **(Fifth Century?)**

Bishop Paul abandoned his Bishopric in Italy and travelled to Edessa desiring to lead an ascetic life (Arneson, Fiano, Marquis & Smith, 2010). There, he met John. Not knowing a trade, Paul earned a meager living as a day laborer, but gave most of his money to the poor and prayed everyday in the caves and mountains near the city. John realized that Paul was a wonderworker, and so he begged Paul to accompany him on his travels. Soon, the two friends left Edessa to visit the monks on Sinai, but instead of reaching the site of their

intended pilgrimage they were abducted and taken to Yemen by tree-worshipping Arabs. After a battle with a tree-god, they succeeded in converting the Arabs to Christianity. During the long journey home, they encountered some unusual ascetics: a dendrite living in a mountaintop tree; and a band of wandering monks among whom was a woman disguised as a man.

The life history of John of Edessa translated by John C. Lamoreaux from an anonymous Sinai manuscript provides some details about John (<http://www.johnclamoreaux.org/cv.html>). The Life of John of Edessa recounts the debate with a certain Phineas, the Jew, in the presence of the Caliph Haran al-Rashid. The text opens with a description of the wicked Jew Phineas, a courtier of the caliph, and how he turns the caliph against the Christians. When John learns of this, after praying before the image of Christ in Edessa (mandylion), he travels to al-Raqqa to meet with the caliph. Upon John's arrival, the caliph summons him and Phineas to take part in a debate. The debate focuses on passages from the Hebrew Bible that support the doctrine of the Trinity. The caliph eventually finds himself convinced of the truth of the Christian position, and proceeds to present philosophical arguments in favor of the Trinity. Finding himself on the losing side, Phineas challenges John to perform miracles. The text recounts that John cast out a demon, caused Phineas to lose his ability to speak, drank poison without harm, caused Phineas' hand to wither, and lastly raised the caliph's daughter from the dead. Not surprisingly, the caliph was seized by fear and wonder, with the result that he ordered a cessation of hostilities against the Byzantines, permitted Christians to practice their faith openly, relieved them of their taxes, and allowed churches to be built throughout his kingdom. The feast of John is celebrated on 31 January and 14 February in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **175. Mor John of Mardin**

**(A.D. ? - 1165)**

John (Joseph) of Edessa became a monk in the Mountain of Edessa. In A.D. 1125, he was ordained a metropolitan of Mardin and its environs: Dara, Khabur, Kafar tut and Tallbasem. At his ordination he was given the name Yuhanon (John) and worked hard to improve conditions in his diocese.

He renovated the Monastery of Mor Hananyo (Dayr ul-Zafaran) together with twenty-four more monasteries and churches, some of which were newly constructed. He filled the monasteries with monks and enacted for them canons in a council he convened in the former monastery presided by Maphryono Ignatius II in A.D. 1153. He enacted forty canons in the council and another forty-one more for the monks of his own diocese. Shortly before the year 1155 he composed a treatise about the mystery of the Holy Chrism and its composition, addressed to a certain Yeshu. In this treatise, which covers thirty-six pages, he discusses some ritualistic subjects.

Mor John was distinguished for his proficiency in architectural engineering and he spent his life following the most commendable principles of architecture. He became the focus of attention and left behind a praiseworthy record. Patriarch Michael instituted a day in his commemoration and eulogized him in a poem (Aphrem I, 2000). Mor John left for eternal rest on 12 July A.D. 1165. The feast of Mor John is celebrated on 12 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **176. Mor John of Tella**

**(A.D. 483 – 538)**

John of Tella (John bar Kursos) was born in A.D. 483 at al-Raqqa, Northern Syria. His parents were rich and he received good education in both Syriac and Greek literature (Aphrem I, 2000; Malaty, 2005).

John worked in the army for a short period and then embraced monastic life in A.D. 506 at the monastery of Mor Zakka outside al-Raqqa. John pursued his studies in theology and religious sciences and was ordained priest.

In A.D. 519, John was ordained bishop of Tella. Patriarch Severios of Antioch (A.D. 512-538) appointed him a general representative of the Patriarchate. In about A.D. 521, the bishop was exiled by the Caesar, Justin I for his adherence to the orthodox faith. He spent several years propagating the orthodox faith, travelling widely, often in secret, ordaining many deacons and priests. Later he found refuge at Jazira and finally settled in Sinjar and remained there for sixteen years.

The bishop visited Persia three times and also travelled to Constantinople during A.D. 532-533 to defend the orthodox faith. Bishop John was arrested by the Persian Magi, Governor of Nisbin (Aphrem I, 2000). In A.D. 537, Ephrem, the Malkite (Chalcedonian) Patriarch of Amid, held a council at Ras Ayn in an attempt to change the mind of Mor John in vain. Subsequently, he was detained and ill-treated.

Mor John endured all the ill-treatment and died on 6 February A.D. 538 at the age of fifty-five. The biography of Mor John was written by his disciple and companion, the monk Elijah.

The writings of Mor John of Tella include forty-eight canons compiled for the monks of his monastery and twenty-seven canons for the clergy. These are titled in some of the manuscripts as ‘Canons of John of Tella to be observed by clergy, especially priests of the villages’. He has written a letter about the confession of faith which begins: “The Apostle Paul has laid down for us a spiritual foundation which the waves of heresy cannot shake.” He has also written a commentary on trisagion.

Mor John of Tella worked tirelessly to defend the orthodox faith. The feast of Mor John is celebrated on 6 February in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## 177. St. John Chrysostom, the Gold-mouthed

(A. D. 347 - 407)

John was born at Antioch. His father, Secundus, who held a high position in the Empire died shortly after John's birth. Anthusa, his mother, widowed at the age of twenty, brought up John with utmost care. He learned rhetoric under Libanius, the best teacher of the time (Cayre, 1935; Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1958). He was a student of theology under Diodore of Tarsus, the leader of the Antiochene School (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Douglas, 1978).

John's mother Anthusa died in A. D. 373 and John was practising ascetism on the advice of Basil at an early age. St. Chrysostom's life may be conveniently divided into five epochs: (a) His life as a layman at Antioch till his baptism and admission as a reader, A. D. 347-370; (b) His ascetic and monastic life, A. D. 370-381; (c) His career as a deacon, priest and preacher at Antioch, A. D. 381-398; (d) His episcopate at Constantinople, A. D. 398-404; (e) His exile, A. D. 404-407 (Smith & Wace, 1877). Bishop Meletius of Antioch ordained him Subdeacon (*Korooyo*). In A. D. 381 he was ordained Fulldeacon. His ascetic practices and fasting during lent period caused his physical health to deteriorate and he had to return to Antioch.

In A. D. 386 he was ordained Priest and he served Patriarch Flavian I until A. D. 397. Nekthariyoos, the Patriarch of Constantinople, passed away on 27 September 397 and Fr. John was elected to succeed him. On 26 February 398, Theophilus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, ordained him Bishop by name Chrysostom (Ivanios) and elevated him to Patriarchate against his will (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Douglas, 1978; Smith & Wace, 1877).

Mor Ivanios was called the Golden-mouthed because of his skill in preaching. He had many opponents for he stood for the down trodden and for the revival of Priesthood. He spoke against the

practices of the rich, which invited furious response from the wealthy (*Britannica*, 2001). Mor John Chrysostom spoke against the lavish spending of personal money. He exhorted that money is not personal. It is entrusted to the rich for its wise management and hence should be shared with the needy. He admonished lazy Priests and punished Bishops who were found guilty. His criticism of luxurious style of living, enraged the Queen and high officials. Added to these, Mor Chrysostom provided asylum for those ascetics of Egypt whom Theophilus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, had excommunicated. Moreover, he opposed erecting the sculpture of Eudoxia, wife of Arcadius, the emperor of Eastern Roman empire, near the church. It was also alleged that Mor Chrysostom referred to Eudoxia as Jezebel.

In A. D. 403, Theophilus of Alexandria called a synod of all the Bishops of Syria and Egypt in Oak, Bosporus. Mor Ivanios did not attend the meeting. In his absence, he was dethroned and Theophilus compelled Eudoxia to send him to exile. However, there was a large number of people who supported Mor Ivanios. Meanwhile, because of an earthquake, there were some accidents in the King's palace and Mor Ivanios was called back. But in the next year he was exiled to Cucusus and was imprisoned there.

Mor Ivanios wrote about 200 letters to the faithful of Constantinople. Several friends visited him in exile. Then he was taken to Pontus (eastern end of the Black Sea). The troubles, the journey and bad weather made him suffer a lot and on 14 September 407, he departed for his heavenly abode at Comana, Helene Pontus praying: "Praise to God for everything." After thirtyone years, on 27 January 438, the relics of Mor Ivanios were taken to Constantinople from Comana. Bishop Proclus and Emperor Theodosius II received the holy remains and interred them at the church of the Aspotes.

John Chrysostom (Mor Ivanios) was an orator and an interpreter. His speeches were on the Gospels of Mathew, John, and on the eight epistles of St. Paul. He prepared a text of the Holy *Qurbano* (Cross & Livinstone, 1974), which is in use in the syriac orthodox church.



He used several analogies in his speeches, which included Moses and Christ, baptism and the crossing of Red Sea, and the lamb of Passover and the lamb of God. The faithful cried in repentance while listening to his speeches.

The twelve Baptismal instructions of St. John Chrysostom are well known. These are speeches delivered in A. D. 390 at Antioch to those who were preparing for baptism and to those who were baptized. Of the twelve instructions, the manuscripts of eight were discovered from the monastery at Mount Athos in Greece. Newman Press, New York, published the English translation of the twelve instructions in 1963. John Chrysostom has also written six books on Priesthood. Those books deal with the symbolism, descriptions and glory of Priesthood. St. Vladimir's Seminary, New York, published the English translation of the six books in 1964. The feast of St. John Chrysostom (Mor Ivanios) is celebrated on 13 November in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

## **178. St. John III of Sedre, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. ? - 648)**

St. John III, Patriarch of Antioch, is also known as Mor Yuhanon of Sedre. He was a prominent and energetic Church dignitary, a pious, intelligent and far-sighted man (Aphrem I, 2000). He entered the monastic order at the Monastery of Ousebuna (between Antioch and Beroea) where he mastered Greek and Syriac as well as theology.

He became the disciple and secretary of Patriarch Athansius I Gammolo (A.D. 595-631) and succeeded him to the Apostolic See in A.D. 631. He witnessed the Arab conquest of al-Jazira. He was a man who faced difficulties and hardships with patience (<http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/St.%20John%20of%20Sedre.htm>).

At the request of the Arab Emir ‘Amr ibn Sa‘d’ (Wright, 1894), the Gospels were translated from Syriac into Arabic by skilful Christian Orthodox Arab translators around A.D. 643, but this translation has not come down to us. He entered into an elaborate dialogue with the Amir of the Muslims on the facts of Christianity, which was written down by Severus, one of his secretaries. It is titled “Letter of the Patriarch Mor John concerning His Conversation with the Amir of the Muslims.” This letter was translated into French and published by Nau (1915).

Moran John III also composed prayers of supplication known as the Sedre in Syriac, which he incorporated into the liturgy of the Church. They usually begin with praise and glorification of the Lord, God. Of these Sedre, a large collection can be found in the British Museum. Since many sedre came from the pen of this Father, he was nicknamed ‘John of the Sedre’. They are written in a smooth and splendid style. Nine of these Sedre bear his name, the first of which is for Lent, the second for the Resurrection, the third and the fourth for the repentance of sinners, the fifth for the dispelling of ordeals, the sixth for evening, night and day and the seventh for morning, the eighth for the dead and the ninth for the Friday morning of the fifth week of fasting.

Moran John III has composed three prayers of supplication, to be used in the celebration of the Eucharist, the first of which begins: “Praise be to the pure sacrifice who became the priest of his person;” the second begins thus: “Praise be to the heavenly Lord of hosts;” and the third begins: “O Lord who are truly a good master.” He has also drawn a liturgy which begins: “O Lord, who are delighted by love and enjoys safety;” a homily on the consecration of the Chrism, which begins: “Beloved brethren let us talk philosophically a little bit on behalf of this present sacred feast” and a letter to Marutha, Catholicos of Takrit (A.D. 628-649), which he wrote at the beginning of his patriarchate.

He also wrote a magnificent doctrinal treatise in thirty-nine pages addressed to the Corepiscopos Theodorns, which he opened with a

general proclamation to the children of the Holy Church, and declared in detail the creed of Faith in support of the true Apostolic belief, citing as evidence the Fathers, one of whom is John of Jerusalem. Furthermore, he condemned in this treatise the heresy of the Phantasiasts (Christ's body was only a phantasm, not a material substance), and concluded it with the history of the leaders of this heresy and the account of their false ordinations. He left for eternal rest on 14 December A.D. 648 and was entombed in the church at Amida, Diyarbakir, Southeast Turkey. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Patriarch St. John III of Sedre on 14 December.

## **179. Moran John IX Bar Shushan, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. ?- 1073)**

Yesu was born in Melitene (Malatya in Turkey), where he studied the philological, religious and philosophical sciences. He became a monk in one of the monasteries and studied under the Patriarch John VIII and achieved fame for both piety and eloquence.

He succeeded Athanatius V (A.D. 1058-1063) and assumed the name John. He is the ninth to assume this name after Athanasius V. He was known as Bar Shushan the scribe, who could write beautiful calligraphy. He copied many splendid books, and collected in one thick volume the memre (Poems) of St. Ephrem and St. Isaac, but left it incomplete. He did an excellent job in dividing the memre of St. Isaac into chapters, vocalizing them and commenting upon them. He also wrote a five page treatise, refuting the Malkite doctrine, which opens with the Creed of Faith, a lengthy polemical treatise on the bad customs which had crept into the Armenian congregation, contradictory to Church customs, which he sent to the Armenian Catholicos, and an argument based on a difference of opinion with

Gregory II, the Armenian Catholicos (A.D. 1065-1069), who was deposed and reinstalled later.

Bar Shushan's other writings are, a liturgy which begins "Fountain of love and goodness." He is also said to have written another liturgy, a short order of Baptism in ten pages used when death strikes a child suddenly and seven *husoye* for the Sunday preceding Christmas, for the evening and morning services of the commemoration of Mor Severus - his name is appended in the second *husoyo* - for the mornings of the first four Wednesdays of Lent, for the Fridays of the fourth and fifth weeks of Lent, mainly written for epidemic and the stoppage of rain, and for the first *qawmo* of prayer on Palm Sunday (Aphrem I, 2003).

He also composed splendid poetry, of which four poems remain, written in the heptasyllabic and the pentasyllabic meters, on the calamity of Melitene in A.D. 1058. Bishop Sergius of Hah (A.D. 1483) acknowledged that Bar Shushan wrote an excellent four page panegyric in praise of Jacob of Sarug, which begins "Jesus, the light whose shining brought joy to all the earth." He also wrote letters, in some of which he refuted his opponent, and many homilies and treatises, all of which are lost; twenty-four canons of which there survives only the one on the obligatory nocturnal prayer for priests and deacons. He also wrote in Arabic a Synodical letter to Christodolus the Coptic Patriarch, and also refuted those who criticized the Syrians for using salt, leaven and a little oil in the bread made for Holy Mass.

Moran John administered the Church efficiently, ordained seventeen metropolitans and bishops. He left for eternal rest on 6 November, 1073. The feast of Moran John Bar Shushan is celebrated on 6 November.

## 180. St. John of Damascus

(A.D. 675/76 – 749/50)

The source of information for the life of John of Damascus became available only in the tenth century through Patriarch John of Jerusalem. John was born in a wealthy Christian family in Damascus (Smith & Wace, 1882; Cayre, 1940). His father was in charge of the financial affairs (Collecting taxes from the Christians) of the Caliphate court of Caliph Abdul Malek (A.D. 685 – 705) and represented Christians in the Royal Court (White, 1991). His father was known by the Arabic name, 'Al – Mansur'. Later the son also came to be known by the same name (Smith & Wace, 1882).

He was baptized immediately after his birth. His tutor was a Sicilian monk, Kosmos. The Christians in Syria enjoyed some freedom as they were paying taxes. John also held a high office in the Government (Vizier) during the reign of Caliph Yazid II (A.D. 719 – 723) at the beginning of the eighth century (Smith & Wace, 1882). But he gave up the comfortable court life and left his home around A.D. 715 and migrated to Jerusalem to become an inmate of St. Sebas monastery (Cross & Livingstone, 1974) as he was attracted by the simplicity and austerity of monastic life (Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1963). He became a monk in about A.D. 726 (White, 1991) and he was ordained a priest by Patriarch John V in c. A.D. 730.

There was a great dispute over iconoclasm, a movement seeking to prohibit the veneration of idols in churches from A.D. 717 - 843 (Gr. *eikonoklastes*-image-breaker, iconoclastic controversy). St. Epiphanius of Salamis (A.D. 315 – 403) vehemently objected to the use of pictures and images in the church (Douglas, 1978).

Making the images of Christ, St. Mary and other martyrs were idolatry. Christ never asked for that. The Bible has prohibited the worship of idols. St. Epiphanius wrote to Emperor Theodosius on this subject, "Royal power should be wielded to prevent the use of idols in churches. All the existing idols should be removed and no

new ones should be allowed to be made.” He wrote in his will “God’s image should be borne in the heart. Images should not be kept in churches” (Chediath, 2006).

Images and idols were widely prevalent in churches from A.D. 400 to 600. Emperor Leo III in A.D. 725/26 issued an edict banning the making and worshipping of idols and their exhibition in public places (Smith & Wace, 1882). Gregory II & III of Rome declared the prohibitory orders as heretical (Douglas, 1978). John was in Palestine as a delegate of Patriarch John when the controversies and protests spread havoc.

Fr. John undertook a spirited defence of the holy images since the scriptures prohibited only the use of idols. His letters can be condensed in this manner. “It is impossible and impious to picture God but not Christ, the virgin, the saints and those angels who have appeared in human form. It is permitted to do so; idols alone are prohibited in the scriptures. The advantages of images and their veneration are many. They teach and recall the divine gifts, they nourish piety, they are also canals of grace, a kind of medium between their prototype and the faithful, even possessing a certain instrumentality in the granting of graces from high” (Cayre, 1940, pp. 328 - 329). He wrote three discourses on the subject (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

John was well known as a humble and obedient priest. His respect and devotion towards the Church, St. Mary and other saints were commendable. When Leo, the Isaurian, the Emperor of Constantinople, started persecuting the venerators of idols, John protested strongly against it. The Emperor vented his anger by ordering John’s right hand to be cut off. He prayed fervently to Virgin Mary for the restitution of his hand and thereupon the legend goes that his hand was miraculously restored (Smith & Wace, 1882; Hoever, 1989).

Some prayers used on Sundays and feast days were written by St. John when he was a priest. Songs sung in eight tones were

composed by Yacoub of Edessa, Andrew of Tigris, John of Damascus and Kosmos (Aphrem I, 2000). It is believed that John passed away in A.D. 750. The writings of John Phocas of the twelfth century show that he was entombed in a tomb next to the tomb of St. Sebas (the monastery of St. Sebas is situated ten miles away from Jerusalem in the south eastern direction). Later his relics were transferred to Constantinople (Smith & Wace, 1882). John the priest's feast is celebrated on 4 December. He is also commemorated on 6 May and 29 November.

## **181. St. John of Egypt, Abbot**

**(A.D. 304? - 394)**

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

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

John never ate until sunset and he ate only dried fruits and vegetables. At first and even until he became inured to it, he suffered severely because he would not eat anything that had been cooked by fire, but he continued this diet from fortieth year until he was ninety (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I).

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

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

## **182. Mor John of Ephesus the Syrian Chronicler (A.D. 507 – 587)**

Mor John (Yuhanon) was a famous historian, evangelist and an industrious man of the sixth century. He was born in Agel, a province of Amid, Turkey in A.D. 507 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). He was at the threshold of death at the young age of two due to a serious disease. He was brought back to life by the intercessory prayers of Mor Marun, a pillar ascetic in the monastery of Ara Rabta.

John became an inmate of the above-mentioned dayaro at the age of four and remained there until he was fifteen. During this time, Marun died and he shifted his stay to the monastery of John, the Iberian, north of Amid, Turkey. He studied Holy Scriptures and practised spiritual life.



Mor John, the bishop of Tella ordained him a Deacon in A.D. 529. He accepted monastic life following his ordination (Aphrem I, 2000; Malaty, 2005). The monks when attacked had to flee and they were scattered in many places. They were allowed to return to the monastery in A.D. 530. John visited many monastery, conversing with the most virtuous ascetics, learning from them and recording their chronicles. He travelled to Antioch in A.D. 532, to Egypt in A.D. 534 and to Constantinople in A.D. 535. He could provide information about the persecution let loose by Ephraim of Amid and the cruel tyrant Abraham Bar Kili.

Deacon John travelled to Constantinople, Mesopotamia etc (A.D. 540 – 541). Emperor Justinian who had great faith in him sent him to Asia Minor, Caria, Phrygia and Lydia to preach to the heathens. In A.D. 558, Mor Yacoub Burd'ona (Baradaeus) ordained him the Metropolitan of Ephesus (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Aphrem I, 2000). His sincere evangelization for twenty-nine years converted nearly eighty thousand people to Christianity. He founded ninety-two churches and ten monasteries. In his efforts he was assisted by Deutrius who he consecrated the Metropolitan of Caria.

After the death of Mor Theodosius in A.D. 566, Mor John became the supreme authority of the Church of Constantinople. Justin II and the Chalcedonian bishops (malkite) started persecuting the Church from A.D. 571 onwards. Mor John was imprisoned as a part of the trials against Christians and he was banished to an island for forty months. He has made detailed records about Paul of Aphrodisias, Stephen, the metropolitan of Cyprus and Elisha who were banished along with him and about the sufferings and tribulations they endured in prison (Wace & Piercy, 1999). He was arrested, released and banished twice again before his death in A.D. 587.

Mor John was an ecclesiastical historian who has written The Ecclesiastical history in three volumes. This history was published in various languages. The third part was published in English in A.D. 1860 by Payne Smith. Lives of Eastern Saints, translated by

E.W. Brooks was republished in 2003. He included biographical sketches of fifty-eight contemporary monks in that volume (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). The book also describes the monastic life, customs and administration of the monasteries at the that time. Mor John of Ephesus is also known as John of Asia (Ephesus was the capital of the district Asia).

## **183. Mor John of Jerusalem**

**(A. D. 356 - 417)**

John of Jerusalem was born in c. A. D. 356. He was a monk from his early years. He later became a noted theologian and bishop, a strong advocate of the Platonistic Alexandrian tradition during the 5th century doctrinal controversies of the Eastern Church (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-of-Jerusalem>). He is the co-author of a celebrated collection of catechetical conferences on the Jerusalem Christian creed.

John succeeded the noted theologian Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386) as bishop in c. A. D. 387. In 393 he was attacked by the Latin biblical scholar St. Jerome and by the influential Bishop Epiphanius of Constantia (now Salamis, Cyprus) for adhering to the views of Origen of Alexandria.

When Epiphanius incited the Palestinian monks to anti-Origenism, John retaliated by denying them access to the holy places in Jerusalem and refusing to baptize their converts or bury their dead. In the fall of 396, Jerome published a virulent manifesto denouncing John. The consequent scandal reverberated throughout the Greek and Western churches. John reconciled with Jerome at Easter in 397, through the mediation of Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria (d. 412). John remained neutral in the continuing Origenist polemic between Jerome and his former theological colleague Tyrannius Rufinus.

Contention arose again, however, over Pelagius' teaching that man is capable of leading a moral life without divine help. Though John received him sympathetically in Palestine, Jerome and an emissary from Augustine of Hippo denounced him as heretical at the Jerusalem synod in July 415. When Augustine's disciples invoked the authority of their master against Pelagius, John retorted that in Jerusalem he alone was the Christian authority. He then devised a compromise formula, distasteful to Jerome, declaring that God can enable the earnest man to avoid sin. Pelagius was judged free of doctrinal error, which was confirmed in December 415 at the metropolitan Council of Diospolis. Soon afterward, John tacitly permitted the Pelagians to sack the monastery at Bethlehem, a centre of vehement anti-Pelagianism, and was sharply reproved by Pope Innocent I.

John is credited with the possible partial authorship, long attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, of the theologically esteemed Catecheses, a series of Easter instructions for the newly baptized. An English translation of the Catecheses was edited by F. L. Cross (1951). The feast of John of Jerusalem is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 7 June.

## **184. St. John the Merciful, the Patriarch of Alexandria**

**(A. D. 555 – 619)**

John was born on the island of Cyprus in the city of Amathus in c. A. D. 555. His father, Epiphanius, was the ruler of Cyprus. At the wish of his parents he got married and had two children. When his wife and children died, he became a monk. He was zealous in fasting and prayer, and had great love for those around him (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2000/11/12/103286-st-john-the-merciful-Patriarch-of-alexandria>).

When the Patriarchal throne of Alexandria fell vacant, emperor Heraclius and all the clergy begged John to occupy the Patriarchal throne. St. John considered his chief task to be charitable and to help all those in need. At the beginning of his Patriarchal service in A. D. 608, he ordered his stewards to compile a list of all the poor, needy and downtrodden in Alexandria ([http://sanctoral.com/en/saints/saint\\_john\\_the\\_almsgiver.html](http://sanctoral.com/en/saints/saint_john_the_almsgiver.html)). The saint ordered that all of these unfortunates be provided for each day out of the church's treasury.

Twice during the week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, sitting on a bench on the portico of the Patriarchal cathedral, he received everyone in need. He settled quarrels, helped the needy and aggrieved, and distributed alms. He would not permit his servants to have food until the grievances were redressed. A man whom he had helped thanked him for his assistance one day, but he interrupted him, saying: My brother, I have not yet shed my blood for you, as Jesus Christ, my Saviour and my God. The saint never refused suppliants. One day, when the saint was visiting the sick, he met a beggar and commanded that he be given six silver coins. The beggar changed his clothes, ran on ahead of the Patriarch, and again asked for alms. Saint John gave him six more silver coins. When, however, the beggar sought charity a third time, the servants began to chase the fellow away, the Patriarch ordered that he be given twelve pieces of silver, saying, "Perhaps he is Christ putting me to the test."

Three times a week he visited the house of the people who are sick, and rendered assistance to the suffering. It was during this period that the emperor Heraclius led a tremendous army against the Persian emperor Chosroes II. The Persians ravaged and burned Jerusalem, taking a multitude of captives. The holy Patriarch John gave up a large portion of the church treasury in ransom for their release.

Saint John the Merciful was known for his gentle attitude towards people. Once, the saint was compelled to excommunicate two clergymen for a certain time because of some offence. One of them repented, but the other became angry with the Patriarch and fell

into greater sins. The saint wanted to summon him and calm him with kind words, but it slipped his mind. When he was celebrating the Divine Liturgy, the saint was suddenly reminded by the words of the Gospel: “If you bring your gift to the altar and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar ... first, be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Mt. 5:23-24). The saint left the altar, called the offending clergyman to him, and falling down on his knees before him in front of all the people he asked forgiveness. The cleric, filled with remorse, repented of his sin, corrected himself, and afterwards was reinstated to priesthood.

Saint John was persuaded to accompany the governor, Nicetas on a visit to the emperor in Constantinople. While on his way to visit the earthly king, he dreamed of a resplendent man who said to him, “The King of Kings summons you.” He sailed to his native island of Cyprus, and fell asleep in the Lord while praying on his knees at Amanthos in A. D. 619 at the age of sixty-four (<http://antiochPatriarchate.org/en/page/john-the-merciful-Patriarch-of-alexandria/865/>). The feast of St. John, the merciful is celebrated on 12 November in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **185. Mor John, Bishop of Dara**

**(A.D. ? – 860)**

John was tonsured a monk at the monastery of Mor Hananya near Mardin, Turkey. In c. A.D. 825, the Patriarch Dionysius of Tell Mahre (A.D. 817-845) consecrated him Metropolitan of Dara which he administered for thirty-five years (Aphrem I, 2003).

Mor John was a scholar and an illustrious theologian and has many works to his credit (Wright, 1894). The works of Mor John were later cited by authorities such as Mor Moses Bar Kepho (d. A.D.

903), Mor Dionysius Bar Salibi (d. A.D. 1171) and Mor Gregoris Bar Hebraeus (d. A.D. 1286).

The distinguished works of Mor John are: (1) A book on theology which comprises celestial hierarchies, ecclesiastical hierarchies, priesthood, resurrection, Christian doctrine, offering of the Holy Sacraments, etc., (2) A book on Paradise, creation, resurrection, Epiphany, the finding of the Cross and the Acts of our Lord, etc., (3) A commentary on the New Testament (or the Gospels alone), (4) An eloquent treatise on the policy of the Church and the settlement of peace in it and (5) A liturgy (*Thakso*).

The commentary on the Eucharist by Mor John (John of Dara, 1999) which is available in English informs us of the many practices extant in the ninth century. However, this commentary contradicts many of the practices contained in the later commentaries of Mose Bar Kephos (1988) and Dionysius Bar Salibi (1990). The feast of Mor John, the Theologian is celebrated on 11 May in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

## **186. Mor John, the Arab**

**(A.D. 391 – 486)**

Mor John, the Arab (Mor Yuhanon, the Arabian) was born in the village Hirtha in the Kashkar region. His father, Abraham, who belonged to the Buquila family was well known in that area.

His education started at the age of seven. He was interested in monasticism from the age of fifteen. Once at the church in Hirtha he had a vision about trisagion. He also saw punishment meted out to sinners on the Day of the Judgment and the list of names of the Just. An angel asked him, "Where do you want your name to be?" he answered, "With the virtuous." The angel advised him, "You must become a monk." On his enquiry how that could be made possible

the angel told him, “A group of saints will pass your way after two days. You must join them.” Yuhanon shared this divine experience with Mor Coorilos of Hirtha. The Bishop advised him to wait for two days to ascertain the veracity of the vision. After saying this the Bishop retired to the church to carry on with his prayers.

As Mor Coorilos was engaged in praying, he saw a light emanating from the cross. He saw a vision. He saw a lamp and heard a voice announcing that Mor Augen had sent seventy-two disciples to wipe off the darkness of the world. The next morning he summoned Yuhanon and asked him to wait for one more night. Yuhanon had another vision that night of three elderly people. One person appeared more luminary. He heard a voice asking him to go to Mt. Sinai. Yuhanon after discussing his vision with the Bishop shared his feelings with his parents whom he had invited. They were anxious over his decision to become a monk but gradually accepted it.

Yuhanon started out on his journey from the village and like prophet Habakuk arrived at Singar. The village headman questioned him about the purpose of his visit. As Yuhanon made no answer, he was imprisoned. That night an angel appeared before him and asked him to go to the house of Augen. He arrived at Augen’s Ashram weary after two days.

Pallus, the abbot of the monastery asked, “Why have you come here?” He was too tired to respond. Pallus reported the matter to Andrews, another monk who had foreseen this matter by divine grace. Yuhanon was given monastic habit. Yuhanon who was filled with divine blessing was a model for other monks.

Once John was sent to the village Marre to buy wine for the Holy Qurbono. On arriving there, he gave away the money meant for the purchase of wine to a poor man. As he had no money, he filled the barrels with water and returned. He reported the matter to the abbot. On inspection, they found to their surprise that the water had miraculously turned into wine.

On another occasion, he with the brother monks went to buy grain from the village near the Mor Augen monastery. Three thieves

attacked them on the way and bound John with ropes. They released him when he cried for mercy. He prayed for their return to the right path shedding their vicious lives. They had a change of heart and became monks.

Another miracle attributed to him is about walking on water. When he arrived at the village Tamonon, a monk invited him to join his monastery. When they reached the banks of the river Tigris, they found a Persian ship anchored there. They refused the monks permission to board the ship and harassed them as well. Then John and the brother monk walked over the River Tigris to reach the other side.

When John returned to the monastery he obtained permission from the Abbot to lead a solitary life on the eastern side of the monastery. The Gospel of John was his only possession. He came to the monastery only to attend Sunday mass and to partake in the feast celebration of saints. He succeeded as the next Abbot after the death of the then Abbot.

Many miracles happened due to his intercession. He could oust an evil spirit with his prayers from a man possessed who was brought before him from Nisbis. Many childless couples were blessed with children, plants bloomed, even the war between the Persians and the Romans ended and the plague that ravaged many in Marre village could be wiped off through his intercession.

Mor John revealed to the monk Shem'un "My death is near. My body should be entombed in Mor Augen Dayro." He who had been a monk for thirty-three years and an abbot for forty-two years passed away in his ninety fifth year. The feast of John, the Arabian, is celebrated on 29 August in the Syrian Orthodox Church.



## 187. St. John, the Baptist

(B. C. 3 – A. D. 32?)

John is the son of Zachariah the Priest, and Elizabeth (Luke 1:13). The birth of John was almost six months before the birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26, 31). The birthday of John, the Baptist, is celebrated on 24th June in the Syriac Orthodox Church and is a feast, which has a long tradition.

John was born at En Kerem or Ain Karim in Judea in the beginning of the first century A. D. His raiment was of camel's hair, and he was girt with a girdle of leather like E-li'-jah (2 Kings 1:8; Mathew 3:4). His food was locusts and wild honey (Mathew 3:4; 1 Samuel 14:25–26). The translation 'locust' is wrong. In the original translation, the reference is to carob pods (fruit) of the locust tree, a mediteranian tree or a variety of wild cassava (a tubular root). This is also known as St. John's bread.

John separated himself from the society with a vow of Nazarite (Luke 1:15; Numbers 6:3-4). John, the Baptist, is the forerunner of Christ who prepared the way for Christ (Mathew 11:10; Luke 1:76). He came in the sprit and power of Eli-jah (Luke 1:17). Jesus testified: "Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John, the Baptist" (Mathew 11:11; Luke 7:28).

John started his mission in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius (c. A. D. 28-29) on the banks of Jordan River (Encyclopedia Americana, 1988). He preached from Inon (near Modern Neblus) to Jerico in the Valley of Jordan. The usage "desert" or "wilderness" is to be understood as places where there was less population.

The essence of John's preaching is: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mathew 3:2). He travelled all Judaea and the entire region round about Jordan (Mathew 3:5) and many were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins (Mathew 3:6). He was tough with his admonition: "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees;

therefore every tree which bring forth no good fruit is cut down, and cast into the fire” (Mathew 3:10).

Birthdays of saints are not usually celebrated in Syriac Orthodox Church with a few exceptions. The birthday of John the Baptist is celebrated in the Church because John was filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb of Elizabeth before birth (Luke 1:41).

The virtues of John, the Baptist, are unique. “He must increase and I must decrease” (John 3:30). John, the Baptist, was beheaded on August 29 for he said to Herod that it is not lawful for him to have Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife (Mathew 14:1-12). Herodia was the daughter of Aristobulus and the wife of Philip, half-brother of Herod (Josephus, 1992, Book 18, Chapter 5).

The body of John, the Baptist, was entombed at Sebaste. According to the tradition among Syrians, the head of St. John the Baptist was brought to Damascus from Jerusalem sometime in the early century of Chirstian Era and interred it in the church in Old Damascus (now Ommayyad Mosque). The prayer on the feast day reads: “Lord, grant us courage to stand by truth even if we are put in prison and tempted with worldly treasures.” Three feasts of John the Baptist are celebrated in the Syriac Orthodox Church. Those are - - June 24 - Birthday, August 29 - Martyrdom (beheading), and February 24 - finding of the head of John, the Baptist, at Homs, Syria. (The birthday of John the Baptist is also celebrated two weeks before Christmas).

## **188. St. John, the Disciple**

**(? - A. D. 100)**

John is the younger son of Zebedee and Salome of Bethsaida. James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother were the disciples of John, the Baptist. John, the Baptist testified: “ Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:36). On hearing this the two disciples (Andrew and

John) followed Jesus (Adbul Ahad, 1948). James and John were fishermen (Mathew 4:21). They were called “Sons of Thunder.”

John was different from the other disciples in various ways. John was the youngest of all disciples. Jesus loved John the most (John: 19:26). John is the only disciple who is seen standing by the cross. It is believed that John is the only disciple who did not receive martyrdom.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were surnamed Boanerges (Mark 3:17). The basis of this surname is attributed to their special traits of the character such as impetuosity and zeal (Mark 9:38, Luke 9:52-56; Nelson’s encyclopedia, 1913). John was a witness to some important events during the ministry of Jesus Christ -- when the only daughter of Jairus was given life (Luke 8:41-42; 49-56) in A. D. 28; when Peter’s mother-in-law was healed of a fever (Mark 1:29-31); at the mountain of transfiguration (Mathew 17:1-2) in A. D. 29; and at the Mount of Olives (Mathew 26:37) in A.D.30.

After the crucifixion of Jesus, John spent the rest of his life at Jerusalem and Ephesus (Hoever, 1989). St. Mary lived with John until her death as was entrusted by Jesus (John 19:25-27). Until A. D. 52 John lived at Jerusalem and later moved to Ephesus (Moothedan, 2001).

Once John was challenged by a Priest of Goddess Diana and gave him poison. John survived even after drinking poison (Day, 2002). Tertullian has recorded that at Rome Emperor Domician put John in boiling oil and he came out unharmed (Moothedan, 2001). He was later (A. D. 95-96) exiled to Patmos Island.

John built several churches in Turkey. John wrote the Gospel according to John, the three epistles and the Revelation. The gospel was written at Ephesus and the Revelation was written at the Island of Patmos. John departed for heavenly abode at the age of one hundred and twenty in A. D. 100. St. John was entombed at Ephesus and a church was built over his tomb. Later, this church was converted to a mosque (Hoever, 1989). The feast of St. John is celebrated on 8 May.

## **189. Joseph of Arimathea**

**(First Century A.D.)**

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

Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb (Matthew 27:57; Mark 15: 43-46; John 19:38).

Probably after the crucifixion, Joseph was overwhelmed by his cowardice and hence went to Pontius Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. It was the custom to throw the bodies of criminals as carrion for animals to devour. But Joseph brought down the body before this happened, and took it to the garden he owned, close to the Calvary.

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

## 190. St. Joseph, the Just

(81 ? BC – A.D. 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 passed away on 19 March (*Britannica*, 2003). *The Arabic history of Joseph, the carpenter* narrates the life and death of Joseph and eulogy spoken over him by Jesus (Quasten, 1949).

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.

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

**(? – A.D. 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 Yavada islands (Abdul Ahad, 1948) or he suffered martyrdom in Arathas, near Beirut (Kallarangatt & Puthkulangara, 2001) and he was entombed in Beirut (Mc Birnie, 2002). The burial place is believed to be Kara Kelesia. His feast is celebrated on 10 May.

## **192. St. Julian, the Martyr**

**(A.D. ? - 284?)**

St. Julian or Elian, was born to pagan parents in the city of Emesa (modern-day Homs, Syria) in the 3rd century. St. Julian (also known as Ellien) accepted the Christian faith even though his father and family were not Christians. Because of this, he and his family were

at odds with one another (<http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2010/02/st-julian-elian-martyr-and-unmercenary.html>). He heard the Gospel of our Lord concerning the parable of talents and decided to use his talents to benefit others.

“Having set his hopes in Jesus Christ, Julian was not tempted by the glory of this temporary world. He prayed day and night, practiced fasting, visited prisoners and comforted them. He gave out large alms of what remained in excess in his father’s house. Julian studied and practiced medicine skillfully. He strived to cure the diseases of both the body and soul. He cured sick people by Christ’s grace and the faith of the Apostles, while preaching God’s Word and urging them to follow the path of virtue. ‘It is not’, he says, ‘with medicines that you will be cured of your illness nor thanks to your idols which drive to eternal punishment all those who kneel before them, but by the power of Jesus Christ’s name who has been crucified by the Jews under Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem, who has been buried and rose on the third day.’”

His fellow physicians who were not followers of Christ were jealous because of his mastery of the healing arts. They asked his father to force his son to stop healing in the name of Jesus Christ. But St. Julian refused to listen to these men or his father.

The Roman governors were ordered to persecute Christians. Julian’s father was a high-ranking officer in the city, so he arrested Bishop Silvanos of Homs, Syria, Deacon Luke and Reader Mokimos, to torture them. They beat them; then dragged them through the city behind a chariot, in order to publicly terrorize the Christians. They were tortured repeatedly. Julian sneaked into the prison and tended to their wounds. There he was arrested and brought to his father, who turned him over to the governor. He witnessed the execution of Silvanos, Luke and Mokimos. When these men were about to be put to death, St. Julian prayed to God and an angel appeared to him and said: “Do not be grieved, O Julian, a crown has been prepared for you. You will conquer your enemies and the devil’s tricks. Do not



fear their torture, for I am with you!” Then his father had him tied to a horse and dragged through the streets.

He was imprisoned and tortured for months, but would not renounce the faith, instead he led all the tormentors to Christ. Finally, his father had blacksmiths drove long spikes into Julian’s head and feet. When his executioners left, he managed to crawl to a cave owned by a potter. When the potter came to the cave and discovered the body of St. Julian he took it by night to the church of the Apostles and St. Barbara where he was buried at the East of the Altar. Julian entrusted his soul to the Lord on 6 February, 284. (<http://www.antiochianarch.org.au/stJulian.aspx>).

Later, a church dedicated to St. Julian was built on the spot of the cave where he died and his body was laid in a marble coffin. Many miracles attributed to St. Julian’s intercessions occurred after his death and they continue to occur to this day. There is a church dedicated to this great saint: the original church of St. Julian in Homs, Syria. The feast of St. Julian (Ellien) is celebrated on 7 February in the Syrian orthodox Church.

## **193. Mor Julios Elias Qoro, the Delegate of the Holy See of Antioch**

**(A.D. 1881 – 1962)**

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

He joined Kurkumo monastery (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 Moran Abdulla II appointed Elias Ramban as the abbot of the monastery 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 (Julius) and was sent to serve the Malankara Church. Mor Yulios Elias came to India on 22 October 1923. It was Yulios Elias Qoro who took Rev. Fr. Michael and Rev. Fr. Thomas 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. Osthatheos in 1930 Mor Yulios Elias 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. Athnasius Paulose were there to receive His Holiness.

Mor Yulios Elias 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) priest 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 Manjinikkara received incomparable discipline. After serving as a bishop for thirty nine years he departed for the heavenly abode on 19 February 1962. He was entombed in the tomb already prepared by him. His feast is celebrated on 19 February.

## **194. Mor Julius Geevarghese**

**(A.D. 1829 – 1884)**

Mor Julius (Yulios), the first metropolitan of Thumbamon diocese, was born in Konatt family, Pambakuda as the son of Konatt Mathen and Kunjilachar in A.D. 1829. He who was a great scholar in Syriac language and Theology was one among the six Metropolitans consecrated by H.H. Peter IV, the Patriarch.

After his ordination at a young age, he came under the tutorship of his own ancestors Abraham malpan, Konatt and Yohanan malpan, Konatt for theological studies. After being ordained a kassiso, he taught the seminary students at Pambakuda church, the headquarters of his priestly ancestors. Mor Gregoroius Chathuruthil, the bishop, interred at Parumala was his student. He helped Mor Deevanasios

Joseph Pulikkottil, the then Malankara Metropolitan, in his correspondence in Syriac as he was a scholar in that language.

Patriarch Peter IV arrived in Kerala in A.D. 1875 and came to Arthat church, Kunnamkulam. Mor Yulios was elevated to the rank of a Ramban on 17 June 1875 at Chiralayam church by the Holy Father. He accompanied His Holiness as his interpreter until his return.

A printing press in Syriac language in Kerala was first started by him. In 1876 he was consecrated a Metropolitan along with Kadavil Paulose Ramban, (Mor Athanasius) at North Paravoor church. He accepted the selection to the metropolitan rank rather reluctantly. Until the arrival of the Patriarch in Pambakuda, he was immersed in literary activities like teaching the Deacons Syriac and translating rare books of the language. After being appointed the first Metropolitan of Thumbamon diocese he visited the churches in the diocese and discharged essential administrative duties, but most of his time was spent in learning Syriac staying at Pambakuda church. After the return of the Patriarch, he helped Joseph Mor Deevanasios in the conduct of litigations. He presented many books from his collection in the court and presented himself as a witness in Canon law.

When he was trying to establish one more printing press the Patriarch arrived in Kerala. The Patriarch encouraged him and sent him to a press run by European missionaries at Cochin in order to obtain necessary training. This happened when he was a Ramban. He visited the press many times, stayed there and gathered information through direct experience. In A.D. 1879, 'Kerala Deepam Press' started functioning in the church building of Pambakuda church. Some spiritual books like Qurbono Thakso, Aneeda, etc. were printed there. Bishop Mor Deevanasios and other Bishops supported him in his efforts.

Mor Yulios did not have a long life to carry on the good work. While visiting some churches in his diocese he fell ill and returned to Pambakuda. Though he recuperated after treatment and rest, he fell ill again. Mor Yulios passed away on 21 March 1884 in his fifty-fifth year. He was entombed in Pambakuda church.

His nephew Konatt Mathen malpan bought new equipments to extend the activities of the press. The press was named 'Mor Yulios Press' in his memory. The feast of Mor Julius Geevarghese is celebrated on 21 March in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **195. Mor Julius Kuriakose**

**(A.D. 1933 – 2011)**

Kuirakose, the youngest son of Varkey, Kochupurackal, Veliyanad and Elyamma was born on 6 July 1933. His brothers were Chacko, Varghese and Mathew. His school education was completed at Govt. L. P. School, Veliyanad; N. S. U. P. School, Ramankari; Leo XIII High School Aleppy; St. Joseph's High School, Pulikkunnu and M. G. M. High School, Thiruvalla. The intermediate studies were at S. B. College, Changanacherry.

Kuriakose belonged to St. Stephen's Knanaya church, Veliyanad. He joined Manjinikkara dayro as a student at the age of twenty-two. The delegate of the Holy see of Antioch, Mor Yulios Elias Qoro ordained him Deacon in February 1955. His theological studies were completed under the tutorship of Very Rev. Yacoub Ramban, Madappad and Rev. Mosha Salama Ramban. On 21 September 1958, Mor Yulios Elias Qoro ordained him Priest at Manjinikkara dayro. (The priest Rev. C. M. Thomas who was ordained along with him is the present Catholicos H. B. Baselios Thomas I).

He assisted Mor Yulios Qoro in various capacities after his ordination as a Deacon and a Priest. After his ordination in 1958, he served as a vicar in Thumbamon and Perumpally churches and in a church of St. Antony's Association, Mangalore.

Mor Yulios Elias Qoro appointed Rev. Fr. Kuriakose as the vicar of St. Mary's Syrian Simhasana church, Arthat, Kunnamkulam in 1960. He offered the most creditable service to the church until 1984.

He has played a crucial role in stabilising St. Mary's Simhasana (thronal) church and in the conduct of church litigations.

Rev. Fr. Kuriakose was the First Secretary to the Patriarch Ignatius Zakka Iwas from 1984 to 2004. During this period, he visited many foreign lands along with the Patriarch. He was consecrated Ramban by the Patriarch at St. George Cathedral, Damascus on 22 December 1990. He was consecrated Metropolitan under the name Mor Yulios at St. Peter's & St. Paul's Cathedral, Ma'rath Saydnaya, Damascus on 27 September 1998.

His skill in the use of Syriac language enabled him to translate many Syriac books to Malayalam. He learnt the practice of Syrian rites of worship directly from Mor Yulios Elias Qoro and it inspired many to follow the Syrian tradition.

Indo American University of Humanistic Studies, Florida, U. S. A. conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity & Sacred Philosophy. Diondra University of Italy honoured the Bishop by bestowing on him the degree of Doctor of Theology. The Bishop was a member of the St. Gregorius Simhasana church, Cherumkulam, Mannarghat, Palakkad underwent cardiac surgery twice, once in Germany and later in Kerala. From 2007, he was also under treatment for Parkinson's disease.

In 2010, he entrusted his administrative duties to Mor Athanasius Geevargis. He visited the Patriarch in 2010 January for the last time and bid him farewell. Mor Yulios Kuriakose led a life of rest during the final stages of his life in Gethsemane dayro, Piramadam. He arrived at Manjanikkara dayro on 8 April 2011. He participated in the Holy Qurbano and noon prayers on Saturday, 9 April. As he was resting in the afternoon, he suffered a heart attack and succumbed to it by 4 p.m.

His mortal remains were entombed on the western side of the tomb of his mentor and teacher, Mor Yulios Elias Qoro at Manjanikkara dayro cathedral on 11 April 2011. The anniversary of Mor Julius Kuriakose is celebrated on 9 April in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## 196. St. Julios of Rome

(A.D. 290? – 352)

Julius (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 A.D. 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 (A.D. 295-373) of Alexandria died due to brain haemorrhage in A.D. 336 (Poulet & Raemers, 1956).

In A.D. 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 A.D. 340 but Eusebius not only disagreed with that but also prevented the diplomatic mission from proceeding to Rome.

In August A.D. 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 A.D. 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 A.D. 337 to A.D. 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 *Qurbono Thakso* in which the prayer anticipating the second coming of Christ is remarkable. He departed for the heavenly abode on 12 April A.D. 352.

## **197. Mor Julios Yeshu Cicek**

**(A.D. 1942 – 2005)**

Yeshu Cicek was born on 1 January 1942 in Kafro or Upper Kafro (Near Thur'abdin, South-east Turkey) as the son of priest Bar Saumo and mother Saied. He joined Dayar-ul Zafran 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 Dolbani. He started his life as a monk in 1960 after joining Mor Gabriel monastery in Qartmin (east of Midyath). He served as a music teacher and administrator of the monastery during the period 1962-67. After being ordained a priest in 1967 he served the church in Holland, Lebanon and America. Rev. Ramban Yeshu Cicek was the superior of Gabriel monastery in 1974.

His higher studies were pursued in Michigan University, USA (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 millions was bought in Losser, Holland and St. Aphrem Syrian monastery 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 Transworld 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 Thur'abdin, 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 Yesu Cicek 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.

## **198. St. Julitta of Caesarea**

**(A.D. ? – 303)**

Saint Julitta was from Caesarea, Cappadocia (in modern Turkey) whose property was stolen by an influential, greedy and covetous man who was a local pagan. She took him to court where he objected that she had no standing or rights in court as she was a Christian. The judge ordered her to prove her standing by offering sacrifice to an idol; she refused. She was immediately arrested. She confessed saying that she will not renounce her Creator God, Who fashioned her. She was convicted to be cast into a furnace in A.D. 303 (<https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2015/07/saint-julitta-of-caesarea.html>). Fire embraced the body of Saint Julitta but she miraculously remained unburnt. Her body was buried by the faithful befitting a Christian (<https://catholicsaints.info/tag/died-in-cappadocia/>). In c. A.D. 375 St. Basil of Caesarea honoured the martyr with an encomium.

## **199. Mor Julius Yacoub**

**(A. D. 1912-1992)**

Yacoub (Kunjappan) was born on 27 December 1912 at Pampady, Kottayam. He was the son of Madappatt Chacko and Annamma. His parents died when he was a child and his elder brother took care of him. His primary education was at Pampady and Vazhoor.

He had to discontinue his high school education while at N.S.S. High School, Karukachal due to ill health.

Yacoub pursued his theological studies at Sharbil Dyara, Thrikkothamangalam. The very Rev. Kochuparambil Geevarghese Ramban and Vanchithattil Kuriakose Ramban were his teachers at the Dyara. Mor Michael Dionysius was also staying there at that time. One of his colleagues was Parayakulath Yacoub (later His Grace Mor Themotheos Yacoub).

On 24 May 1942 Yacoub was ordained Deacon by Dionysius Michael at St. Mary's Church, Manarcad. On 19 August 1945 Deacon Yacoub was ordained Priest by Mor Dionysius Michael at St. Thomas church, Chengalam, Kottayam. A little later, Rev. Fr. Yacoub joined Manjinikkara Dyara. On 19 June 1955, Mor Julius Elias ordained him Ramban. Ramban Madappattu Yacoub taught Syriac and liturgy to several students at Manjinikkara and at Malelcruz Dayara during 1962-64.

On 12 June 1975, Ramban M. C. Yacoub was ordained Metropolitan by Moran Yacoub III, the Patriarch, at St. George Cathedral, Damascus by the name Julius. His Grace was appointed to oversee the Simhasana churches and institutions that are directly under the Holy See of Antioch. In November 1990, H. H. Patriarch Zakka I Iwas honoured him with the title '*M'Shablono Thobo*' meaning the spiritual teacher.

His Grace Mor Julius Yacoub served the Holy tomb of Saint Elias III for about half-a-century. His Grace was the President of the Evangelical Association of the East during 1963-64. H. G. served Mor Julius Elias, the delegate, as the secretary and translator. His Grace has translated a few books from Syriac. Those, include the book titled '*Dove*' written by Bar Hebraeus, *the Biography of Mor Yuhanon M'rahmono*, *The history of Mor Augen*, *the text of the sacrament of Holy matrimony* which is in use in Syria, and a few prayers and promeon- sedro.

His Grace was very particular about prayer and fasting. His life, food and dress were all very simple. His Grace used to correct the

mistakes of the clergy of all ranks for his training was by Mor Julius Elias and Mor Dionysius Michael who never compromised with the respect for the traditions and practices of the Church.

His Grace was getting ready for his departure and he prepared a place of rest for himself well in advance. His Grace converted his ancestral property into a trust and a church was constructed on that land. On 21 January 1992 His Grace was admitted to hospital and on 24 January 1992 His Grace breathed his last. The mortal remains were interred at Manjinnikara on 25 January. The memory of Mor Julius Yacoub is celebrated on 24 January.

## **200. St. Justin, the Martyr**

**(c. A.D. 100 – c. 165)**

Justin was a native of Flavia Neapolis (now Nablus near Sicheim, Palestine) and belonged to a pagan Greek family (Quasten, 1949; Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Attwater & John, 1996; Farmer, 1997; Paul, 2014).

Justin had a liberal education and devoted himself to rhetoric and to reading of poetry and history. And his thirst for knowledge was not satisfied with philosophy. One day when he was walking in a field near the sea-shore, perhaps at Ephesus, pondering over Plato's maxims, he found a venerable-looking old man who aroused his interest in Jesus Christ. He urged the young man to pray fervently that the doors of light might be opened to allow him to obtain the knowledge which God alone can give. The old man's words inspired Justin with a desire to study the scriptures and to know more about the Christians (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). Justin remarked: 'a flame was kindled in my soul; and love of the prophets, and of those men who are friend of Christ, possessed me' (Quasten, 1949, p. 196).

Justin converted to the faith when he was about thirty years old probably at Ephesus or Alexandria. He remained a layman and he

said: “It is our duty to make our doctrine known, lest we incur the guilt and the punishment of those who have sinned through ignorance” (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Paul, 2014). He preached throughout Palestine, Syria and other regions (Paul, 2014). He was the most important Christian apologist of the second century.

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

Rusticus: You, then, are a Christian?

Justin: Yes, I am a Christian.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **201. Mor Kauma, Monk of Toralidon**

**(Fifth/Sixth Century A.D.)**

Mor Kauma stands as a luminous star, in the heavenly abode of Saints and Prophets. His strenuous ways of life and steadfast faith in God has brought him the title ‘the angel on earth’. He was also called the ‘mourner of Mayfarqin’ (Phinahas, 2008). The word ‘Kauma’ means ‘standing in an erect position’. The holy angel of God meditated in the shape of a cross on a tree and hence got the name ‘Kauma’. He spent forty-five years of his life in solitude, having a little food to sustain life.

Mor Kauma’s parents were staunch believers in God. They lived in a place named ‘ Mayfarqin’ (Turkey). They were childless for a long period of time and were quite sad. They prayed continuously and the Almighty blessed them with a son, who later became the solace for millions, the holy saint Mor Kauma.

Shemavoon was the name given to the child and his sister was named as Agastia (Agusia). The complexion of Mor Kauma was reddish white and he had long hairs. They supported each other at every venture. When the children grew up they decided to dedicate their life for Christ and lead a lonely life. (<http://www.stpetersandstpaulschurch.com/hist.aspx>).

They had several boarding places on their way. Everywhere they were protected by the arms of God through His messengers. Every experience they had gone through purified their lives immensely and

with the passage of years they became more and more saintly. The transformation of 'Shemavoon' to 'Kauma' and 'Agastia' to 'Folog' happened in these periods of time. Folog was asked to disguise herself as a male. Towards the end of Kauma's life he got an assistant named 'Yeshu'. She was a female dressed as a man, just like Folog.

In the mountains of Mecfrukth, there lived a saint named 'Gabroono'. He lived at the top of a big tree. A stream was flowing near the tree and it is believed that the angels of God made the stream for the holy saint. He spent fifty-three years of his life in the tree, in intense fasting and prayers. Mor Kauma chose this place to spend the rest of his life. He stayed in the hut at the top of the tree and Folog stayed at the bottom of the tree. Kauma became more glorious during this time. He was served by the angels of God. Nobody was allowed to enter the hut.

Mor Kauma came down from the hut only once to visit the tomb of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome. After several years, one day Mor Kauma called Folog and Yeshu and said: "my time has come. My body should be left in the hut until my bones are done with in the way God wants it to be." The next time when they saw him they were surprised to find him in the tree in the shape of a cross. They praised the almighty for what they have seen and then the angel of God appeared before them and revealed the truth that Mor Kauma had been praying for the last forty-five years in the shape of the cross. They also said that "God has given him to the people of the earth." From the very day he blesses humanity in ways enormous through his prayers.

The relics of Mor Kauma were brought to India by St. Osthathous Sleeba (d. 1930) and were interred at several churches, such as Neelimangalam, Malel curiz, Mazhuvannoor, Perumbavoor, Nadamel church, etc. The water in which the relics of Mor Kauma were kept was used by St. Osthathous Sleeba in healing several people which attracted many to Arthat Simhasana church. The feast of Mor Kauma is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 1 September and 15 November.

## **202. St. Kuriakose, and his mother Morth Yulithi**

**(A.D. 302 – 305?)**

Kuriakose (Quriaqos/Cyriacus) was born in AD 302 at Iconnium, Turkey. The mother of Kuriakose, Yulithi (in Greek *Julitta*), was a beautiful rich woman and a good Christian, a descendent of the Asian kings in Asia Minor where St. Paul and Barnabas founded the church. Yulithi spent most of her time praying and helping the poor. Yulithi's only son Kuriakose (Cyricus) grew up in a spiritual atmosphere. His father was an army officer, who died when Kuriakose was not even three years of age (n.a., 2016). When Yulithi's husband passed away all of a sudden, she had to raise her son by herself (<http://www.neamericandiocese.org/feasts-memorials.41/st-yulithi-st-kuriakose.aspx>; n.a., 2016).

Dioceltian, the Roman emperor, started the worst Christian persecution when Kuriakose was only three years old. Yulithi, in order to escape from persecution, fled to Selucia in Syria with two of her maids (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II). As the situation there was worse, they went to Tarsus, the birthplace of St. Paul. The Roman tetrarch in that city, Alexandros was also very cruel towards Christians. Yulithi was arrested and brought before Alexandros (Abraham, 1975). Because Yulithi confessed that she was a Christian as against all warnings of Alexandros, the soldiers threw Yulithi on the ground after taking away young Kuriakose from her. Alexandros promised to release her if she renounced Jesus Christ to which she answered that even a child, like her son, would not.

Alexandros asked Kuriakose: "Would you agree to worship the idols?" Young Kuriakose replied: "Your idols are made of stone and wood; my real God is Jesus Christ." When Yulithi heard this, she was filled with courage shouted: "I am a Christian; I worship the real God Jesus Christ who made heaven and earth". Then Kuriakose also shouted "I am a Christian; I am a Christian."



Soldiers continued beating Yulithi and Alexandros tried to play with the boy to draw his attention. The tetrarch got mad at the child as he was not falling into his trap and threw him to the ground. The young boy hit his head against one of the concrete steps and died instantly (Abdul Ahad, 1948). There is another version that when Kuriakose saw his mother being tortured he struggled against his detainers to get to her. In that act Kuriakose kicked Alexandros (Alexander) and scratched his face with his little nails. Alexandros in his fury threw the child down seizing him by foot, fracturing the skull and killing him on the spot (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II). When Yulithi saw this, she prayed: "Thank you my Lord because you considered Kuriakose worthy of receiving this glorious crown. I ask you now my Savior to take me also ...". On hearing this, the angered Roman emperor ordered to behead her. Thus she was beheaded while she was repeatedly saying: "I am a Christian, I am a Christian". At night, her two maids took the bodies and hid them in a cave near Tarsus.

When Constantine, the first Roman emperor, came to power, he built a church where the Mother and the child were martyred. Parts of the relics of these two saints are preserved in the Syrian St. Mary's Monastery in the valley of Nitron. There is also a historical church bearing their name in Tahta. The feast of St. Kuriakose and his mother Morth Yulithi is celebrated on 15 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **203. Mor Kuriakose, Metropolitan of Amid**

**(A.D. ? – 623)**

Mor Kuriakose (Quryaqos) was a doctor of the Church. He became a monk and studied at the monastery of Zakka near al-Raqqa. Later he became the disciple of Patriarch Peter III of Raqqa (A.D.

581-591) who consecrated him Metropolitan of Amid (Omeed or Amida) in c. A.D. 582/83 (Aphrem I, 2003).

In A.D. 609, he was replaced by Metropolitan Samuel for political reasons but was restored to his Bishopric later. Mor Kuriakose was praised for his efforts in bringing unity within the Church of Alexandria. He has prepared six canons which are incorporated in the *book of Hudoye* by Bar Hebraeus.

Mor Kuriakose passed way in A.D. 623 and he is commemorated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 3 August.

## **204. Moran Kuriakose, the Patriarch of Antioch (? - A.D. 817)**

Moran Kuriakose (Kyriakos/Cyriacus) born and raised in Tikrit, Iraq is well known among the Antiochian Patriarchs. He had his education at al Raqqa monastery and joined the monastery after his studies. A model monastic and a theologian he ascended the throne of Antioch on 17 August A.D. 793 (Wright, 1894; Aphrem I, 2000).

The venerable father was an expert in Canon laws. We can see the many interpretations and explanations of various canonic laws given by him while examining the Hoodaya canon developed by Bar Ebraya (A.D. 1226 – 1286). Some priests and laymen protested against his strictures and broke away from his determined methods in enforcing laws and regulations. Moran Kuriakose believed that laws and traditions should be practised diligently.

Michael Rabo, the Patriarch (A.D. 1126 – 1199) spoke of him thus –St. Kyriakos' Divine Providence is a notable book, which testifies his deep knowledge of the Holy Bible and the writings of the Church scholars. The seventy-two canons established by him and the pledge of allegiance to be taken by the priests before their ordination

are well known. His eulogy of Patriarch St. Severius (A.D. 459 -538), in the book *Vineyard of the Beloved*, and the composition for the Sunday commemorating the priests who have departed from us, deserve special mention. He has composed an *Anaphora* (Wright, 1894).

During the synod held at Kennisra (A.D. 797 – 98) his endeavours to reconcile Phantasiast / Julianist (a Christian sect that denied the reality of Christ's body) and to persuade them to join the mother Church did not bear fruit.

St. Kyriakos administered the Holy See for twenty-four years (A.D. 793 – 817) during which time he ordained eighty-six Prelates for the Church. He departed for the heavenly abode on 16 August (A.D. 817) at Mosul and was entombed at Tikrit, Iraq. The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates him on 16 August.

## **205. Ramban Kuriakose, Vanchithattil**

**(A.D. 1883 – 1967)**

Kurien (Kuriakose) was fourth among the six children born of Chacko Mathu, Malekkal, Kiliroor (Panampady) and Achamma. After completing his academic studies he joined Bishop's College, Calcutta to pursue theological studies as his passion was to serve as a priest.

Mor Coorilos Paulose ordained him a Korooyo on 11 September 1911. He was ordained Priest soon after. Mor Athanasius Paulose, Always elevated Fr. M. Kuriakose, Vanchithattil to the rank of a Ramban on 19 August 1934. (Rev. Fr. M. I. Paulose, Mulayirikkal also received the rank of a Ramban on the same day. Later Mor Sevarius of Cochin diocese).

Vanchithattil Ramban played a significant role in the services of the Church from the time he was ordained a priest. He assisted Mor Athanasius *Valiya thirumeni* of Always in the planning and formation of Malankara Sunday School Association (M. S. S. A.) in 1920.

Rev. Fr. Kuriakose was the main architect in founding the spiritual organisation of the Syrians, 'Religious Movement of the Ancient Syrians - R. M. A. S'. in 1930. During the Malankara visit of Patriarch Ignatius Elias III, Fr. Kuriakose accompanied him most of the time.

He played a pivotal role in the formation of 'The Brotherhood of St. Antony's – B. S. A. & the St. Mary's Sisterhood – S.M.S'.

Fifteen acres of land in Piramadam and ten acres of land in Kizhakkamablam for B.S. A. & S.M. S. respectively were donated for the throne of Antioch. The land was hence registered in the names of these spiritual organisations so that it will be used only for the intended purpose and function under the sanction and authority of the Patriarch.

Very Rev. Kuriakose Ramban Vanchithattil stayed at Manjinikkara dayaro from the time of its inception. Some time in between, he stayed at Piramadam and Panampady. From 1962 until his demise, he lived at Panampady. His final days were difficult even for his carers as he suffered from old age problems, failing memory and the severity of the monastic life had taken its toll on him.

Kuriakose Ramban has authored many ecclesiastical books pertaining to Church service. In most of them, the author is mentioned only in initials 'Fr. M. K'.. The available books under the authorship of this Syriac expert are The Holy Church & Faith, Monastic Life, St. Mary, St. Peter, the Chief of Apostles, and St. Antony.

Vanchithattil Ramban who should be remembered with gratitude by the Malankara Church passed away on 14 December 1967 and he was laid to rest at St. Mary's church, Panampady.

## **206. St. Lazarus of Bethany**

**(A.D. 5? – c. 65? )**

Lazarus of Bethany was the brother of Martha and Mary (John 11:1-2). All the three were beloved friends of Jesus (John 11:5). Jesus visited them very often (Luke 10:38-41; John 11). It is inferred that the family was rich as there were many condoling friends on the death of Lazarus and that Mary poured very expensive perfume on Jesus' feet (John 11:19, 12:3).

In the absence of Jesus, Lazarus died, and was entombed. Jesus, the Saviour, brought back Lazarus to life from the grave after four days (John 11:17,43-44). As a result many Jews believed in Jesus, but others reported the matter to the Pharisees, who convened a council to hasten the decree of the Master's death (John 11:45-46, 53-57).

Later, six days before the Passover, at a feast in some home in Bethany where Martha served, Lazarus sat at the table as one of the guests, when his sister Mary anointed the feet of Jesus (John 12:1-3). Many of the common people came there to see not only Jesus, but also the risen Lazarus. They believed in Jesus, and were enthusiastic in witnessing His triumphant entry into Jerusalem and persuaded others from the city to meet Him (John 12:9,11,17-18). For this reason the priests plotted to murder Lazarus (John 12:10). But that was not accomplished.

According to an old tradition of Epiphanius, Lazarus was 30 years old when he was raised from the dead, and lived 30 years thereafter (<http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/L/LAZARUS/>). Lazarus was believed to have followed St. Peter to Syria. According to another tradition, Lazarus and his sisters were put into a leaking boat by the Jews at Jaffa. However, they landed safely on the island of Cyprus. He was made bishop at Kition (Larnaka) and died there after thirty years (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV). There is

another tradition that they landed in the south-east of Gaul (Farmer, 1997). They could convert many people and there Lazarus became bishop.

There is evidence that the memory of Lazarus was devotionally honoured both in the early days at Jerusalem and later throughout the Church. Etheris, a Spanish lady pilgrim (in c. A.D. 290), has recorded that a procession took place on the Saturday before the Palm Sunday to the site from where Lazarus had been raised (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV; Farmer, 1997). Lazarus of Bethany is commemorated on the Saturday before the Palm Sunday in the Syrian Orthodox Church. The feast of Lazarus of Bethany is celebrated on the Saturday after the Fortieth Friday (in the Great Lent) in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **207. St. Longinus, the Martyr**

**(First Century A.D.)**

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

The name of the centurion, Longinus, is almost certainly derived from the Greek word 'longche' which means a lance (Thurston & Attwater, 1990; Farmer, 1997). The name of the soldier is given as Longinus in the later recensions of 'Gospel of Nichodimus' (also known as Acts of Pilate). The name Longinus is also found in the

Acts of Linus (Smith & Wace, 1882). According to tradition, the blood of Christ running down the lance (by which he pierced the side of Lord) touched his eyes and healed his failing sight (blindness?) due to age or infirmity. This miracle encouraged Longinus to leave the army and become a monk at Caesarea of Cappadocia. He saved many souls by his words and example.

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

## **208. St. Lucianos, the Martyr**

**(c. A.D. 240? - 311?)**

Lucianos (Lucianus) was born at Samosata, Syria in about A.D. 240 (Smith & Wace, 1887). He was educated at Edessa under Macarius. Lucianos went to Antioch, the high ranked theological school among the schools of the East (Wace, 1911). He became proficient in rhetoric and philosophy. Lucianos was ordained priest and later became head of the Antiochian school with Dorotheus. Even though Lucianos was a priest of Antioch, he was at Nicomedia in A.D. 303 when Diocletian first published his edicts against Christians.

Lucianos produced with the help of Dorotheus, a revised text of the Greek version of the Old Testaments and the four Gospels (Attwater & John, 1996). Many mistakes had crept into the Old and New Testaments because of the inaccuracy of transcribers and in other ways (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I). This revised version was in use in the churches of Constantinople, Asia Minor, and Antioch (Wace, 1911).

During the persecution of Diocletian, Lucianos was imprisoned for nine years at Nicomedia (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I;

Attwater & John, 1996). He was deprived of food for fourteen days and when almost dead of starvation, meat offered to idols was set before him which he did not touch. It was not in itself unlawful to eat such food as St. Paul had taught (1 Cor. 8:1-13). Lucianos was either starved to death or, more probably (according to St. Chrysostom) killed by the sword at Nicomedia in Bithynia and entombed at Drepanum, renamed as Helenopolis by Emperor Constantine (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I; Attwater & John, 1996). The feast of Lucianos is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 24 October.

## **209. St. Luke, the Evangelist**

**(? –A. D. 80?)**

St. Luke was born at Antioch and was a gentile. He was a physician and went to Macedonian Thebes during the reign of emperor Trajan. He was a disciple of apostles (Col. 4:14). Eusebius has mentioned that Luke is of Greek origin. St. Paul has recorded that Luke was with him (2 Timothy 4:11) at the close of his ministry (c. A. D. 67). Details of St. Luke are not available after the martyrdom of St. Paul.

St. Luke was a fellow labourer of St. Paul in the missionary tours (Philemon 1:24). They earned their own living. “Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me” (Acts 20:34). St. Paul did the tent-making and Luke practised medicine (Acts 18:3).

Luke travelled along with St. Paul (c. A. D. 51-58) to Jerusalem. It is assumed that when St. Paul was in prison, Luke had occasion to mingle with the other apostles and to collect materials to write the gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Luke is probably the only person among the gospel writers who is not of Jewish origin.



The gospel according to Luke is unique in certain respects. The childhood of Jesus is described in this gospel. The Magnificat is included in this gospel (Luke 1:46-56). Luke might have visited St. Mary to collect these details. Luke drew the picture of St. Mary for the first time, which is preserved at the St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Church, Jerusalem. Luke was not married. He wrote the gospel either at Achaia or Greece. He departed for heavenly abode at the age of eighty-four either at Boetia or Bithynia. The feast of St. Luke is celebrated on 18 October.

## **210. Lydia, who sold purple cloth**

### **(First Century)**

Lydia was a convert who was subsequently baptised (Acts 16:11-15). Lydia was originally from Thyatira but was living in Philippi when she met Paul on his second missionary journey. She was a seller of purple cloth, which Thyatira was famous for, being a centre of indigo trade.

Now-a-days it is possible to get any color we want. But it was not like that in the early days. Dyes were natural, not synthetic, and the dye for purple was made from a juice found in minute quantities in shellfish. It took thousands of crustaceans to make a yard or two of purple cloth. So, it was very expensive, worth its weight in silver it was said.

Lydia apparently had moved to Philippi (the first district of Macedonia which was also a Roman colony) to ply her trade in that city. Archaeologists have found among the ruins of Thyatira inscriptions relating to a dyers' guild in the city. It is possible that Lydia was a member of this guild. Lydia was also a worshipper of God, and, when Paul found her, she was honouring the Sabbath, which means she was likely a Jew. The account of Lydia's conversion says

that she had gathered with a group of other women on the Sabbath at a place of prayer near the river outside of Philippi. The fact that Paul, Timothy, Luke, and Silas came to the riverside to speak to the women most likely indicates there were not enough Jewish men in Philippi to open a synagogue there. But to have a synagogue you need ten men who will meet together to say prayers. Philippi, it seems, doesn't have a synagogue. If there's no synagogue, then Jews that happen to be in the town or passing through know to meet near the river on the sabbath to pray. That's where Lydia went.

Lydia heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Bible says that God opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying (Acts 16:14). After she believed, Lydia was baptized, along with the rest of her household. After Lydia's conversion and baptism, she insisted on Paul and his friends to stay at her home, if they judged her to be "a believer in the Lord" (Acts 16:15). Luke says that "she prevailed upon us," which indicates the fervency of her desire to be hospitable. The missionaries did indeed judge Lydia to be a true believer, and they stayed at her home while in Philippi.

Lydia's conversion marks the start of a new beginning. Up to that point, the gospel had not gone further west than Asia Minor. In fact, on this journey, Paul's original intention had been to stay in Asia, but God had changed his plans. The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision calling him westward across the Aegean Sea and into Macedonia (Acts 16: 6-10). Later in biblical history, we discover there is a church in Thyatira (Revelation 2:18). Paul did not visit that city in any of his missionary journeys, and we have no record of who might have established that church. The Bible does not say whether Lydia is the one who brought the gospel to her hometown.

## 211. St. Macarius of Egypt

(c. A.D. 300 – 390)

Macarius was born in the village Kemet of North Egypt around A.D. 300. He was known by different titles like ‘Macarius, the Great’, ‘Macarius, the Egyptian’, and ‘Macarius, the Elder’ (*Britannica*, 1988, Vol. 7; Chediath, 2006). Information about him is found in Rufinus’ Translation of the *Historica Monachorum* and *Lusaic History* by Palledius (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

Once a wicked woman who became pregnant accused Macarius of having defiled her and people dragged him along the streets (Moothedan, 2001). He did not defend his innocence. At the time of her delivery, she had prolonged labor. She had a dream in which God told her she could not deliver unless she confessed the name of the man who really violated her. She was thus compelled to disclose the identity and Macarius was freed from the accusation. People praised and glorified him.

He dwelt in a desert in Scete/Skete, Wadi-el-Natrum. When he was thirty, in A.D. 340 he was ordained a priest (Cayre, 1935; *Britannica*, 1988). He was blessed with the power of prophecy and healing. He was known as the patriarch of monasticism. He was well known like the Antonius of Egypt. He had visited Antonius many times (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Cayre, 1935; *Britannica*, 1988). He was very popular among the hermits of South Egypt. He lived the life of a hermit for sixty years.

Bishop Lucius of Alexandria banished Macarius to an island in the River Nile as he fought against the heretical teachings of Arius. Later he returned to Egypt and lived there until his death in A.D. 390.

Historians have made many references to his letter to his brothers ‘To the Friends of God’. Another renowned work is Fifty spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius, the Egyptian by A. J. Mason, 1921. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 19 January.

## **212. Mor Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem**

**(A.D. ? – c. . 334)**

Mor Macarius was a strong upholder of orthodoxy against Arianism. He was the Bishop of the Holy City from A.D. 312 to 334. Mor Macarius was present at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. He took a prominent role in drafting the creed (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). Soon after the council he was commissioned by Emperor Constantine to build the church at the Holy sepulchre at Jerusalem after St. Helena's discovery of the cross in A.D. 326.

It is opined that Mor Macarius was with Helena in search of the True Cross in Jerusalem. Later he and his fellow-Bishops were invited to build a church at Mamre. Macarius of Egypt is known as Macarius, the Elder and Macarius of Jerusalem is known as Macarius, the Lesser. The feast of Mor Macarius is celebrated on 20 March in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **213. Macrina, the Elder**

**(A.D. 270? - 340)**

Macrina, the Elder, paternal grandmother of St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Peter of Sebaste and St. Macrina the Younger, was born in about A.D. 270. She grew up a pagan in Neocaesarea. Most of the city she lived in was pagan, until St. Gregory Thaumaturgus became the bishop of Neocaesarea.

Macrina and her husband became acquainted with St. Gregory, and she eventually became his spiritual daughter (Farmer, 1997). St. Macrina so loved and revered him that she kept his relics with her during her entire life, finally settling them in a chapel at the family's estates at Annesi and cherished the wisdom he passed on to her.

St. Macrina lived in Neocaesarea during some of the worst persecutions of the early Christian era. In the persecution of Galerius and Maximin, Macrina and her husband left home and escaped to a hill forest of Pontus where they lived for seven years (Smith & Wace, 1882; Wace, 1911). They endured many hardships, but patiently waited and prayed for the persecutions to end. They survived on vegetables for over seven years.

St. Gregory Nazianzen describes the last persecution under Maximian as the most frightful and severe of all. Once the persecution had died down, Macrina and her family returned to Neocaesarea in A.D. 311. A short time later, the Roman authorities stripped them off everything they owned and turned them out into the streets. With nothing more than the clothes on her back to call her own, St. Macrina was forced to rely on the generosity and mercy of God in order to survive. Begging in the streets, telling stories for the few paltry coins it brought, and accepting the cast-off food and clothing of her former equals, she endured their pity, and the insults and mockery of the pagans in her town. She must have learned valuable lessons in humility.

Macrina raised her child, St. Basil (the Elder), as a single parent. In spite of the obstacles, she succeeded in passing on her faith and tradition to him. He became a lawyer and teacher of rhetoric, married Emmelia, a beautiful and devout Christian. Their household was remarkable for generosity and hospitality to the poor.

St. Basil and St. Emmelia's children, St. Macrina's grandchildren, nine of whom survived to adulthood, were raised in an intensely Christian atmosphere, taught to read from the Psalms and were thoroughly immersed in a Christian life. She taught her grandchildren to read from the Bible, trained them in piety and practical Christian values and told them stories of her spiritual father, St. Gregory Thaumaturgis.

Among the siblings four of them held so strongly to the faith their grandmother had taught them that we recognize them today as

saints: St. Macrina the Younger, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Peter of Sebaste (<http://myocn.net/macrina-elder/>).

St. Macrina the Elder passed away around A.D. 340, when her eldest grandchild was only twelve. She never lived to see her grandchildren's success or their spirited defense of our faith. She left no letters, homilies or books. But by simply living what she believed, by simply being a mother and a grandmother, by teaching her children and grandchildren by word and example, by telling her children stories of her spiritual father and through her steadfast faith, St. Macrina the Elder became a bridge of theology, passing on the tradition entrusted to her. St. Macrina is commemorated on 14 January and 30 May.

## **214. St. Macrina, the younger**

**(A.D. 327 – 380)**

Macrina was born in A.D. 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 (A.D. 329 – 397), Mor Gregorius of Nyssa (A.D. 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). She is known as 'Macrina, the younger' to distinguish her from 'Macrina, the elder' her paternal grandmother (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

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 A.D. 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 A.D. 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, Naucratius 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 A.D. 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 A.D. 373 in the presence of Macrina and Peter. She was entombed in the church of the Forty Martyrs.

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

Mor Gregory of Nyssa, another brother of Macrina visited her in A.D. 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 Ibora came along with a group of priests to attend her funeral. She was entombed 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.

## **215. St. Malke**

**(A.D. 222 – 315)**

Malke was born to a wealthy family in Qulezmo in A.D. 222. Her parents were Yuhanon and Rafkha, sister of St. Augen. Yuhanon and Rafkha were childless for long years. Shufny their first child was dumb. After three years, they were blessed with a son. When the speechless Shufny was asked to name her brother, she uttered the name Malke for the first time.

When he was five years old, he was tutored by Samuel on the precepts of Christian belief. He was an excellent student. When he

was sixteen, he wanted to become an ascetic. However, his parents wanted him to take a wife; but he left home with his friend Elisha in A.D. 245 to Mount Izlo and entered monastic life.

There he stayed in the monastery of his uncle Mor Augen. He and his friend stayed there for four years and then went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The following three years were spent in Egypt. They proceeded to Nisbis where Mor Yacoub (d. A.D. 338) ordained them priests (Roberts & Donalson, 1956).

As he preferred a life of solitude, he went to Arkah, a village in Turkey. Once he saw a group of boys playing. A young boy had climbed up a fig tree and was scared by an evil spirit at the foot of the tree (Astrasis). Malke's prayer drove away the spirit. He constructed a monastery on the location where God exiled the devil. The people of the village came in hordes to assist in the construction. Another miracle attributed to him is the curing of Emperor Constantine with his intercessory prayers.

Malke was aware that his death was near. He blessed the people thus, "My beloved people, always be merciful and dedicate yourselves to prayer and fasting. Let truth, love and peace adorn all your lives. Fight evil with good." He passed away on a Thursday, 14 April A.D. 315. The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates him on 21 April ([www.soc-wus.org](http://www.soc-wus.org)).

## **216. St. Mammias of Caesarea, the Martyr**

**(A.D. 260? – 275?)**

Mamas (Mammias) was born in Paphlagonia, Asia Minor in c. A.D. 260. His parents, Theodotus and Rufina, were pious and illustrious Christians. The parents of the saint were arrested by the pagans for the open confession of their faith and were locked up in prison in Caesarea in Cappadocia.

Knowing his own bodily weakness, Theodotus prayed that the Lord would take him before being subjected to tortures. The Lord heard his prayer and he died in prison. St. Rufina also died after him, after giving birth to a premature son. She entrusted him to God, beseeching Him to be the Protector and Defender of the orphaned infant (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2008/09/02/102459-martyr-mamas-of-caesarea-in-cappadocia>).

God heard the dying prayer of St. Rufina. A rich Christian widow named Ammia reverently entombed the bodies of Sts. Theodotus and Rufina, and she took the boy home and raised him as her own son. St. Mamas was educated and he grew up in the Christian Faith under the care of his foster mother. Mamas by means of prudent conversations and personal example converted many of his own peers to Christianity.

The governor, Democritus, was informed of this, and the fifteen-year-old Mamas was arrested and brought to trial. However, Democritus decided not to subject him to torture, but instead sent him off to Emperor Aurelian (A.D. 270-275). The saint bravely confessed that he was a Christian before the Emperor. Subsequently, the emperor subjected the youth to cruel tortures. They tried to drown the saint, but an angel of the Lord saved St. Mamas. He then lived in the wilderness, not far from Caesarea. There the saint built a small church and lived in strict observance of monastic practices.

Soon he received a remarkable power over the forces of nature; wild beasts inhabiting the surrounding wilderness gathered at his abode and listened to the reading of the Holy Gospel. St. Mamas nourished himself on the milk of wild goats and deer. The saint did not ignore the needs of his neighbors. He prepared cheese from milk and gave it freely to the poor. Soon the fame of St. Mamas spread throughout Caesarea.

The governor sent soldiers to arrest him. When they encountered St. Mamas on the mountain, the soldiers did not recognize him, and mistook him for a simple shepherd. The saint then invited them to his dwelling, gave them a drink of milk and then revealed his name, knowing

that death for Christ awaited him. The servant of God told the servants of the Emperor to go ahead of him into Caesarea, promising that he would soon follow. The soldiers waited for him at the gates of the city, and St. Mamas, accompanied by a lion, met them there.

Surrendering himself into the hands of the torturers, St. Mamas was brought to trial under a deputy governor named Alexander, who subjected him to intense and prolonged tortures. When they threw St. Mamas to the wild beasts, those creatures would not touch him. Finally, one of the pagan priests stabbed him with a trident. Mortally wounded, St. Mamas went out beyond the city limits. There, in a small stone cave, he entrusted his soul to God. He was entombed by believers at the place of his death.

Christians soon began to receive help from him in their afflictions and sorrows. St. Basil, the Great (Homily 26) and St. Gregory of Nazianzen (Oration 43) spoke very highly of St. Mamas. “Remember the holy martyr, you who live here and have him as a helper. You who call on his name have been helped by him. Those in error he has guided into life ....”(Butler, 1866).

Saint Mamas of Caesarea (Mammas) was martyred c. 275 at the age of 15 in Cappadocia in the persecution of Aurelius (Smith & Wace, 1882). He preached Christianity during his teenage years, and a lion from the fields is said to have remained with him as companion. The Syriac Orthodox Church commemorates the Martyr Mammas on 3 May, 29 May and 2 September.

## **217. St. Marina of Antioch**

**(A.D.? – 304?)**

Marina or Margret celebrated as a saint was martyred during the persecution of Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 284 – 305). She was born in Pisidia on the border of Antioch and the River Orenthos. She lost

her mother when she was five years old. Dasius, her father who was an idolater gave her into the care of a nursemaid who raised her on Christian faith. Learning about it her father disowned her (White, 1991) and drove her out of the house. Marina was well brought up as a chaste person with a fine character as her caretaker was a just and pure woman.

She read the biographies of martyrs and about their deep faith. She realized how their faith in Christ transformed ordinary people into martyrs. She was also aware of the persecution they suffered under kings and other administrators. She had a zealous desire to become a saint. One day when Marina and her foster mother had gone out Alupharnus sent some soldiers to arrest the Christians. When they approached her Marina prayed, “O! God, have mercy on me. Please do not allow my spirit to be sullied by those who defy God. Bless me to remain fearless in the True Faith. Free me as a bird saved from a hunter and a fish saved from a net and strengthen me to answer them boldly.” The soldiers informed their master about her.

She engaged Alupharnus over a long and active discussion on God, the Creator of the heaven and the earth. He tried to persuade her to marry him with the offer to make her the queen if she followed his advice. Seeing that she would not renounce her faith he turned to threats of persecution. Marina replied, “I believe the merciful God will strengthen me. You have power only over my body but you cannot touch my spirit. I will be in the company of the wise virgins who awaited the arrival of the bridegroom. I will have a share in their faith.”

As she refused to accept his conditions, she was subjected to the most brutal maltreatment. She continued praying, “O! God, those who await You are never ashamed. Show me Your path. Walk me in Your way of truth. I confess Your name. Shower Your blessings upon me.” Hot wires were applied on her body and she was raked with iron combs. Still she refused to yield seeking the help of her Divine Father, “O! Lord, do not separate yourself from me. You are my strength. Relieve my life from the hands of the strong dog.”

Soon after, she was imprisoned. A bright light engulfed her at night when she was praying. All her lacerations were healed by the power of God. The authorities were astounded to see her healed body the next day morning. They decided to burn her at the stake. As the soldiers got ready to carry out the orders, she went on praying. There was an earthquake and a voice was heard saying, "You are blessed. You will receive the crown of chastity." Amazed at the sight, those who were present glorified the True God. They were all beheaded and they too attained martyrdom.

Marina was taken out of the city precincts as she proved to be a threat to their gods and idols. She prayed and sought intercession for all those who were facing trials. It is believed that she was beheaded on 2 December. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates her feast on 20 June. Some churches celebrate the event on 2 December as well.

## **218. St. Mark, the Evangelist**

**(? –A. D. 68)**

Mark was born either at Jerusalem (The new encyclopedia Britannica, 1988) or at Irannappola, Africa (Abdul Ahad, 1948). The birth of Mark is believed to be at Jerusalem for the house of Mark's mother, Mary, was at Jerusalem. Mark is also referred to as John Mark (Acts 12:12).

A sixth century inscription discovered from the site of the house of Mary reads as follows: "This is the house of Mary, mother of John, called Mark. After the ascension of our Lord, Jesus Christ, into heaven, the holy apostles proclaimed this church in the name of Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Renewed after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in the year A. D. 73."

Several important events took place in this house, now called St. Mark's church, near the Jewish Quarter, Jerusalem. They are: the last supper and the washing of feet (John 13:12); the Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4); the election of Mathias (Acts 1:21-26); and the council of the apostles in A. D. 51 presided over by St. James, the brother of Jesus Christ and the first Bishop of Jerusalem; and St. Peter came to this house upon release from prison by an angel (Acts 12:12-13).

Mark was related to Barnabas, a Levite, and so he is believed to be a Levite (White, 1991). Mark appears to have been intimately associated with St. Peter and might have been converted by St. Peter (Abdul Ahad, 1948). St. Peter refers to him as "Mark, my son" (1 Peter 5:13). Mark is believed to be one among the 70 (72 ?) emissaries Lord, Jesus Christ, had appointed (Luke 10:1). "Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth around his body (a cloak). They tried to arrest him, but he ran away naked, leaving the cloth behind" (Mark 14:51-52). This young man is believed to be Mark. Mark was a close associate of St. Peter and St. Paul. Mark might have spent at least five years in Rome.

There are different opinions regarding the Gospel according to Mark. Pappias (A. D. 65-135) suggests that the gospel was written at the request of Romans to record an accurate account of Jesus Christ from the mouth of St. Peter. The gospel was written either at Rome (Encyclopedia Americana, 1988) or in Italy around A. D. 60 (Hoever, 1989; White, 1991).

St. Peter ordained Mark Bishop for Alexandria probably in A. D. 61. Abdul Ahad (1948) has described in detail about his arrival in Alexandria. While travelling in Alexandria, he met a cobbler by name Anianos. His finger was punctured of the needle and he was in pain. Mark made clay and anointed his finger. Anianos was healed immediately. Anianos took Mark to his home where he preached about Jesus Christ. Several people believed in Jesus and were baptized. In A. D. 64, Mark ordained three Priests and seven Deacons. Anianos

was appointed as their chief (Episcopo). Then he left for Rome where he spent time with St. Peter and St. Paul until their Martyrdom in A. D. 67.

Mark returned to Alexandria where the Church was flourishing. The gentiles wanted to kill Mark. On the celebration of God Serabis, they tied Mark to the tail of a horse and made it run until his body was disfigured. He was thrown into a prison for he was not dead. The next day he was further tortured and killed. The year of the martyrdom is given as A. D. 68 by Abdul Ahad (1948) and A. D. 75 by some others (e.g., White, 1991).

Gentiles put the body of Mark to fire. Immediately thunder and shower occurred and the fire was extinguished. Seeing these the gentiles ran away. The disciples of St. Mark entombed the body at Alexandria. The feast of St. Mark is celebrated on 25 April.

## **219. St. Markos, Solitary**

### **(Fifth Century)**

Marcus, the Ascetic (hermit/solitary), was a Christian theologian, saint, and ascetic writer of the fifth century AD ([https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Mark%20the%20Hermit&item\\_type=topic](https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Mark%20the%20Hermit&item_type=topic)).

His interest was in the spiritual life as it should be led by monks. He belonged to the Antiochene School and shows himself to be a disciple of John Chrysostom (d. 407).

Various theories about his period and works have been advanced. He probably spent his time in the desert east of Palestine (near St. Sabas) or at Egypt (Eapen, 2006). He was a contemporary of Nestorius. He has written on baptism and repentance, and a refutation of the teaching of Nestorius. His writings dealt with the grace of God through baptism and an analysis of the nature of temptations. He



departed for his eternal rest probably before the Council of Chalcedon (451).

Two feast days are mentioned in the Calendar of Saints (Rajan, 2004) - - of Marcos (hermit) on 5 March and Markose (Solitary) on 27 October. It is not certain whether the feast day is of the same saint.

## **220. St. Martha, mother of St. Simeon, the Stylite (Younger)**

**(A. D. ? - 551)**

St. Martha, mother of St. Simeon the Stylite (Younger), was a native of Antioch. From her early years she yearned for monasticism, but her parents persuaded her to marry. Her husband, John, soon died, and righteous Martha with all her strength devoted herself to the raising of her son. She was an example of high Christian temperament for her son. She often visited the temple of God, she attended church services attentively and with piety, and frequently received the Holy Mysteries of Christ.

Saint Martha rose up to pray each night, and her prayers were offered with heartfelt warmth and tears. She particularly venerated St. John the Forerunner, who was for her a protector, frequently appearing to her in visions. St. Martha was charitable towards the poor, she fed and clothed them, she visited the convalescent and she attended to the sick, she buried the dead, and for those preparing to receive holy Baptism she made the baptismal garments with her own hands.

Saint Martha was a model of chaste and pious life and by her example she guided many on the pathway to salvation. When her son, Saint Simeon, had become a renowned ascetic, she urged him not to exalt himself for his own efforts, but to thank God for everything.

The time of her death was revealed to St. Martha. (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2008/07/04/101895-venerable-martha-the-mother->

of-the-venerable-simeon-stylites-the). St. Martha died in A. D. 551 and her body was buried at the place which witnessed the ascetic deeds of her son, St. Simeon the Stylite (<http://enacademic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/11702887>). The feast of Morth Martha is celebrated on 6 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

**Note:** The period of St. Simeon, the Stylite (Elder) is from A. D. 390 to A. D. 459 (Wright, 1894; Smith & Wace, 1882; Ferguson & Wright, 1988).

## **221. Mor Marutha, the Maphrian of Tigris (c. A.D. 569 – 649)**

Mor Marutha was born in Sharsak, a village in Bethnehudra in Mosul around A.D. 569 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 Shem’vun 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 A.D. 628 he was ordained Maphrian of Tigris by Mor Athanasius I Gammolo (A.D. 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 Azarbaijan, 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 *Qurbano Thakso*, speeches for some feasts are included in this. It is recorded in the writings of Bar Sleeti (d. 1171) that the Nineva lent, (the three days' lent) was put into force by Mor Marutha.

Mor Marutha passed away in A.D. 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.

## **222. St. Mary Magdalene**

**(A.D.? – c. 63?)**

Mary Magdalene was born in Magdla (Israel) on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee near Tiberius. 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 entombed (*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.

## 223. St. Mary of Egypt

(A.D. ? – 422?)

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

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

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

Then, she returned to the icon of St. Mary to give thanks. There she heard a voice which said: "Go over to Jordan and you shall find rest."

Mary bought a few loaves of bread from a baker and enquired the way to Jordan and reached there at the church of St. John, the Baptist, on the bank of the river. She crossed over river Jordan into the wilderness and remained there for forty-seven years. She had seen no human being and had lived on edible plants and on dates. She was not able to read and God himself had taught her the mysteries of faith. Mary requested Zosimus not to divulge what she had said. Zosimus promised to meet her again in Jordan on the Maundy Thursday of the following year to give her holy communion. The next year, on the Maundy Thursday Mary received communion from Zosimus at the appointed meeting place and ate three lentils which Zosimus offered. She went back walking over the river. But when Zosimus went back into the desert to keep his second appointment Mary was found dead. Zosimus entombed the body of Mary. A lion helped to dig her grave.

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

## **224. St. Mary, Mother of God**

**(B. C. 14? - A. D. 37?)**

Mary was born in B. C. 14 in the little Galilean village of Nazareth to a holy couple Joachim and Ann of the royal race of David. They were already far advanced in age and had almost ceased to hope that God would bless them with a child. Their long-felt desire was gratified by the birth of Mary, the chosen one of Adam's race.

Joachim was the second son of Eleazar of the tribe of Juda and the race of David. Ann (Deena) is of the tribe of Levi and the race of Aron. Joachim is also known as Yunochir or Heli (Abdul Ahad, 1948).

The gospels refer to Joseph to whom Mary was betrothed as the son of Jacob (Mathew 1:16) and the son of Heli. The genealogy of Joseph makes it evident that Joseph is the grandson of Matthan (Mathew 1:15-16; Luke 3:24). One explanation of the above reference to Joseph as the son of Jacob and Heli is that Joseph is the son of Jacob by birth and Joseph is the son-in-law of Heli (Heli's daughter Mary is betrothed to Joseph). This genealogical analysis is available in Abdul Ahad (1948). However, the Orthodox study Bible (1993) advances another possibility. There was a law (Deut. 25:5,6) that the brother of a man who died without a child should marry the wife of the deceased and raise up an heir for his brother. The most likely explanation is that Jacob and Heli were born of the same mother, but of different fathers. When Heli died after a childless marriage, his brother Jacob married the widow, who became the mother of Joseph. Joseph was a carpenter from Nazareth. He had seven children. James, Joses, Judas and Simon are referred to as brothers of Jesus Christ (Mark 6:3).

Mary was given to the Jerusalem temple at the age of three in accordance with a vow. Until the age of thirteen Mary helped in the church by stitching the vestments and preparing the accoutrements. It was customary that children beyond the age of thirteen were not allowed to stay in the church. Thus, Mary was entrusted to the care of Joseph of Nazareth.

Mary appears in the New Testament first when the Angel Gabriel announces the message of the favour of God (Luke 1: 28). Then Mary is seen, when Jesus was dedicated in the Jerusalem temple for naming (Luke 2:21-22), when they went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover (Luke 2:41-42), at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1), when a multitude was listening to Jesus (Mark 2:31), at the cross of Jesus (John 19:25) and when Mary together with disciples (Acts 1:14) was praying in the upper room (St. Mark, Jerusalem). The role and virtues of St. Mary, the Mother of God, can be gauged from these verses in the Bible.

All Christians accept St. Mary as a model to emulate. The early Church at Jerusalem had a close association with St. Mary. Protestant theologians content that Mary was a passive instrument in the salvific act of Jesus Christ. However, St. Mary was not timidly submissive for she had the free will to choose. This is evident from her response: “Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). There is another argument that Mary became the Mother of God ‘only by grace’ (*sola gratia*). This would suggest that God unilaterally imposed the mission on her. It would again go against the basic theological teaching of free will. St. Paul suggests the need for meaningful response to the divine call as is evident in the following verses. “We beg you who have received God’s grace not to let it be wasted” (2 Cor 6:1). “Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation” (Phil. 2:12).

There is an important role for St. Mary in the redemption of mankind. However, the Catholic and Protestant Churches occupy the opposite poles on this matter. The Catholic Church goes to the extent qualifying St. Mary as *corredemptrix* (Macquarrie, 1991). This term projects St. Mary to have an equal status in the redemptive act of Jesus Christ. The Protestant Church considers Mary as a lady used for Jesus to take flesh from, which was possible for any woman (Genesis 3:15; Gal 4:4). The Syriac Orthodox Church qualifies St. Mary with different names, which are indicators of the theological teachings about her. Perpetual virgin (Yacoub III, 1985), Mother of God (Cayre, 1935), Mother of Church (Bernard, 1960), first among the saints and the second Eve are a few of the qualifications. The teachings of Patriarch Severios of Antioch and that of Philoxinos of Mabbug are relevant in understanding the concepts about St. Mary.

The Syriac Orthodox Church does not accept the immaculate conception of St. Mary as declared by Pope Pius IX in 1854. In contrast, Mary was born with the original sin. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). “Therefore, just as through one man’s sin entered the world, and death



through sin, and thus death spread to all man, because all sinned” (Rom 3:23; Rom. 5:12). “All” refers to mankind and it will be reasonable to include St. Mary in the group. The concluding prayer of the holy Qurbono after the final blessing includes St. Mary for whom the sacrifice was made.

The New Testament is silent about the life of St. Mary after Pentacost. Some writers content that she lived with John, the disciple, as entrusted by Jesus Christ at the cross (John 19:25-27). A few suggest that she spent the rest of her life at Ephesus and departed for heavenly abode in A. D. 66? However, Abdul Ahad (1948) suggests that St. Mary lived only for five years after the ascension of Our Lord and passed away at Jerusalem at the age of fifty-one. The body of St. Mary was wrapped in linen cloths used for the burial of Jesus and entombed in the Gethsemane. After that St. Mary was taken to paradise with her body in the company of angels and saints. The intercession of St. Mary is a basic tenet of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

## **225. Mor Mathai, Monk**

### **(4<sup>th</sup> Century)**

Mor Mathai was born in the early 4th century in the city of Amid or in an adjacent village. Little is known about his early life. Mor Mathai was a monk in that region when the anti-Christian persecution of Julian the apostate took place (<https://www.sor.eua.edu>).

In 361, Mor Mathai and other monks were forced to flee to Nineveh where he founded a hermitage on Alfaf Mountain in the Nineveh plains. It was during that time that he met prince St. Behnam, the son of Sencharib, while on a hunting trip. Mathai taught him the principles of Christianity and Behnam became a disciple of Mattai. Impressed by his teachings, Behnam went back to his mother and persuaded her to let him

take his sister Sara, who had leprosy, to the saint. She was cured by the saint and after the miracle, both Sara and Behnam were baptized by the saint along with Behnam's forty companions.

On learning of his children's conversion, King Sencharib became angry and threatened them with severe punishment if they did not renounce their Christian faith. Behnam and Sarah refused to renounce their faith and tried to escape with some of their friends, but the king's soldiers found them and killed them. They both received the crown of martyrdom.

Later an evil spirit possessed the king. It tormented him with pain and fear. The worried queen sent for St. Mathai, knowing in her heart that the saint had indeed brought about the cure for her daughter. When St. Mathai arrived, he prayed for the king and the Lord immediately healed him. The king was very glad to be free of the terrible evil spirit and he and the queen listened to St. Mathai's words about the all powerful and true God. Both the king and the queen believed in our Lord Jesus Christ and were baptized (Rajan, 2017). Eventually the entire city believed in our Lord Jesus. To show his gratitude, the king built a monastery for St. Mathai in the Alfarf Mountain 35 km northeast of Mosul where Mor Mathai healed his daughter. The bodies of his children, Sts. Behnam and Sarah were entombed in it. Many healings and miracles are attributed to the relics of St. Behnam and Sarah. The feast of Mor Mathai is celebrated on 18 September in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **226. St. Mathew, the Disciple**

**(? - A. D. 70?)**

Mathew is one among the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. He is from Nazareth or Galilee and was of the Essakkar tribe (Abdul Ahad, 1948; White, 1991). He was a Jew and the son of Alphaeus

(Mark 2:14). His original name might have been Levi and he accepted the name Mathew after becoming a disciple. In Greek, the word for disciple is “Mathethai.” Thus, it is likely that the Jew (Levi) was later known as Mathew in the Greek. The evolution of the name is detailed in some books (e. g., Kallarangatt & Puthukulagara, 2001).

Mathew was called by Jesus while he was sitting at tax collectors place (Mathew 9:9; Luke 5:27) at Capernaum in the territory ruled by Herod Antipas ( The new encyclopaedia Britannica, 1988; Mc Birnie, 2002). Mathew means the “gift of God.” The name of Mathew appears in the list of disciples as seventh or eighth (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Mathew 10:3). This suggests that he joined the disciples much later than the other disciples.

Jews scorned the tax collectors. Tax collectors collected tax for the Roman government. They were considered to be anti-nationalistic. It was difficult to collect tax from Jews for they thought that they were God’s people and giving tax was to submit themselves to other people. Therefore, native Jews were appointed as tax collectors for the Roman government. A tax collector was a corrupt person and it was an embarrassment to be known as a collaborator of Rome. Several verses in gospels allude to this hostile attitude. “. . . saw Him eating with tax collectors and sinners . . .” (Mark 2:16). “. . . let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Mathew 18:17).

According to Pappias of Hierapolis, Mathew composed the gospel in Armaic (Eusebius, 1980). Since the time of Iraneous (c. A. D. 130-200) it is believed that the gospel according to Mathew in Greek is the translation of the original text in Armaic (Encyclopedia Americana, 1988). The gospel was written during the second half of the first century. The gospel was designed to convince that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus, Our Lord, in whom all the promises about the Messianic Kingdom had been fulfilled.

Mathew evangelized a number of countries, which include Ethiopia, Persia and Parthia. Mathew went to Ethiopia during the reign of King Aeglippus. He raised the King’s son (from the dead)

and several people believed in Christ. At his direction they constructed a church, which was named “the Resurrection Church.” An antique document, *The Contendings of the Apostles*, has reference to this incident (Kallarangatt & Puthukulangara, 2001). Mathew spent twenty-three years in Ethiopia.

It is uncertain whether he died a natural death or received the crown of martyrdom. Many authors also give the place of martyrdom differently. A few suggest that he was martyred during the rule of Emperor Domician at Ethiopia. The place of burial is either Jabala or Antioch according to Mor Michael Rabo and Mor Bar Saleebi (cited in, Abdul Ahad, 1948). Robert Guiscard transferred the holy relics of St. Mathew to the Cathedral in Salerno, Italy from Brittany (White, 1991; Mc Birnie, 2002).

Six feast days of St. Mathew are given in the Syriac Orthodox Church calendar. They are: February 24, May 20 (Four Evangelists), June 30 (the twelve disciples), August 24, September 21, and November 16. These different dates suggest that the relics of St. Mathew were transferred to different places during the course of time.

## **227. St. Mathias, the Disciple**

**(? – A.D. 64? )**

St. Mathias (Matthias) 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 is a Gospel according to Mathias as recorded by Origen (Quasten, 1949).

There are different opinions about the martyrdom of St. Mathias. One is he was stoned to death by Jews in Jerusalem on 14 May, A.D. 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 (A.D. 311 - 328?) and later it was interred at Trier, Germany (Mc Birnie, 2002). His feast is celebrated on 30 June (twelve Apostles), 4 March and 24 August.

## 228. St. Maximus, the Confessor

(c. A.D. 580? – 662)

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

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

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

## **229. Moran Meletius, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(? – A.D. 381)**

Moran Mor Meletius who was the Patriarch of Antioch was born of wealthy and aristocratic parents belonging to Melitene in Lesser/Minor Armenia (Douglas, 1978).

Meletius who had been the friend of Acacius of Caesarea was the metropolitan of Sebastea (Smith & Wace, 1882). He later ascended the throne of Antioch as its Patriarch (A.D. 360).

Patriarch Mor Meletius had selected John Chrysostom, ‘the Gold Tongued’ (A.D. 347–407) for missionary work, sent him for theological studies and ordained him a full Deacon in A.D. 381 (Douglas, 1978).

Meletius arrived in Antioch at a difficult time when Eudoxius (A.D. 360) was transferred to Constantinople. Eudoxius was a supporter of Arius and Mor Osthathios (d. A.D. 380?), Mor Paulinos (d. A.D. 380?), and Mor Athanasius (d. A.D. 373) of Sebastea championed the cause of Mor Meletius. The definition regarding ‘the substance of the Son’ in the Nicaea Creed was the topic of contention. Mor Meletius defined the Son as of the same substance as the Father; “three persons are conceived in the mind, but we speak as if addressing one.” This explanation led to arguments and even physical assaults (Smith & Wace, 1882).

Mor Baselios (A.D. 330 – 379) supported Mor Meletius over this issue (Cross & Livingstone, 1997). The divisions which followed led to the banishment of Mor Meletius. Emperor Valens banished him twice from the country (A.D. 365 -366, 371 – 78).

In November A.D. 361, when Constantius died and Emperor Julian ascended the throne as the next emperor Mor Meletius returned to Antioch. Those who had accepted the Nicaea Creed came to a consensus and rejected heresies like Arianism, Sabellianism and Macedonism.

Emperor Theodosius respected Mor Meletius most reverentially. Mor Meletius presided over the synod of Constantinople (A.D. 381). To the great grief of every one, he passed away on one of the days while the Council was sitting (Smith & Wace, 1882; Cross & Livinstone, 1974; Malaty, 2005). The funeral speech of Mor Gregorios of Nyssa (A.D. 335 – 394) and the elegant panegyric by Mor John Chrysostom, the Gold-tongued (A.D. 347 - 407) are brilliant testimonies for his virtuous life. Gregorios (Gregory) of Nyssa referred Moran Meletius as ‘the sweet calm look, the radiant smile, the kind hand seconding the kind voice’ (Smith & Wace, 1882).

His mortal remains were taken to Antioch to be interred near the tomb of Babylus (d. A.D. 250). The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 12 February.

## **230. St. Mennas, the Martyr**

**(A.D.? – c. 304)**

Mennas (Menas) of Egypt was a soldier in the Roman army (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV). He served in the Cotyaeum region of Phrygia under the centurion Firmilian during the reigns of the Emperors Diocletian (A.D. 284-305) and Maximian (A.D. 305-311). When the emperors began the fiercest persecution against Christians, the saint refused to serve these persecutors. He removed his soldier’s belt (a sign of military rank) and withdrew to a mountain, where he lived an ascetic life of fasting and prayer (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/0577/11/11/103277-martyr-menas-of-egypt>).

Once Mennas happened to arrive in the city during a pagan festival. He preached faith in Christ, the Savior of the world. At his trial before the prefect Pyrrhus, the saint bravely confessed his faith, saying that he had come to denounce the impious. The prefect was angered, and had Menas arrested.



Pyrrhus offered to restore the saint's former rank if he would offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. When he refused, he was put to cruel tortures, and was beheaded. This occurred in the year 304 (312?). Christians gathered the martyr's relics by night and hid them until the end of the persecution. Later, they were brought to Egypt and placed in a church dedicated to St. Mennas southwest of Alexandria.

The saint received grace from God to work miracles, and to help those in need. St Mennas is noted for healing various illnesses, delivering people from possession by demons, and as a protector, especially during times of war.

The feast of St. Mennas of Egypt is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 22 October and 11 November.

## **231. Prophet Micah**

**(8<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.)**

Prophet Micah, the 6th of the twelve minor Prophets, descended from the tribe of Judah and was a native of the city of Morastha, to the south of Jerusalem, wherefore he was called a Morasthite. His prophetic service began around the year 778 before the birth of Christ and continued for almost 50 years under the kings of Judah – Joatham, Akhaz, and the Righteous Hezekiah (721-691 B.C.).

He was a contemporary of Prophet Isaiah. His denunciations and predictions were in regard to the separate kingdoms both of Judah and of Israel. He foresaw the misfortunes, threatening the kingdom of Israel before its destruction, and of Judah, during the incursions under the Assyrian emperor Sennacherib. To him belongs a prophecy about the birth of the Saviour of the world: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5: 2).

From the words of Prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 26: 18-19), the Jews evidently were afraid to kill Prophet Micah. His relics were discovered in the IV Century after the Birth of Christ at Baraphsatia, through a revelation to the bishop of Eleutheropolis, Zeuinos. The feast of Prophet Micah is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 10 and 14 August.

## **232. Patriarch Mor Michael Rabo, the Great (A. D. 1126-1199)**

Mor Michael Rabo was born in A.D. 1126 in Melitine (Malatya, Turkey). Michael's father Elia of Melitine was a pious Priest of the Qandasi family. This family has produced many prelates for the Church such as Athanasius Zakka, Metropolitan of Ayn Zarba (+1166); Michael's uncle, Maphryono Gregorius (Jacob) Yakoob (1189-1203); and Patriarch Michael II Junior, the nephew of Mor Michael (A.D. 1292-1312).

Young Michael became a monk at the monastery of Mor Barsawmo near Melitine and was later ordained Priest and was appointed abbot of the monastery. The Patriarch Mor Athanasius VII bar Qutreh (1138-1166) passed away and the Holy See became vacant. Subsequently, the Holy Synod unanimously elected Ramban Michael to the Patriarchate of the Apostolic See of Antioch. Ramban Michael was not willing to accept the exalted position for he considered himself unworthy. Mor Dionysius Ya' qub Bar Salibi, Metropolitan of Amid (+1171) and another member of the Holy Synod persuaded him to accept the election. On 18 October 1166, Ramban Michael was consecrated Patriarch at the monastery of Mor Barsawmo by the Maphryono Mor Yuhanon Sarug (1164-1188) and twelve other Bishops. Soon after, the Patriarchal headquarters was shifted from Amid to Mor Hananya Monastery known as "Zafaran."

In 1168, Patriarch Michael visited the archdioceses of Jerusalem and Damascus. Holy Chrism was consecrated at the monastery of Mary Magdelene near Damascus Gate. On that Easter Day John (Yohanna) was ordained Metropolitan for Damascus. In 1169, a synod was held at the monastery of Mor Barsawmo.

The Patriarch Mor Michael Rabo has written several books which include a book on the ranks of Priesthood, liturgical texts on preparing for receiving Holy Qurbono, the duties of man, how to be a disciple of Jesus, and the need for repentance and confession. The most important work is the ecclesiastical and secular chronicle that begins from the creation until the year 1193 A. D. The manuscript of this unique work is kept at St. George's church, Aleppo.

Patriarch Mor Michael Rabo ordained one Maphryono (Mor Gregorios Yakoob, 1189-1203) and fifty-four Bishops. His Holiness departed for the heavenly abode on 7 November 1199. The mortal remains were interred in the new church at the monastery of Mor Barsawmo. Patriarch Mor Ephrem Barsoum describes him as "one of the greatest pontiffs of the Church of God, the finest of the Patriarchs of Antioch, a scholar, and a famous chronicler of everlasting name, of graceful pursuit, and of uncommon qualities, of widely known virtues, and of good deeds (cited in, Zakka I Iwas, 1999). The feast of Patriarch Mor Michael Rabo, the Great, is celebrated on 7 November.

## **233. Mor Militheos Barnaba, Homs**

**(A.D. 1922 – 2004)**

The baptismal name of Mor Militheos Barnaba was George. He was born as the son of Rev. Fr. Joseph and Le Ari at Idil in modern Turkey in 1922. After his primary education at Azek, he joined St. Thomas School, Mosul, Iraq. He was ordained Korooyo in 1938 by

the metropolitan of Mosul, Mor Athanasius Tooma Qwasil. In 1939, he joined St. Ephrem seminary, Sahale, Lebanon. After his ordination as '*Yaufodayakino*', he was known as Barnaba.

The Patriarch Mor Aphrem Barsaum (1933-1957) appointed Deacon Barnaba as a teacher in the seminary when it was shifted to Mosul in 1945. He was the head of the seminary for two years. He accepted the monastic habit from Mor Athanasius at Mor Mathai dayaro, Mosul in 1945.

He was appointed as the second Secretary to the Patriarch Aphrem I in August 1947. He was ordained Priest in 1950 by the Patriarch Aphrem I at Soonoro church, Homs. Following that in 1951, he was appointed as the first Secretary to the Patriarch.

Fr. Barnaba was chosen as the patriarchal vicar of Egypt in 1955. Patriarch Aphrem I consecrated him Metropolitan under the name Mor Milithios Barnaba at Soonoro cathedral, Homs on 7 April 1957. When the patriarchal headquarters was shifted to Damascus, Syria in 1959 he was given charge of the diocese of Homs and Hama.

Mor Miliatheos established an orphanage in 1963. Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I presented him the honorific medal in the name of Ignatius Noorono on 18 March 1983. He was involved in a car accident and led a life of rest from 1997 onwards. Mor Miliatheos passed away on a Thursday 18 November 2004. He was entombed near the tomb of Patriarch Aphrem I on 22 November on the north side of the Soonoro cathedral, Homs. The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates him on 18 November.

## **234. St. Mina, the Martyr**

**(A.D. 285 – 309?)**

Mina was born in A.D. 285 in the town Nakiyos in Egypt (Abdul Ahad, 1948). His father Eudoxius was the Governor and his mother was Euphemia. They had no children for a long time.

Euphemia went to a church in Attrib on the feast day of the Virgin Mary and sought with tears her intercession to grant her a child. She received the response 'Amen'. Mina was born after that. Later he had a brother and a sister.

His father died when Mina was eleven years old and their mother died three years later. Mina led a Christian way of life observing lent and offering prayers. He joined the Roman army and was given a high rank due to his father's reputation. He went with the troops to Algeria to render his patriotic service to the nation. Emperor Diocletian at this time ordered everyone to give up the Christian belief and to torture those who did not worship idols. Mina decided to resign his job in the army and to surrender his life to his Lord, Jesus.

Mina sold all his property and became an ascetic. He saw in a vision the portals of heaven opened and all martyrs being adorned with glorious crowns. Following that, he heard a voice granting him three crowns - - (1) for celibacy, (2) for asceticism and (3) for martyrdom.

Mina was offered many gifts to abjure a life dedicated to Jesus. When he refused to comply with their demand and reaffirmed his faith in Jesus an order was soon issued to decapitate him. This event is recorded to have happened in A.D. 303 (Abdul Ahad, 1948; Aphrem I, 2000). After the execution, his dead body was set to fire for three days and nights but it remained unharmed. His sister bribed the soldiers and managed to get his body released and she embarked on a ship heading towards Alexandria along with her brother's body. A sea monster entered the ship, which scared the passengers and the crew. Fire emanating from the saint's body chased the monster off.

As the ship neared the port of Alexandria, a huge crowd including the Patriarch of Alexandria had gathered to welcome the saint's remains. With great reverence, they sheathed his body in expensive clothes.

When the period of persecution drew to an end, Mor Athanasius, the Patriarch of Alexandria, following a divine instruction, loaded

St. Mina's body on a camel's back to be taken out of the town. The camel was not led by anyone as directed by the angel. People followed the camel. They heard a sound on reaching Lake Bayad in the district of Marriot, "The Lord wishes Mina's body to be interred here." Thereupon they performed his burial there itself.

Many years passed and when Alexandria was besieged, the Governor secretly took St. Mina's body with him. Through the saint's intercession, he won the war. He wished to carry the body back to Alexandria. The camel, which carried the body of the saint, knelt at his burial place near Lake Bayad. It refused to move in spite of being beaten. They transferred the body to another camel's back but they could not continue the journey. Finally, they had to bury him in the same place.

After a lapse of many years, a shepherd happened to locate the burial place of St. Mina quite accidentally. One of his sheep was afflicted by mangy, a skin disease. That sheep rolled on the soil after dipping itself in water. It was miraculously cured. Thenceforth the shepherd worked a cure by applying the muddied soil of that particular place on the sick sheep. This story spread quickly over many places.

Upon hearing the story of the miracle the Emperor of Constantinople sent his daughter, who was suffering from leprosy there. She too applied the muddied soil from that area upon her diseased body. At night, she heard a voice telling her 'Get up early in the morning and dig this place. You will find my body there'. She informed her father she was healed of the dreaded disease. He constructed a church there. During the reign of Roman Emperors Arcadius and Honorus, a large city was built around this area, which later came to be called Mariut. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Mina on 9 June.

## **235. St. Moses, the (Black) Ethiopian**

**(A.D. 320? – 395?)**

Moses was an Ethiopian by race and lived in Egypt during the fourth century. He was a servant or slave to an Egyptian official (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). He was a man of huge stature. His master drove him out because he committed a murder. He joined a band of robbers. Because of his great physical strength, they chose him as their leader. Moses and his band of robbers were feared because of their many evil acts. People trembled at the mere mention of his name (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2015/08/28/102414-venerable-moses-the-ethiopian-of-scete>).

Once Moses sought revenge on a man whose barking dog kept him from an intended robbery of sheep. He swam the Nile and killed four of the man's sheep, swam back across the Nile with them. He butchered them, cooked and ate the best parts. He sold the skin for wine. Then he walked 50 miles to rejoin his gang.

Moses spent several years leading a sinful life, but through the great mercy of God he repented, left his band of robbers and went to one of the desert monasteries in the Valley Wadi al-Natrum (Skete). There he was completely obedient to the brethren, and he poured forth many tears of sorrow for his sinful life. After a while St. Moses withdrew to a solitary cell, where he spent his time in prayer and the strictest fasting.

St. Moses was not quickly freed from the passions. He went often to the monk, Abba Isidore, seeking advice on how to be delivered from the passions of profligacy. Being experienced in the spiritual struggle, the Elder taught him never to eat too much food, to remain partly hungry while observing the strictest restraint. But the passions continued to trouble St. Moses in his dreams.

Moses was tempted by demons to get back to his old habits. Moses went to Isiodre who lived in Skete and explained his conflict.

He said: “What am I to do, seeing that the dreams of my soul darken my reason, by reason of my sinful habits?” He said to him: “Because you have not withdrawn your mind from imagining these things that is why you endure this. Give yourself to watching and praying with fasting and you will quickly be delivered from them.” Listening to this advice he retreated to his cell and gave his word that he would not sleep all night nor bend his knees. So he remained in his cell for six years and every night he stood in the middle of the cell praying and not closing his eyes. And he could not master the thing. So he suggested to himself yet another plan, and going out by night he would visit the cells of the older and more ascetic (monks), and taking their waterpots secretly would fill them with water. For they fetched their water from a distance, some from two miles off, some five miles, others half a mile.

Several accounts note how for years he struggled with temptation to return to his robber life after he had chosen the monastic way. Once, while alone in his cell, four robbers attacked him. He tied them up, slung them over his shoulders and took them to the church where he dumped them, declaring that it was un-Christian to harm them and inquiring what was to be done with them. When the attackers found out who he was, they repented and joined the community (Palladius, 1898; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III).

After many years of monastic life, St Moses was ordained deacon. The bishop clothed him in white vestments and said, “Now Abba Moses is entirely white!” The saint replied, “Only outwardly, for God knows that I am still dark within.” Once, the bishop decided to test him and he directed the clergy to drive him out of the altar, insulting him as an unworthy Ethiopian. In all humility, the monk accepted the abuse. Having put him to the test, the bishop of Alexandria, Mor Theophilus, then ordained St. Moses to the priesthood. St. Moses labored for fifteen years in this rank, and gathered many disciples around him.

When the saint reached the age of 75, he warned his monks that soon robbers would descend upon Skete and murder all those who remained there. The saint asked his monks to leave, in order to avoid



violent death. His disciples begged the saint to leave with them, but he replied: “For many years now, I have awaited the time when the words of my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, should be fulfilled: ‘All who take up the sword, shall perish by the sword’” (Matt. 26: 52). After this, seven of the brethren remained with St. Moses, and one of them hid nearby during the attack of the robbers. The robbers killed St. Moses and the six monks who remained with him. Moses was entombed at the monastery called Dair al-Baramus (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). Their death occurred about the year 400 (<http://incommunion.org/2011/12/07/st-moses-the-black-a-patron-saint-of-non-violence-by-pieter-dykhorst/>).

The feast of St. Moses, the Black is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 18 June and 28 August.

## **236. Mor Severios Moshe Bar Kipho**

**(A. D. 813-903)**

Moshe was born at Kuhayl in the city of Balad, Mosul in A. D. 813. His parents were Simon and Mary. At an early age, Moshe joined the monastery of Mor Sergius situated between Balad and Sinjar (Aphrem I, 2000). His monastic life began under the guidance of Ramban Quryaqos of the monastery.

In A.D. 863, monk Moshe was ordained Bishop by name Severios for the dioceses of Beth Kiyona and Mosul (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). Mor Severios was the Periodentes for about ten years (A. D. 872-883) of the Tikrit Archdiocese after the death of Mor Malchezedek (Chediath, 1988; Aphrem I, 2000). Most of the encyclopedias provide no information about Mor Severios Moshe. However, Mor Dionysius Bar Saleebi (+1171) does mention about the letters of Moshe Bar Kipho.

Moshe Bar Kipho has written 54 chapters about the creation of Angels. He has quoted the works of Mor Ephrem (306-373), Mor

Baselius of Caesarea (329-379), Gregory of Nazainzen (329-390), Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), John Chrysostom (347-407), Jacob of Serugh (451-521), Philexenos of Mabbug (450-523), Mor Severios Patriarch (459-538) and Mor Jacob of Edessa (633?-708).

Moshe Bar Kipho has written several books which include *commentaries of Old and New Testament books, two liturgies, a commentary of the Holy Qurbono, Church history, treatises on themes such as Paradise, free-will, Priesthood, resurrection, etc.* (for a detailed list, see, Aphrem I, 2000).

The renowned doctor and copious writer of the church, Mor Severios Moshe Bar Kipho departed for the heavenly kingdom on 12 February A. D. 903 at the age of ninety. The mortal remains are interred at the monastery of Mor Sergius. The feast of Moshe Bar Kipho is celebrated on 12 February.

## **237. St. Nicephorus, the Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 260 ?)**

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

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

In the year A.D. 260, persecution against the Christians suddenly began to rage under Valerian and Gallienus. Saprificius was brought before the governor for interrogation. Saprificius testified: “ I am a Christian. I have the honor to be a priest. We, Christians acknowledge one Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, who is God: the only true God,

who created the heaven and earth. The gods of pagans are devils.” The governor ordered to behead Sapricius. This did not shake the constancy of Sapricius. He said: “My body is in your power, but you cannot touch my soul of which my Savior Jesus Christ is master.”

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

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

## **238. St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra**

**(A.D. ? – 342)**

Nicholaus (Mor Zokhe) was born as the son of Epiphanius and Joanna. They lived in the city of Pataca (Patara), Lycia, Turkey (south-western Asia Minor), where they occupied a high status. It is recorded

that as soon as he was born he stood up and glorified God (Smith & Wace, 1887; Paul, 2014).

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

Abbot Nicholaus was chosen the Archbishop of Moora (Myra), Lycia and became well known for his extraordinary piety and zeal. He suffered imprisonment for the faith, and made a glorious confession during the latter part of the persecution of Diocletian (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). He is said to have been a participant at the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325). He is described as a strong opponent of Arius and occupied a pivotal place in the council.

Saint Nicholaus (Santa Claus, an American corruption of Saint Nicholaus) entered to eternal rest in A.D. 342 and was entombed in his own cathedral in Myra. His popularity in England is very great and several churches were dedicated to his name. He is also the patron saint of children bringing them gifts on Christmas (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). The Emperor Justinian built a church in his honour at Constantinople, about the year A.D. 430 (Butler, 1866). His relics were later transferred to Bari in Apulia (Italy) in 1095 (Paul, 2014) and is often referred to as Nicholaus of Barri. The feast of Nicholaus is celebrated on 6 December.

## 239. Nicodemus

(First Century)

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ‘ruler of the Jews.’ He is mentioned by John at three contexts in the Gospel - - (1) Nicodemus’ meeting with Jesus at Jerusalem, (2) Nicodemus defended Jesus before the Sanhedrin, and (3) Nicodemus assisted the burial of Jesus Christ.

### 1. Nicodemus’s meeting with Jesus at Jerusalem:

This meeting, which is believed to have taken place in the house of John, was one of the results of our Lord’s ministry at Jerusalem during the first Passover (cf. John 2:23; 3:1-3). Although Nicodemus believed in the divine nature of Christ’s mission that he is a teacher (prophet) sent by God, his faith was very incomplete. Nicodemus is supposed to be timid since he visited Christ “by night” (John 3:2). Some scholars have claimed that Nicodemus came as a representative of the Sanhedrin, an enquirer deputed to ask to get an “official” response from Jesus Christ. It is true that Nicodemus speaks using the first-person plural, “We know You have come from God as a Teacher.” But Nicodemus would not have needed to sneak through the night for an official visit, since other Jewish officials challenged Jesus in public. Secondly, his declaration that Jesus is a Teacher from God hardly seems the language of a disapproving enquirer. But mainly, Nicodemus later reveals himself when he comes with Joseph of Arimathea to take and prepare Jesus’ body for burial (John 19:39). By this time Nicodemus had become bold enough to publicly reveal what he believed.

Christ proclaimed to Nicodemus the necessity for a spiritual regeneration: “No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3). This was interpreted by Nicodemus only in its materialistic sense, and therefore caused him bewilderment and confusion (John 3:4). The re-birth is not outward but inward, it is not

of the body but of the soul (Jn 3:6). But Nicodemus still remained unenlightened (John 3:9). Christ therefore answered, “You are a great teacher of Israel, and you don’t know this?” (John 3:10). Christ returned to the problem underlying the first statement of Nicodemus. If Nicodemus cannot believe in “earthly things,” how can he hope to understand “heavenly things.” The heavenly things are the deeper mysteries of God’s purpose in sending Christ into the world (John 3:12) and of Christ’s Divine Sonship (John 3:13).

## **2. Nicodemus defended Jesus before Sanhedrin:**

At the Feast of Tabernacles, when the Sanhedrin was enraged at Christ’s proclamation of Himself as the “living water” (John 7:37, 38), Nicodemus stood up in defence of Jesus saying: “According to our Law we cannot condemn a man before hearing him and finding out what he has done” (John 7:51). Yet here also he showed his natural diffidence that he made no personal testimony of his faith in Christ, but sought rather to defend Him on a point of Jewish law (cf. Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15).

## **3. Nicodemus assisted the burial of Jesus Christ:**

Nicodemus at last made public confession of his faith in following Christ. His wealth enabled him to provide the “mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds,” with which the body of Jesus was embalmed (John 19:39). *The Gospel of Nicodemus* (also known as the *Acts of Pontius Pilate*) and other apocryphal works narrate that Nicodemus gave evidence in favour of Christ at the trial before Pilate, that he was deprived of office and banished from Jerusalem by the hostile Jews, and that he was baptized by Peter and John. His remains were said to have been found in a common grave along with those of Gamaliel (son of Gamaliel?) and Stephen, the deacon and the first martyr. The feast of Nicodemus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 11 March.

## 240. St. Nikitha

(A. D. ? – 372 ?)

Nikita was born into a wealthy family of the Gothic people who lived near the Danube River in the 4th century, in what is now Romania (<https://russianicons.wordpress.com/tag/st-nikita/>). The word Nikitha is derived from Greek *Nicetas* which means victor. He was baptized by Bishop Theophilus, said to have been a participant in the First Ecumenical Council (A.D. 325). An intertribal war broke out, and Nikita became a soldier on the Christian side, the leader of which was Fritigern. Their opponent was the leader Athanaric.

Fritigern's forces defeated Athanaric, and Christianity was further spread among the Goths by Wulfila (Ulfilas), Nikita also worked to spread Christianity and convert others to that belief.

Over time, however, Athanaric regained power, massed forces and returned to attack and persecute the Christian Goths. Nikita was captured and tortured, and finally thrown into fire (some say burnt at the stake in Moldavia in 378?). There is considerable difference in sources for dates in Nikita's life and death.

According to a less reliable account, Nikita was actually the son of the Roman Emperor Maximilian. He was persecuted by his father for holding the Christian faith, Nikita was severely tortured and cast into prison for three years. Nikita also raised a couple of people from the dead, but Maximilian was still not convinced. Then his Queen and the people rose against the Emperor, and Nikita managed to baptize a huge number of people. The feast of St. Nikitha is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 4 August.

## 241. Onesimus, the Disciple of St. Paul

(A.D. ? - 117)

In a letter to the Ephesians by Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, the language is very reminiscent of Philemon, and the name of the bishop of Ephesus (c. 107–117) was Onesimus. It has been suggested that the slave was released to help Paul, that in his later years he might have become bishop of Ephesus, and that his “ministry” or “service” was the collection of the Pauline corpus. This is based not simply on the identity of name, but on similarities to Philemon found in Ignatius’ letter to the Ephesians. Paul in his apostolic ministry, furthering the message of Christ and seeing beyond the limitations of the social order of his day, in which both slaves and freemen are servants of God.

According to the New Testament Onesimus was a slave who, after robbing his master Philemon, fled to Rome, where he was converted by apostle Paul (<http://www.learningscriptures.info/bible-people/onesimus.htm>). Paul met Onesimus while the former was in a Roman prison, and Paul baptized the slave and came to consider him as his own son. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon with the epistle, asking Philemon to accept him “no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a brother, beloved especially to me, but even more so to you, as a man in the Lord. So if you regard me as a partner, welcome him as you would me. And if he has done you any injustice or owes you anything, charge it to me”. In Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, Onesimus is again mentioned as accompanying Tychicus (Colossians 4: 7-10), the bearer of the letter ([https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=4908](https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=4908)). The feast of Onesimus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 15 February.



## 242. Mor Ossyo

(? – A.D. 377)

Ossyo's (Esia's) parents were Fanitheros and Gurgunia both famous and staunch believers in Christ. He was born in the town Farya, Rome. His father was brother to King Theodosius of Sakadasyus.

Fanitheros and Gurgunia were childless but they believed fervently a child would be born to them and that was Ossyo. The Syriac meaning of the word Ossyo is 'doctor'. He studied in the school of Mor Yuhanon at Hamdan. His parents desired him to marry the Governor's daughter Arunia (Hasiba?) when he was of marriageable age. He had other plans as he had decided to give up worldly comforts to follow the divine path. Soon he proceeded to Jerusalem.

He visited the church of Nativity and other holy places in Jerusalem and obtained priestly habit after five months. He went to Mt. Sinai and arrived at a place where ten priests were staying. He did not stay with them but continued his journey to Kafra desert on the hillside. There he met St. Dimet (Dometius), became his disciple and trained under him for fourteen years. He continued his stay with his master until his death.

Mor Ossyo became well known through his prayer life, asceticism and fasting. He did missionary work in Homs, Syria. More than thousand idolaters gave up their religion to follow him. Ossyo could cure Bibindar, the King of Persia, who was infected during the outbreak of an epidemic. He travelled to the interiors of Antioch and protected people from the attack of wild animals. He healed many sick people in Nicomedia. When he returned to Antioch from Nicomedia, he realized his end was near. He called his students to his deathbed and said, "Children, I am going. As long as you live on this earth, do not deviate from the path I have taught you. Be careful not to fall into faulty ways. Continue worshipping God. Always tread

the path of virtue and purity. This world and everything in it are mere shadows.”

He also prayed for himself and the world. He passed away on a Thursday in the month of October in A.D. 377. There are many churches in Aleppo and other places in his name. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Ossyo (Esia) on 1 October. In Aleppo, the feast is celebrated on 15 October. (Translated by Sri. Ashraf H.S.A., T.K.M.H.S.S., Karikodu, Kollam from an Arabic book).

## **243. Mor Osthatheos Bennyamin Joseph**

**(A.D. 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, Kunnamkulam and Pre-Degree in Shri 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 Dayro and there he was the secretary to the delegate of Antioch, Mor Thimotheus Aphrem Aboodi in 1972. He was ordained sub-deacon at Manjanikkara Dayro 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 Priest 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 to 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 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 Dayro.

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 Osthatheos Sleeba 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 Dayro on 7

November 1989 and it was duly blessed on 10 February 1996. A plan was drawn for the reconstruction of the Dayro 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 Dayro which was under the Holy See of Antioch. It was only due to the timely intervention and determination of Bishop Bennyamin (on 13 October 1996) that the dayro 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 dated 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.

Mor Osthateos Bennyamin 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 a.m. he breathed his last while in the hospital. His mortal remains were taken to his native church, St. Mary’s Syrian Simhasana church, Kunnamkulam by 10 a.m. and was laid there for the public to pay homage. The next day (18 June) after the Holy *Qurbono* at 8.30 a.m., the funeral procession via Malelkurisu Dayro, St. George Simhasana church, Perumpally, St. Mary’s Cathedral, Manarcad; Simhasana Church, Kottayam; Chingavanam Dayro, Simhasana church, Thiruvalla; arrived at Manjanikkara Dayro at 10 p.m.

On Saturday 19 June, the burial service following the Holy *Qurbono* 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 at Mor Ignatius Dayro, Manjanikkara. His Grace had offered his services at Manjanikkara Dayro for twenty years and his anniversary falls on 17 June.

## **244. St. Mor Osthatheos Sleeba, the Delegate**

**(A. D. 1854 – 1930)**

Sleeba was born at the village, Kafarso, (near Shrehre) near the city of Amid, Mesopotomia on 1 January 1854. He was born in the Abakkar family to Salbi and Naboon. He had two brothers and three sisters. His father Salbi died when Sleeba was a child. His father's brother, Priest Dhenha, was his first teacher. Later he learned Syriac and theology from very Rev. Samuel Ramban who was the vicar of the Damascus church.

In 1849 Very Rev. Samuel Ramban came to Malankara (Kerala, India) with His Grace Mor Athanasius Stephanos at the direction of His Holiness Yacoub II, the Patriarch of Antioch. Ramban Samuel returned home after eight years. At that time, the protestant missionaries were causing trouble in the Church.

His Holiness Patriarch Peter IV came to India in 1875. The Synod of Mulanthuruthy, the appointment of Mor Dionysius Joseph as Malankara Metropolitan, the administrative set up of the Church into seven dioceses, the ordination of Bishops including that of His Grace Mor Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil helped to restore true faith in the Church.

Mor Dionysius Joseph and Mor Gregorius Geevarghese reported to the Patriarch, the difficulties faced by the Church in the wake of the Protestant teachings (that the intercession of St. Mary is wrong and that the prayers for the departed are baseless). The Patriarch of Antioch intervened to protect the true faith, in the 19th century as it was done in the 17th century.

In 1880, the Patriarch Peter IV ordained Samuel Ramban Bishop by name Athanasius Shem'veun and sent him to Malankara. His disciple Sleeba was ordained Deacon and accompanied Mor Athanasius Shem'veun. They reached Kochi on 1 January 1881.

At that time, Kottayam Old Seminary and Cheriapally were in the possession of Protestant people. Therefore, a new church (Puthenpally) was established for the worship of the faithful. Mor Athanasius Shem'veun and Deacon Sleeba stayed at Puthenpally, Kottayam. In 1889, the Court Order came in favour of Mor Dionysius Joseph. Subsequently, Mor Athanasius Shem'veun and Deacon Sleeba moved to Old Seminary, Kottayam.

On 11 June 1889 Mor Athanasius Shem'veun departed for his heavenly abode while staying at Old Seminary, Kottayam. The mortal remains were interred at Puthenpally, Kottayam. Deacon Sleeba lost his teacher in a foreign land. He was not discouraged at the loss, but continued to work in the vineyard of the Lord.

Mor Gregorius Geevarghese (Chathuruthil) had a special affection for Deacon Sleeba. In 1895, Mor Gregorius visited the Holy Land for which all the arrangements were made by Deacon Sleeba and he accompanied the Bishop on his visit. Deacon Sleeba visited Mor Gregorius at Parumala on several occasions. On 2 November 1902, Mor Gregorius departed for the eternal rest. Deacon Sleeba again felt a big vacuum. However, he continued with the gospel work. Deacon Sleeba could speak Malayalam although with a foreign accent.

In 1906, Deacon Sleeba returned to Mosul, Iraq along with Deacon Mathew (Chettalathumkara) who later became Catholicos Augen. Both of them stayed at the monastery of Mor Mathai, Mosul. Mor Coorilos Elias Kudso, the Reesh Dayro, ordained Deacon Sleeba Ramban. After two weeks Ramban Sleeba was ordained Priest. In March 1908, His Holiness Patriarch Abded Aloho II ordained Kassesso Sleeba Bishop by name Osthatheos at the church of Forty Martyrs at Mosul and appointed him the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch in India.

Mor Dionysius Joseph was in his old age and Mor Ivanios Murimattathil retired from his administrative duties. In these circumstances in 1908 the meeting of the representatives of the

Church met and elected Kassesso Geevarghese (Vattasseril) and Ramban Paulose (Kochuparambil) to be ordained Metropolitans. They went to Mosul and the Patriarch Abded Aloho II ordained them Metropolitans at Jerusalem. The three newly ordained Bishops including the delegate, Mor Osthatheos, came to Kerala along with Ramban Augen.

Mor Dionysius Joseph departed for heavenly abode on 10 June 1908. Mor Osthatheos Sleeba, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, carried out the administrative duties of the Church. Mor Dionysius Geevarghese Vattasseril was designated as the Malankara Metropolitan in a meeting held at the Old Seminary, Kottayam. It is in the year following his assuming the charge of Malankara Metropolitan that Mor Dionysius Geevarghese rebelled against the Holy See of Antioch. Later, Vattasseril Bishop's rivalry against Mor Osthatheos caused Mor Osthatheos to change His Grace's stay from Old Seminary where he had been staying for a long time.

In 1910, Bishop Vattasseril initiated a move to destroy the age-old apostolic succession of St. Peter in the Church. This issue caused a problem in Arthat Valiyapally. Those who believed in the Apostolic succession of St. Peter and the supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch wanted to establish a church at Arthat, Kunnamkulam. A few faithful executed a gift deed of land in favour of the Holy See of Antioch and handed over the property to His Grace Mor Osthatheos Sleeba, the delegate.

Mor Osthatheos Sleeba laid the foundation stone of the Arthat St. Mary's Syrian Simhasana church on 9 October 1920. His Grace celebrated Holy mass in a temporary shed. The Holy relic of Mor Kauma brought by Mor Osthatheos healed many ailing people. Several miracles are being reported through the intercession of Mor Osthatheos. During this period His Grace founded churches at Malel Cruz and Vadavukodu.

His Grace was suffering from hernia. The physical health of His Grace deteriorated and since 1927 Mor Julius Elias was helping him



to discharge the duties of the delegate. On 13 March 1930 His Grace was given the unction for the sick. On 19 March 1930 at 9.00 p. m. His Grace departed for eternal rest. The mortal remains of His Grace were interred at the Arthat St. Mary's Syrian Simhasana church founded by him. His Grace Mor Osthatheos Sleeba was declared saint by the Apostolic Bull No. E 71/2000 dated 4 April 2000 of the Patriarch of Antioch, Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. The feast of St. Osthatheos Sleeba is celebrated on 19 March in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **245. Mor Osthatheos Thomas**

**(A.D. 1904 – 2000)**

Thomas was born on 5 June 1904 to Mathai, Panthalamakkil, Sitharkuzhi (Pachilakkat) Puthenpurayil and Annamma. He spent his childhood at his native place Puthuveli itself. His primary education was at Puthuveli Primary School. He studied at St. Mary's School Kuravilangad until seventh standard and attended M. G. M. High School, Thiruvalla after that. As a student, he exhibited his talents in oratory, acting and composing poems. Even in sports, he could make his mark.

He received the order of Korooyo from Malankara Metropolitan St. Coorilos Paulose, Kochuparambil (Panampady) at the age of nine. Before Middle School, he joined Pambakuda seminary for a three-year course in theology. He was the disciple of Rev. Ramban Geevarghese Kochuparambil and Rev. Malpan Konatt Mathen and Metropolitan Mor Themotheos Augen.

Before his ordination as a priest in 1930, he had passed his intermediate course from C.M.S. College, Kottayam and graduated from S.B. College, Chenganacherry. Following the advice of the delegate of Antioch, Mor Yulios Elias Qoro, he offered his services

at St. Mathias church, Madras. On his return to his native place, he took his B.T. degree from Maharajas Training College, Trivandrum. He was appointed as the head master at St. Stephen's church School, Keeramabara. He taught five years in Vadakara High School and served in the same school for eleven years as the head master. The T.T.C. School in Vadakara was established mainly due to his efforts. During this period, he published many short poems.

After retiring from Vadakara High School in his sixtieth year, he helped Chevalier T. Thomas to start an English Medium High school at Perambur, Chennai. He rendered his service there as a teacher and vice-principal.

The Malankara Synod selected him as a Metropolitan when he was seventy-one. Moran Mor Ignatius Yacub III, the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East consecrated him Metropolitan under the name Mor Osthatheos on 12 June 1975.

From 1975 to 1982, he was the assistant Metropolitan of Kandanad, and Kottayam dioceses. He was appointed as the Metropolitan of Cochin during the first visit of Patriarch Moran Ignatius Zakka I Iwas to Malankara in 1982. When Mor Osthatheos took up the administrative rein of Cochin diocese at the age of seventy-eight, it had no headquarters or institutions of its own. He implemented many development programmes on a regular basis. Initially his stay was at Karingachira church but gradually 'Kymtha' Chapel at Thiruvankulam was developed as the diocesan headquarters. His interest in teaching prompted him to start an English Medium High School, 'The Gregorian Academy'.

The Holy See honoured Mor Osthatheos by bestowing on him the title 'Snugro'd Haimmonutho' (the protector of faith). He was deputed to help H.B. the Catholicos, as he was unwell. He also did a commendable service as the chairman of the litigation committee of the Church.

He retired from administrative duties of the diocese after entrusting the work with his successor Mor Gregorius Joseph. The

humble, enlightened and peace-loving Bishop entered eternal rest on 28 July 2000 when he completed ninety-six years. He was entombed at 'Kymtha' Seminary Cathedral, Thiruvankulam on 30 June. His death anniversary is celebrated on 28 July.

## **246. St. Osthatheos, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. ? – 337)**

St. Osthatheos (Eustathius) was born in Saied (Saide) in Pamphelia. He was ordained bishop for Aleppo, Syria. Later he acceded to the throne of Antioch as its Patriarch (Cayre, 1935). Mor Osthatheos presided over the Nicea council, made the introductory speech and opposed the heresies of Arius. 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 Ancrya to settle the disputes in Church rising out of the heresies of Arius. It was later shifted to Nicaea in Bethinia (now Isnik in Turkey). It was well attended by three hundred and eighteen bishops. The Synod was in session from May to July. On 13 June A.D. 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 Osthatheos took stringent measures against Arius and maintained true faith in the Church. The Church historian, Eusebius (A.D. 265-340) who had attended the Council later turned against Osthatheos (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). The Emperor who favoured Eusebius banished Mor Osthatheos in 330 to

Trajanopolis (in Thrace) where he passed away in A.D. 337 (Smith & Wace, 1880; Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1958; Cayre, 1935). It is likely that he spent most part of his exile in Philippi (Smith & Wace, 1880).

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 A.D. 330 - 360. In A.D. 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 Osthathéos 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 Osthathéos were transferred to Antioch from Trajanopolis at the end of the fifth century. His feast is celebrated on 5 June by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **247. St. Pachomius, Hermit**

**(A.D. c. 290? - 346?)**

Pachomius was one of the pioneers in the organisation of hermits into groups and to write down rules for them (Smith & Wace, 1887). He was born in Thebaid, Egypt in A.D. 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 A.D. 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 monasteries in Thebaid. From A.D. 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 A.D. 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 A.D. 348 and many members of the monastery died. Pachomius was also a victim of this pandemic and died in A.D. 346 (Aphrem, 1963; Hoefer, 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.

## **248. Mor Palladius, Solitary**

**(c. A.D. 367? – 425?)**

Palladius was born in about A.D. 367 (363?) in Galatia (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I). Palladius embraced an ascetic life when he was about twenty years. He was a pupil of Evagris Pontus (Malay, 2005). Palladius travelled widely to acquaint himself with the life of those leading solitary lives (Wace, 1911).

Palladius visited Bethlehem in about A.D. 387. At Jerusalem he met Melania the elder and Rufinus. In A.D. 388 Palladius visited Alexandria and the nearby monasteries (Malaty, 2005). He also met Didymus (d. A.D. 395) while on the journey. Thereafter Palladius retired to the Nitrian desert in about A.D. 390.

After spending a year in the Nitrian desert, Palladius went deeper into the desert known as Cells. There he spent nine years (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I). He enjoyed the company of Macarius the younger (d. A.D. 390) and Evagris Pontus (d. A.D. 399). During this period Palladius travelled the whole of upper Egypt and visited all leading solitaries.

Palladius returned to Palestine due to ill-health and then moved to Bithynia where he was called to the Episcopate in about A.D. 400 (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I; Malaty, 2005). Mor John Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407) ordained Palladius, bishop of Helenopolis. Mor Palladius was one of the first victims of the persecution that was aimed at the

followers of Mor John Chrysostom. Mor Palladius fled to Rome with many others since a decree was promulgated to arrest all those who had given assylum to bishops, priests or laymen who had communicated with Mor Chrysostom.

Mor Palladius and others were received hospitably in Rome about the middle of A.D. 405. Mor Palladius gratefully acknowledged the help and Mor Chrysostom wrote letters from Cucusus thanking the noble ladies of Rome and one Pinianus and his wife (Wace, 1911).

The whole group returned to Constantinople later but was confined in separate chambers in the fortress of Athyre and were compelled to renounce communion with Mor Chrysostom and to recognize Atticus. Threats and violence could not change the mind of Mor Palladius and he was banished to Syene, on the extreme border of Egypt (Wace, 1911) where he spent six years from A.D. 406 to A.D. 412 (Cayre, 1935, Vol. I). About the A.D. 408, Palladius composed his famous work '*Dialogue on the life of St. John Chrysostom*' (Malaty, 2005).

In about A.D. 412 Mor Palladius was permitted to leave but was not allowed to return to his Episcopate in Helenopolis. Mor Palladius resided near Antinopolis in the Thebaid for four years and travelled to Mesopotamia, Syria and other parts of the eastern world. Peace was established in the Church in A.D. 417 and Mor Palladius returned to his episcopate in Helenopolis. But Mor Palladius later took charge of the episcopate in Aspuna in Galatia. In about 420 he wrote a history of monks which became immensely popular (Bihlmeyer & Tuchle, 1958).

Mor Eusebius attended the Synod of Ephesus in A.D. 431 as the bishop of Aspuna. Therefore, it is assumed that Mor Palladius was not alive then or that he ceased to be the bishop of Aspuna before A.D. 431. Cayre (1935, Vol. I) has recorded that Mor Palladius became the bishop of Aspuna in his own province in Galatia and died in this episcopate.

The feast of Mor Palladius, the solitary is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 29 November.

## 249. St. Pambo of Nitria, Abbot

(A.D. 315 - 385?)

Saint Pambo (Pampo) lived an ascetic life in the Nitrian desert in Egypt (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV). Abbot Poemen spoke of Pambo's three practices that are remarkable, viz., his fasting every day till evening, his silence, and his great diligence in manual labour. St. Antony inculcated in all his disciples the obligation of diligence in constant manual labour in a solitary life, both as a part of penance, and as a necessary means to expel sloth, and entertain the vigour of the mind in spiritual exercises (Palladius, 1898; Butler, 1866; <https://oca.org/saints/lives/2010/07/18/102051-venerable-pambo-the-hermit-of-egypt>).

St. Pambo, after he left St. Antony, settled in the desert of Nitria on a mountain, where he had a monastery; but he lived sometime in the wilderness of the Cells, where Rufinus says he went to receive his blessing in A.D. 374. St. Melania the Elder, in her visit found the holy abbot Pambo engaged in his work of making mats. She gave him three hundred pounds weight of silver, desiring him to accept that part of her store for the necessities of the poor among the brethren. St. Pambo without interrupting his work, or looking at her or her present, said to her that God would reward her charity. Then turning to his disciple (Origen?), he asked him to take the silver and distribute it among all the brethren in Lybia and the isles who were most needy, but charged him to give nothing to those in Egypt, that country being rich and plentiful.

Melania continued standing for sometime expecting to be glorified and honored by him and said: "Father, do you know that here there is three hundred pounds weight of silver?" The abbot, without casting his eye upon the chest of silver, replied: "Daughter, He to whom you made this offering, very well knows how much it weighs without being told, for He weighs the mountains. If you give



it to God who did not despise the widow's two mites, and even preferred them to the great presents of the rich, say no more about it and be silent" (Butler, 1866; Palladius, 1898).

St. Pambo excelled most other ancient monks in the austerity of his continual fasts. The restraint of his tongue was admirable. Once a certain religious brother to whom he had asked for advice began to recite to him Psalm 39:1 - - "I said, I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin." When Pambo heard these words he returned to his cell saying that it was enough for one lesson and that he would go and study to put it in practice. This he did by keeping perpetual silence. Whenever it was necessary to speak he did that after weighing well before he gave answer.

The disciples of St. Pambo such as Dioscorus (later Bishop of Hermopolis), Ammonius, Eusebius and Euthymius, mentioned in the life of St. John Chrysostom, became great ascetics. It was said that sometimes St. Pambo's face shone like lightning, as did the face of Moses. When Abbot Theodore begged St. Pambo some words of instruction, he said: "Go, and exercise mercy and charity towards all men. Mercy finds confidence before God."

St. Athanasius once desired St. Pambo to come out of the desert to Alexandria, to confound the Arians by giving testimony to the divinity of Jesus Christ. The saint seeing in that city an actress dressed up for the stage, wept bitterly. He was asked the reason of his tears. He said he wept for the sinful condition of that unhappy woman, and also for his own sloth in the divine service; because he did not take so much pains to please God as she did to ensnare men.

Pambo while on his death-bed, at the very moment of his passing, is reported to have said this to the bystanders, Origen and Ammonius and the rest of the brethren: "From the day that I came to this place in the desert and built my cell and inhabited it, I cannot remember having eaten bread that I have not earned by my hands. I have not had to repent of any word that I have spoken up to the present hour. And so I go to God, as one who has not even begun to be pious."

He passed away at the age of seventy in A.D. 385 without any sickness, pain, or agony, as he was making a basket. St. Pambo said to the brethren who stood near his deathbed: “I go to the Lord as one who has not yet begun to serve Him.” Melania took care of his burial (Butler, 1866; Palladius, 1898). St. Pambo is commemorated on 17 June in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **250. Pamphilus of Caesarea, the Martyr**

**(c. A.D. 240 – 309)**

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

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

Pamphilus was a close associate of Eusebius, the Church historian. Although not certain, Nicephorus Callistus indicates that Pamphilus is Eusebius' uncle. The writings of Pamphilus, the biblical scholar, are totally lost. What is available is reconstructed from the work of Eusebius and those of Jerome and Photius.

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

## **251. Mor Paphnutius, Bishop of Upper Thebaid**

**(A.D. ? – c. 350?)**

Paphnutius surnamed Bubalus was the bishop of Upper Thebaid. He was an Egyptian monk, who had been a disciple of St. Antony (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III).

Paphnutius suffered much hardship and cruelty during the persecution of Maximin(us) Daze (A.D. 305-313). He lost his right eye, was hamstrung in one leg and was sent to work in mines (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III). The Emperor Constantine honoured this man exceedingly, and often sent for him to the palace, and kissed the part where the eye had been torn out (Socrates, 2013, p. 39).

The mutilated body of Paphnutius was an object of wonder and veneration at the General Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 (Wace, 1911; Cross & Livingstone, 1974). He was one of the most zealous in defending the Apostolic faith against the Arian heresy. He was one of the outstanding figures at the Council. He was much honored as a confessor of faith especially by Constantine (Socrates, 2013; Wace, 1911).

Paphnutius was against clerical celibacy (Wace, 1911). Many bishops were in favour of making a general law forbidding all bishops, priests and deacons from living with wives whom they had married

before their ordination. Paphnutius opposed the motion, saying: “It was enough to conform to the ancient tradition of the Church, which forbade the clergy marrying after their ordination.” Further he argued: “For the married the use of wedlock is chastity, he reminded the fathers, and implored them not to lay the yoke of separation on clerics and their wives” (Socrates, 2013; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III, p. 539). To this day it is the law of the Syrian Orthodox Church that married men may receive all holy orders below the rank of episcopate and continue to live freely with their wives.

Paphnutius was a close associate of St. Athanasius, who in A.D. 325 was a deacon and secretary to Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria and succeeded him in A.D. 328. The feast of St. Paphnutius is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 20 July.

## **252. Pantaenus of Alexandria**

**(A.D. 120 ? - 214 ?)**

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

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

Pantaenus (Panthenose) was a priest and a zealous evangelist and undertook his missionary work in the East travelling as far as India (Smith & Wace, 1887; Cross & Livingstone, 1974). Eusebius has recorded that St. Bartholomew had already preached the word of God in these places and had left a copy of the Gospel according to

St. Matthew in Hebrew characters. Jerome adds that Pantaenus brought back this copy to Alexandria.

Pantaenus is distinguished as an expositor of the ‘Word of God’. Once certain philosophers asked him: “In what manner do Christians suppose God to know things that are?” He replied: Neither does He know things sensible sensibly nor things intelligible intellectually. For it is not possible that He, Who is above all things, should comprehend things being, after things being but we affirm that He knows things being” ... Almighty God knows things being, since by willing He made all things being” (Smith & Wace, 1887). The feast of Pantaenus is celebrated on 7 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **253. Pantaleon, the Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 305?)**

According to a legend Pantaleon (Greek - *Panteleímon*) was the son of a rich pagan, Eustorgius of Nocomedia, and had been instructed in Christianity by his Christian mother, Eubula (Löffler, 1911). Pantaleon in Greek language means ‘all compassionate’ or ‘all merciful’ (Cross & Livinstone, 1974; Farmer, 1997; Paul, 2014).

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

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

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

## **254. Sts. Patrobas, Philologus & Gaius**

**(First Century A.D.)**

The three saints Patrobas, Philologus and Gaius are considered to be among the seventy-two emissaries our Lord had sent as we read in Luke 10:1 – “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.” Patrobas is referred by St. Paul in Romans 16:14 – “Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them.” He became bishop of Pottole, Italy and there he baptized many.

Philologus is mentioned in Romans 16:15 – “Salute Philologus & Iulia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the Saints who are with them.” Philologus was made bishop of Sinope by the first-called disciple Andrew (<https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2016/11/holy-apostles-hermas-patrobas-gaius.html>).

Gaius is mentioned in Romans 16:23 – “Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole Church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.” He became bishop of Ephesus after Timothy. All the three emissaries endured tribulations and witnessed Christ and brought many into

salvation. The feast of Saints Patrobas, Philologus & Gaius is celebrated on 5 November in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **255. Mor Paul (I) of Edessa**

**(A.D. ? – 526)**

There were two bishops of Edessa by the name Paul. One of them died in the sixth century (Paul I of Edessa, d. A.D. 526) and the other in the seventh century (Paul II of Edessa, d. A.D. 619). Moran Aphrem has attributed most of the details of Paul I to Paul II (Aphrem I, 2003) whereas others (e.g., Smith & Wace, 1887; Wace, 1911) have made specific mention of this confusion of details of the two bishops.

Paul I of Edessa (initially bishop of al-Raqqqa?) was consecrated bishop in A.D. 510 as successor to Peter whereas Paul II of Edessa was consecrated bishop in A.D. 594 or 595 as successor to Sergius (Aphrem I, 2003; Wace, 1911; Smith & Wace, 1887). When Justin became the Emperor, he forced the decrees of Chalcedon on Mor Severios of Antioch (d. 538) and his followers.

In November A.D. 519, Patricius was given the task of enforcement of the decrees of Chalcedon. Mor Paul was asked to either subscribe to the decrees of the Synod of Chalcedon or resign. Paul refused to accept the decrees and took sanctuary in his baptistery. He was subsequently dragged out by Patricius and sentenced to be exiled to Seleucia. Justin reinstated Mor Paul after 44 days hoping to overcome his resistance. Justin was acting under the advice of the Patriarch Paul who usurped the seat of Mor Severios. The plan was to induce Mor Paul of Edessa to agree to conform to the decrees of Chalcedon secretly and to oppose it outwardly (Smith & Wace, 1887). But Mor Paul still refused to submit. In July A.D. 522, Mor Paul was banished to Euchaita in Pontus. As per a later imperial order Asclepius was placed in the seat of Mor Paul.

Mor Paul while in exile translated the Greek hymns of Patriarch Mor Severios. Mor Paul was an eminent scholar in both Syriac and Greek literature (Aphrem I, 2003). This translation consists of 365 hymns of which 295 are attributed to Mor Severios and the rest to his contemporary John bar Aphtuniya, abbot of Kennesrin (d. A.D. 538) and others. The manuscript in the British Museum makes it clear that the work was executed by 'Paul, bishop of Edessa, when he was in the island of Cyprus in his flight from Persians' (Smith & Wace, 1887). Mor Paul also translated the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* according to the traditions of Kenneshrin (Aphrem I, 2003; Smith & Wace, 1887).

The above mentioned translation was corrected by his famous successor Jacob of Edessa (d. A.D. 708). Although the translation is the work of Paul, the volume comprises a few hymns of the Church Fathers of later period. These are presumed to be incorporated by Jacob of Edessa when he revised the collection (Smith & Wace, 1877). This causes the confusion regarding the translation of Mor Paul (I) of Edessa and that of Paul (II) of Edessa.

Mor Paul has rendered great services to the Syrian Church and its literature by translating many works which earned him the title 'The Translator of Books'. He also composed a ma'nitho for the consecration of Chrism (Aphrem I, 2003). Mor Paul I returned to Edessa in March A.D. 526 and departed for the heavenly abode on 30 October, A.D. 526 (Smith & Wace, 1887). Paul of Edessa is commemorated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 23 August.

**Note:** It is also likely that the feast on 23 August is that of Mor Paul II of Edessa.



## 256. St. Paul of Tamouiah, Ascetic

(A.D. ? – 417 ?)

Abba Paul (Paula) was from Tamouiah, Egypt. He was inclined since his young age to solitary life and he went to Ansena Mountain. There he lived with his disciple Ezekiel, who was the witness of his virtues (<https://st-takla.org/books/en/church/synaxarium/02-babah/07-baba-tamouh.html>).

Paul, because of his exceeding love for the Lord Christ, he exhausted his body with asceticism, forsaking earthly things through fasting and prayers. Lord Christ appeared to him and blessed him for his conduct in this life for such is the behavior of those who are perfect and who fight against the flesh, the world and the devil till they overcome them. St. Paul said to the Lord, “All that is due to Your care, O You creator and redeemer of the human race, by Your death on our behalf, we the undeserving sinners.” The Lord Christ comforted and strengthened him.

When St. Bishoy (d. 417?) went to Mount Ansena, he was joined by the saint Abba Paula. The Lord Christ told Abba Paul (Paula), “Your body will be buried with that of My chosen Bishoy.” When Abba Paula departed, his body was placed with the body of St. Bishoy. When they wanted to move the body of St. Bishoy to the wilderness of St. Macarius in Scete, they carried it onto a boat and left St. Paul’s body behind; however, the boat would not move, until they brought the body of St. Paul and placed it beside St. Bishoy’s body. Then they brought them to the wilderness of Scete. The feast of St. Paul the solitary is celebrated on 4 October in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **257. Mor Paul, Bishop of Tella**

**(A.D. ? – 617)**

Paul was one of the great scholars of his time, well-versed in Syriac and Greek. He was ordained bishop of Tella between A.D. 610 and 615, as a successor of Metropolitan Samuel. It is most likely that he remained only a few years in his diocese, for it was mentioned in the ancient history written by a monk from Qartamin that “Daniel the Uzi was ordained bishop of Tella, Dara and Tur’abdin in A.D. 615, and that in A.D. 622, Zacchaeus was the metropolitan of Tella (Aphrem I, 2003).

Mor Paul collaborated with Patriarch Athanasius I Gammolo (A.D. 595-631) in achieving reconciliation with the Church of Alexandria and he also signed the general proclamation in A.D. 616. Mor Paul has translated the Septuagint (a translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek language) into Syriac according to the most correct versions of the hexaplar texts (Old Testament texts) of Origen, a noteworthy task. Paul undertook this translation at the request of Patriarch Athanasius I either at Alexandria or at the Monastery of St. Antony near Enaton (the ninth mile stone) during his escape to Egypt because of the Persian War of A.D. 615-617. With great precision, he appended to the text the additions and the differences together with the marginal notes connected with the Greek texts and the text of the Septuagint. He was assisted in his work by many scribes, most famous of whom was Deacon Thomas, the secretary of the Patriarch. He completed the translation of the four Books of Kings (two according to the familiar version) on 14 February A.D. 616, at a time when the Syrian Church was in need for this exact translation during the theological disputations. It appears from old manuscripts that this version was used in the Church service books (Aphrem I, 2003).

A complete copy of the above translation was at the Monastery of St. Matthew (Aphrem I, 2003). A similar copy was found in the middle of the sixteenth century in the possession of the ancient

Orientalist Andreas Masius. What may have been brought to Masius by the Syrian metropolitan, Musa (Moses) al-Sawri, for publication must have been transcribed in the ninth century. However, after the death of Andrew in A.D. 1573, the first volume which contained the five books of Joshua, Judges, Kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, Judith and Tobit, disappeared. The second volume survives at the library of Milan. It contains the books of Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes and the Books of Wisdom and the Prophets. Parts of this translation also survive at the National Library of France, Paris and the British Museum (Aphrem I, 2003).

Between A.D. 1787 and 1892, some Orientalists published the surviving Books of Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, the Psalms, Kings IV, Isaiah, the Minor Prophets, Proverbs, Job, the Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Judges, Ruth and parts of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua and Kings.

Prior to the translation of the Holy Bible, Mor Paul made a new translation of the order of Baptism by Mor Severus of Antioch. He also wrote an order of Baptism and a liturgy. Most probably, Mor Paul spent the rest of his life in Egypt. The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates Mor Paul of Tella on 15 February.

## **258. St. Paul of Thebaid**

**(A.D. 234 – 347)**

Christian monasticism first evolved in Egypt. Paul, born in Thebes in A.D. 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 A.D. 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 A.D. 347 God in a dream revealed to St. Antony of Egypt (A.D. 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 monastery 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 entombed the first solitary saint according to proper rites. St. Paul passed away on 10 January. In the ancient times, the eight days (Octave of Epiphany) following Epiphany (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.stpaulinthedesert.com](http://www.stpaulinthedesert.com)). The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 15 January.

## **259. St. Paul, the Disciple**

**(A. D. ? - 67)**

Paul was born in Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 9:11; 22:3). Before the conversion, his name was Saul. Paul’s father was a rich and famous Jew of the Bennyamin tribe and was a businessman (Abdul Ahad, 1948). His father was a Roman citizen and thus Saul was also (Acts 22:28). His mother died while he was a child.

Saul started his education at the age of six in a Jewish School at Tarsus (Aphrem, 1963). At that time there were three famous seats of higher learning - - Tarsus, Alexandria and Adena. Of the three, Tarsus was of the Hebrews to which tribe Saul belonged (2 Cor. 11:22; Abdul Ahad, 1948). At the age of fifteen he was sent to Jerusalem and was a student of Ga-ma’-li-el (a famous Jewish Rabbi of the time), a Pharisee and a famous doctor of law of reputation. Paul was probably the best educated among the apostles and New Testament writers (White, 1991). According to the Jewish law, every Jew should know a craft (work). So Saul learned tent making (Aphrem, 1963).

Saul was a zealous Jew and was in the group who stoned St. Stephen (Acts 7: 58). Some Church fathers suggest that the martyrdom and prayer of St. Stephen, changed the course of Saul’s life. He went

to Damascus to threaten and slaughter the disciples of the Lord. When he came near Damascus, suddenly there shone around him a light from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads or spikes" (a proverb implying the futility of actions against an invincible force, that cannot be overcome). So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9: 1-6).

After this, Saul spent about three years in Arabia as a solitary (White, 1991; cf. Gal. 1:17) to prepare himself for his future missionary activity (Hoever, 1989). Thereafter he returned to Damascus, a focal place in the growth of the Church (Gal. 1:17; Nelson's encyclopaedia, 1913). Paul preached that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 9:20).

Jews plotted to kill Saul but it came to be known to him. He escaped through the wall in a large basket (Acts 9:23-25; 2 Cor 11:33). Saul went to Jerusalem and wanted to meet St. Peter, the head of the Church, and to join the apostles. But, the Church at Jerusalem did not accept Saul for they knew what Saul had done to the Church.

The work of Saul at Jerusalem resulted in the threat to his life. So, he returned to Tarsus (Acts. 9:30). It is believed that he stayed at Tarsus for seven to eight years (Aphrem, 1963). Paul went to Jerusalem with Barnabas during the famine in A. D. 44 with donations. He then went to Cyprus where Sergius Paulose, the governor, confessed the faith. Paul and Silas went to different places preaching gospel (A. D. 49-52) and Paul along with Barnabas attended the first synod at Jerusalem in A. D. 51 (Aphrem, 1963).

Paul had to face two problems that are relevant even today. They are: (1) The discrimination between Jewish Christians and those converted from gentiles and (2) The Christians newly converted at the instance of Paul, were considered to be lesser in rank than those

baptized by the (original) early apostles. Also, the conservatism of converted Jewish Christians and the ultra spiritualism of those converted from the gentiles (Nelson's encyclopedia, 1913, pp. 257-258) were all matters of concern as much as it is for the present day Church in the wake of charismatic and other similar movements.

St. Paul suffered a lot for the Gospel. Once he was stoned and dragged out of the city of Lystra thinking that he was dead (Acts. 14:19). He recollects all those troubles and persecutions. "From Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness . . ." (2 Cor.11: 24-28).

Paul was in prison for about two years (A. D. 57-59) and then went to Rome. Under the persecution of Nero, he was sentenced to death. Being a Roman citizen he was not tortured for long but was beheaded on 29 June A. D. 67. Before the martyrdom Paul and Peter were together in prison for about nine months (Pollock, 1985). St. Paul's missionary work spans over thirtyone years. He supported himself and fellow workers by working with his own hands (Acts 20: 34). He also accepted material help for his basic needs (Phil. 4: 15-19). The feast of St. Paul is celebrated along with that of St. Peter on June 29 at the end of the lent observed in the intercession of the thirteen apostles.

## **260. Paulinus, Bishop of Trier**

**(A.D. ? – 358)**

St. Paulinus was the Bishop of Trier. He was a disciple of Maximin whom he succeeded (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). He was a strong opponent of Arianism. He was banished to Phrygia where he died in exile. His relics were brought back to Trier in A.D. 396. The feast of St. Paulinus is celebrated on 25 August in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **261. Paulus I, the Patriarch of Constantinople**

**(A. D. ? – 351)**

Mor Paulus I (Paulose) is the sixth Patriarch of Constantinople who was elected in A.D. 340. He was a native of Thessalonica, a priest of Constantinople and was the secretary to the aged Patriarch Alexander (d. A.D. 340), his predecessor in the See (Smith & Wace, 1887).

There were two candidates to contest to the See, Paulose and Macedonius. The two candidates had followers who came into open conflict. However, the orthodox party prevailed and Paulose was elected and ordained in the church of Peace at Constantinople. However, Emperor Constantinus was angry that he was not consulted and he summoned a meeting of the Arian Bishops and Paulose was banished. Eusebius, the Bishop of Nicomedia was transferred to Constantinople and he died in A.D. 341. There was violence subsequent to the restoration of Mor Paulose to the See and many lives were lost.

Emperor Constantius was at Antioch during the above mentioned civil war and he ordered Hermogenes, his general of cavalry, to expel Paulose. This resulted in setting fire to the house in which the general was stationed. He was killed and was pulled out from the burning



building, and was dragged in triumph round the city. The Emperor was determined to repay their rebellion by depriving them of half their allowances of corn. Paulose was again driven out of the city.

Paulose with other Bishops went to Rome and consulted Bishop Julius (d. A.D. 352). Julius found them all staunch to the creed of Nicea and accepted them. Paulose recovered his See. He wrote strongly to the Bishops of the East. They declined to act on his advice. However, Constantinus stood resolutely against the choice of the people of Constantinople and ordered to expel Paulose. Philippus, the prefect of the East, was not ready to risk his life and met Paulose secretly as if to discuss some matter and showed him the Emperor's letter. Subsequently, he was again expelled. Macedonius was ordained in the place of Paulose.

Paulose was chained and taken to Singara in Mesopotamia. Afterwards he was taken to Emesa, and finally to Cucusus in Armenia. Patriarch Mor Paulose I is believed to have been strangled to death by the Arians (supporters of Macedonius) in A.D. 351 after three exiles and two restorations. The feast of this martyr is celebrated on 6 November in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **262. St. Pelagia of Antioch**

**(A.D. 290? – 305)**

There are at least three persons mentioned under the name of Pelagia on the list of martyrs. 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. She was surnamed Margarita

(Marina). She came to the Church during the sermon, to the astonishment of other bishops. Nonnus, the bishop of Edessa, had been an ascetic and he dealt with her. He addressed Pelagia about her sin and future judgement and decide baptism. She repented, gave up her lurid life and became an ascetic in Jerusalem. She was baptised with the assistance of Romana, the chief deaconess of Antioch. She finally left Antioch and withdrew to a cell on the Mount of Olives. Jacobus, the deacon, gives us an account of a visit he paid to her. She lived as a monk in male attire, and died some three years afterwards from her excessive austerities (Smith & Wace, 1887). Her feast is celebrated on 29 August.

St. Pelagia, the Antiochian saint was born at the end of the third century (A.D. 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. 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. Ambrose and St. John Chrysostom (Ivanios), have extolled her attempts to protect her chastity (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Hoever, 1989). The feast of this saint is celebrated on 8 October.

## **263. St. Pelagia of Tarsus, Virgin & Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 304 ?)**

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

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

## **264. Peter II the Fuller, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. ? – 488)**

Peter II, also known as Peter the Fuller (Qassar) is the 34th Patriarch of Antioch (A.D. 468/70? - 488). He had been a monk at Constantinople where he practised the trade of a fuller. He had been to Chalcedon and later returned and became known to Emperor Zeno the Isaurian whom he accompanied to Antioch in c. A.D. 470. Here, he opposed Martyrius, Bishop of Antioch, a supporter of Chalcedonian definition. He was imprisoned once and later was banished in A.D. 477 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). He is chiefly remembered for his addition of the Trisagion and the Nicene creed at the Eucharist and the solemn blessing of the chrism (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

## **265. Patriarch Mor Peter IV (III)**

**(A. D. 1799 - 1894)**

Peter was born at Mosul, Iraq in 1799. He spent his boyhood at the monastery of Hananiah (Dier ul-Zafaran). He completed his theological studies and was ordained Priest. In 1846, Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Elias II ordained him Metropolitan of Syria by name Julius.

Moran Mor Elias II passed away in 1847 and Mor Ignatius Jacob II succeeded him to the Holy Throne of Antioch. Patriarch Jacob II passed away in 1871. Mor Julius Peter was enthroned in 1872 (*Edavam/Midhunam* 4th). Moran Mor Ignatius Peter IV is also referred to as Peter III in many writings. However, Peter IV is more acceptable for several reasons. The Patriarch Aphrem I Barsoum has mentioned the name as Peter IV in different historical documents. There is no doubt about the research mind and competency of Moran Aphrem I in ascertaining historical facts. Another fact is that St. Peter, the Apostle is the first Patriarch, Peter I (A. D. 37- 67). He was followed by Peter II, the Fuller (Qassar) (A. D. 468-488); Peter III of Raqqa (A. D. 581-591) and Peter IV (A. D. 1872-1894). They were the 1st, 34th, 40th and 116th Patriarchs respectively (Yacoub III, 1985; <http://sor.eua.edu>).

The Syriac Orthodox Church in Malankara (Kerala, India) was under pressure from the Protestant heresies during the second half of the nineteenth century. Protestants were against intercession of St. Mary and the saints. They were against the prayers for the departed. Accordingly changes were made in the liturgy and prayer books. Mor Dionysius Joseph Pulikkottil informed Patriarch Peter IV of these developments. Realizing the danger to the Church, His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Peter IV, the Patriarch of Antioch, left Constantinople on 14 August 1874 by sea. Mor Gregorius Abdul Sathookki of Jerusalem also accompanied the Patriarch. They reached London.

Patriarch Peter IV stayed in London for seven months. During the stay His Holiness submitted a memorandum to Lord Salisbury. His Holiness also visited Queen Victoria. These efforts were to cancel the order that was in favour of Palakkunnath Mathews Athanasius who was pro-protestant although Patriarch Ignatius Elias II had ordained him at Mardin on 2 February 1842. Patriarch Peter IV succeeded in the efforts and the order in favour of Palakkunnath Mathews Athanasius (dated M. E. 1027 *Karkkidakom* 15th) was cancelled on 4 March 1876.

Mor Dionysius Joseph Pulikkottil invited the Patriarch to India by a letter dated 11 January 1875. The Patriarch accepted the invitation and started his journey from London via Egypt on 22 *Meenom* 1875. His Holiness reached Mumbai on 7 May 1875. His Holiness visited the Madras Governor at Nilgiris and visited the Maharaja at Thiruvananthapuram.

The above-mentioned visits and political consultations changed the situation. The Patriarch Peter IV convened a Synod at Mulamthuruthy Marthoman church on 28 June 1876. Saint Gregorius Geevarghese, Chathuruthil (then a Ramban) was the secretary and translator of H. H. Peter IV. Mor Dionysius Joseph Pulikkottil, Mor Gregorius Abdul Sathookki, 130 Priests and 144 laymen attended the Synod, the first of its kind. As a result of the synod, 'Suriyani Christiani Association', with a Managing Committee was formed according to democratic principles. The Malankara Church was organised into dioceses and the Patriarch Peter IV ordained six Bishops. His Holiness consecrated Holy Chrism on 15 August 1876 at Marthoman church, Mulamthuruthy. The Patriarch returned to Jerusalem in May 1877 after two years of stay in India.

H. H. Peter IV departed for his heavenly abode on 21 April 1894. The mortal remains are interred at Dier ul-Zafaran (Kurkuma) monastery. The Syriac Orthodox Church would not have existed in Malankara without the timely support and help from the Holy See of Antioch. The feast of Patriarch Peter IV is celebrated on 21 April.

## **266. Patriarch Peter of Alexandria**

**(A.D. ? – c. 311)**

St. Peter was the Patriarch of Alexandria from A.D. 300 to A.D. 311 (Cayre, 1935; Quasten, 1952). Peter is described by Eusebius as ‘a model Bishop, remarkable for his virtuous life and for his keen study of scriptures’ (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

The important works of St. Peter are: (1) a refutation of the thesis on the pre-existence of souls, (2) on the resurrection, (3) on the God head and (4) on the coming of Christ (Cayre, 1935). He survived the persecution of Diocletian. He drew up rules governing the readmission of those who abandoned the Church due to the fear of torture. In A.D. 306, Peter went into hiding because of the torture and Bishop Melitius subsequently claimed authority over the Throne of Alexandria. In A.D. 311 Peter came back to his Throne when peace was restored, but was beheaded under the persecution of Maximin. The feast of St. Peter is celebrated on 25 May, 28 October and 24 November in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **267. St. Peter, the Disciple**

**(A. D.? - 67)**

Peter was a fisherman from Beth– sa’-i-da, a city of Galilee (John 1:44). He was from the lineage of Naphtali (Abdul Ahad, 1948). Peter was known earlier as Symeon or Simon in Greek. Peter is the Greek translation for the Armaic name *Kepha*. “You are Simon, the son of Jona: you shall be called Ce-phas” (John 1:42).

That Jo-na is the father of Peter which is evident from Mathew 16:17: “Blessed are you, Simon, Bar–Jo-‘na.” Peter was married (Mark 1:30) and it is believed that he had a daughter (Abdul Ahad, 1948). They moved from Beth-sa’-i-da to Capernaum (Moothedan,

2001). The house of Peter is located near the Synagogue of Capernaum. A church has been built over the remains of Peter's house. Peter's wife might have accompanied him in preaching the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:5).

It is believed that Peter was the disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:40). His ardent belief in Christ (Mathew 14:28), confession of faith (Mathew 16:16), and anxiety about the well-being of Jesus Christ (John 18:10), are all evident in the Gospel. The liturgy and sacraments of the Syriac Orthodox Church, proclaim the primacy of St. Peter. He is the head of, and first among, the disciples of Jesus Christ. The name of Peter appears first in the list of disciples (Mathew 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14). Peter presided over the meeting convened for the election of Mat-thi'-as (Acts 1:15-26).

Peter is the man behind organizing the Church at Antioch. St. Peter established the Holy See of Antioch in A. D. 37 (February 22). Disciples were in touch with Antioch, from where they were commended to the Grace of God for the work (Acts 14:26). The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Jesus Christ stayed in the house of Peter (Hoever, 1989). Jesus travelled in the boat of Peter. Peter was the spokes-person of Jesus and the disciples (Mathew 17:24). St. Mark, the Evangelist, was the disciple of St. Peter (1 Peter 5:13).

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the napkin that had been around His head (John 20:7) was handed over to St. Peter (Mose Bar Kipho's Easter Instruction Chapter 18; cited in Abdul Ahad, 1948). Bar Sleebi has recorded that St. Peter used this napkin as headdress or head-gear (*Koobatho*-Syriac).

Heord Agrippa imprisoned Peter at Jerusalem in c. A. D. 44 (Acts. 12:1-19). He escaped from the hands of Agrippa. Thereafter, he preached Gospel in different places, ordained Bishops, and established churches at several places. Peter presided in the synod held at Jerusalem in A. D. 51. He was in Antioch during A. D. 53-60. Then he proceeded to Rome as a part of his visit where Nero was

persecuting Christians. On the way to Rome Peter met Paul. They together went to Rome to strengthen the followers in the apostolic faith. Nero imprisoned them. It is certain that St. Peter and St. Paul were together in prison for about nine months before their martyrdom on 29 June A. D. 67 ( Pollock, 1985, p. 307).

Abdul Ahad (1948) has recorded that St. Peter was crucified head downward on his request to kiss the feet of his master. According to Tertullian, St. Peter was crucified in the last year of Nero's reign at Rome (Hoever, 1989). Eusebius recounts that St. Peter was hung head downward according to his own request, not deeming himself worthy to die as his own Divine Master (White, 1991). The evening prayers on the feast of St. Peter also affirm this description. The feast of St. Peter is celebrated on 29 June along with that of St. Paul at the end of the lent in the intercession of Apostles from 26 June to 29 June.

The successor of St. Peter is the head of the Syriac Orthodox Church. Now, His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, is the 123rd successor of St. Peter.

## **268. Mor Phathiyoon (Pethion)**

**(A.D. ? - 740/741)**

Pethion was a Zoroastrian (a pre-Islamic religion) convert who, with his uncle the monk Yazdin, preached in the region of the lower Zab. He helped an aristocratic father, Adorhormizd and his daughter, Anahid to convert. Pethion was martyred under Yazdegerd II.

There are several references to the persecutions of Christians under Yazdegerd II (Drake, 2006). Pathiyoon was a man of virtue who formed a favorable relationship with a Muslim governor, Halid al Qasri, whose mother was a Christian (<http://syriaca.org/person/1409>).



According to Bar Hebraeus: Sliba-zkha was succeeded by Pethion, bishop of Tirhan, a native of Beth Garmaï. He was consecrated at Seleucia while he was still a young man. He was diligent in the performance of his duties and looked after a school he had founded. He gave the students extra rations and a set of new clothes every year, and also gave them presents once a week and on feast days. They say that his school eventually attracted as many as 400 students. He was respected equally by his bishops and his people on account of his chastity. After fulfilling his office for eleven years, he died a martyr in the year AD 740/1 and was succeeded by Aba Bar Brikh Sebyaneh from Kashkar. There was a church in the name of Saint Pethion at Diyarbakir (Walker, 2006). The feast of Phathiyoon is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 25 October.

## **269. Apostle Philemon**

### **(First Century)**

Apostle Philemon who was the bishop of Gaza, is numbered among the Seventy-two emissaries ([https://orthodoxwiki.org/Apostle\\_Philemon](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Apostle_Philemon)). The Church has included a letter he received from Apostle Paul in the canon of the Holy Scripture. He, with Apostle Archippus, ministered to the town of Colossae from its Christian center, Philemon's home. During a pagan feast the Church had gathered in his home for prayer. When the pagans learned of it they raided the home and took Sts. Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus to be killed. They were whipped, buried up to their waists and then stoned. Sts. Philemon and Apphia gave up their souls to God.

The New Testament letter was written by Paul the Apostle to a wealthy Christian of Colossae, Asia Minor, on behalf of Onesimus, Philemon's former slave. Paul, writing from prison, expresses affection for the newly converted Onesimus and asks that he be

received in the same spirit that would mark Paul's own arrival, even though Onesimus may be guilty of previous failings. While passing no judgment on slavery itself, Paul exhorts Philemon to manifest true Christian love that removes barriers between slaves and free men. The letter was probably composed in Rome about AD 61 (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Letter-of-Paul-to-Philemon>).

From Ephesus, where he was imprisoned (c. 53–54), Paul wrote his shortest and most personal letter to a Phrygian Christian (probably from Colossae or nearby Laodicea) whose slave Onesimus had run away, after possibly having stolen money from his master. The slave apparently had met Paul in prison, was converted, and was being returned to his master with a letter from Paul appealing not on the basis of his apostolic authority but according to the accepted practices within the system of slavery and the right of an owner over a slave. He requested that Onesimus be accepted “as a beloved brother” and that he be released voluntarily by his master to return and serve Paul and help in Christian work. Paul appealed to the owner that Onesimus (whose name in Greek means ‘useful’) is no longer useless because of his conversion and claimed that the owner owed Paul a debt (as he probably was also instrumental in his conversion) and that any debt or penalty incurred by the slave would be paid by Paul.

The Epistle of St. Paul to Philemon, however, is not a purely personal letter, because it is addressed to a small Christian community that usually met in a room of a person's home. The letter ends with salutations and a benediction in the plural form of address. The body of the letter, however, uses “you” (singular) and is addressed to the slave's owner, a man whom Paul himself has not met. Philemon, the first name in the address, is called a “beloved fellow worker,” which implies that he knew Paul.

The letter was written from prison, and Paul apparently expected a release in the near future, because he requested a guest room, a suggestion that he was not very far from Colossae or Laodicea, which would be true of Ephesus. Colossae would be reached from Ephesus

via Laodicea, and the letter could be addressed to a house-church there. The feast of Apostle Philemon is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 22 November.

## **270. St. Philexinos of Mabug, the Martyr**

**(A. D. 450 - 523)**

Philoxinos was born at Tahal, Persia. He was originally named Xenaya (Smith & Wace, 1887; Douglas, 1978). He studied at Urhoy (Edessa) and at Tel' Ada, Antioch. He later joined the monastery at Karthmin and became a Priest.

On 18 August A. D. 485, Priest Xenaya was ordained Bishop by the Patriarch Peter II (Peter, the Fuller, A. D. 468-488) for Mabbug (Hierapolis), by name Philoxinos. In A. D. 512, Patriarch Severios assumed charge replacing Flavian II. Bishop Philoxinos was one of the most learned Syrian theologians and the spokesman of the Patriarch Severios of Antioch. A Syriac version of the New Testament was published by Mor Philoxenos in A. D. 508 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Douglas, 1978).

Mor Philoxinos has published several letters about the Chalcedon heresy, ascetic life, a set of thirteen 'discourses on the Christian life', the trinity and the incarnation, three texts of holy *Qurbono*, prayers for different hours, etc. About incarnation, he wrote: "The very personality of God the word descended from heaven and became man in the womb of the Virgin, personally without conversion. Thus, He became a man who could be seen, felt, handled, and yet as God, He continued to possess the spiritual, invisible, and impalpable character essential to Deity. Neither the deity nor the humanity was absorbed one by the other, nor converted one into the other. Nor again by a combination of the two natures was a third evolved as by chemical transformation" (Smith & Wace, 1887, p. 392).

In A. D. 518, the faithful Anastas Caesar died and Justinus succeeded him. Justinus was a supporter of Chalcedonians. He persecuted the faithful, and Mor Philoxinos was first exiled to Thrace and then to Gangra in Paphlagonia, where he died (a martyr) of suffocation by smoke (Smith & Wace, 1887; Aphrem, 1963). The date of his martyrdom is given as 10 December A. D. 523.

## **271. Mor Philexinos Samuel**

**(A.D. 1930 – 1985)**

Samuel was born on 4 May 1930 as the son of Kodath Geevarghese and Iittimootil 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 *Koroyo* by Mor Clemis Abraham of Knanaya diocese at Chingavanam monastery. He underwent theological studies at Manjanikkara monastery and Thrikunnath Seminary, Alwaye. He was ordained *Kassiso* by Bishop Mor Gregorius Geevarghese, Vayaliparambil on 14 February 1959. In 1964 he joined Basелиos College, Kottayam as a lecturer.

Rev. Fr. Samuel was ordained Ramban on 25 December 1975 by H. B. Catholicos Basелиos Paulose II at Mor Elia Chapel, Puthencruz. The Rev. Ramban was ordained 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 house.

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 St. Gregorious Chathuruthil 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 passed away on 17 January 1985. His mortal remains were kept at St. Peter's Chapel, Ernakulam 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, Meenangadi 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.

## **272. Mor Philexinos Yoohanon**

**(A.D. 1941 - 2015)**

John was born on 5 December 1941 as the son of Kuruvilla and Annamma in the Elappanal Family, Pampady. He had four brothers and a sister. He completed his school education from MGM High School, Pampady.

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

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

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

He was instrumental in the overall development of the diocese for the two- and- a- half decades since his enthronement as Metropolitan of Malabar diocese in 1985. He took initiatives in

establishing Mor Elias Orphanage - Snehabhavan, Old-age home - Karunabhavan, St. Peter's and St. Paul's Higher Secondary School and St. Gregorius B.Ed. College at Meenangadi.

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

In 2008 the Malabar diocese was divided and a diocese based in Kozhikode was formed for which a new metropolitan was ordained. Since then His Grace Mor Philoxenos Yoohanon remained as the Metropolitan of Malabar diocese. In 2009 His Grace's health deteriorated due to continuous illness. In August 2009, His Grace officially sent a letter to His Holiness the Patriarch requesting permission to relinquish the duty of administering the diocese since he was on treatment. Subsequently the Malankara Episcopal Synod also formally approved the resignation of His Grace from the diocesan administration of Malabar and Simhasana churches in that region. Since 2009 His Grace was leading a retired life at Meenangadi.

His Grace breathed his last at 9.00 a.m. on 30 December 2015 at a hospital at Kalppatta, Wayanad. The mortal remains were brought to St. Mary's Simhasana church, Pampady and was entombed there on 1 January 2016. The anniversary of Mor Philexinos Yoohanon is celebrated on 30 December in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **273. St. Philip, the Disciple**

**(1 ? B.C. – A.D. 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 (A.D. 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 A.D. 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.

## **274. St. Philogonos, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(? – A.D. 323)**

St. Philogonos (Philogone/Philogonius) was the twenty-second Patriarch of Antioch from A.D. 320 to 323. He succeeded Moran Vitalis (A.D. 314-320). He was married and had a daughter (Smith & Wace, 1887). He had been by profession an advocate, and had gained universal esteem by his powerful advocacy for the poor and the oppressed in the law courts.

The details about the life of St. Philogonos are gathered from a homily delivered at Antioch by Mor Chrysostom on his feast on 20 December. Chrysostom in his homily comments upon the great difficulties Philogonos had to encounter, at the commencement of the episcopate, from persecutions. Moran Philogonos completed the rebuilding of the 'The mother of all the churches in the city of Antioch,' traditionally ascribed to apostolic times, the construction of which had been begun by Vitalis.

The feast of St. Philogonos, the Patriarch of Antioch, is celebrated on 20 December in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **275. Mor Philoksinos Yuhanon Dolabani, Bishop of Mardin**

**(A.D. 1885 – 1969)**

Mor Philoksinos Yuhanon Dolabani was born on 10 October A.D. 1885 in the outskirts of the Assyrian village Qelesh in Tur'abdin. He became a monk at the Monastery of Dayro d-Kurkmo at the age of 22. In A.D. 1933 the monk Yuhanon Dolabani was appointed by the Patriarch Aphrem I Barsoum (A.D. 1933 – 1957) to be the patriarchal deputy to Mardin and its environs. Dolabani was ordained bishop for Mardin and the surrounding areas on 4 May 1947 at Homs, Syria by the Patriarch. He came to be regarded as a great man among Assyrians, both as an enlightened Church father and as the confronter of the hostile Turkish authorities (<http://bethnahrin.de/2007/08/19/a-man-of-god-and-assyria/>).

The Assyrian Youth Federation and the Assyrian Federation in Sweden in March 2007 published the book entitled - - "*The Biography of Yuhanon Dolabani and Other Writings.*" The entire book is in the Assyrian language, except for one of his writings on the Assyrians of Cilicia, which is in Ottoman Turkish. Part 1 of the 7 parts book contains the biography of Mor Yuhanon Dolabani.

Part 2 contains a conversation between the late Patriarch Mor Ignatius Elias III and bishop Mor Deevannasios Gewargis from India, which took place in the Dayr ul-Za'faran Monastery near Mardin, south-east Turkey. Part 6 and 7 of the book include poems and lists all literary works of Mor Dolabani which amount to approximately 100 books in total. A gist of the book translated into English by Mr. Tomas Isik is one of the sources of this write up.

The book describes the predicament of the Assyrians in Anatolia the years before, during and after the Seyfo Genocide in 1915. The book sheds light on the period of persecution and terrible massacres that were directed against the Assyrians during that time, thus helping to fill a gap in the history of the Assyrians.

Orphaned Assyrian children who survived the Seyfo genocide and ended up in the city of Adana were taken care of in the Assyrian school. Dolabani remained close to the Assyrian youth from the days he became responsible for teaching in the Assyrian school for orphaned children in Adana, named after three Assyrian letters as “The Taw- Mim-Semkath School.” It was also at “The Taw Mim Semkath School” that Dolabani composed most of his poems. Due to the continued persecutions of the Assyrians, the Syriac Orthodox Church was forced to close the orphanage in Adana. But Dolabani later succeeded in re-opening “The Taw Mim Semkath School” in Beirut in A.D. 1922, making it a secure sanctuary for the orphans ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philoxenos\\_Yuhanon\\_Dolabani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philoxenos_Yuhanon_Dolabani)).

Dolabani was a man with missionary zeal. After the end of the persecution of the Armenian and Syriac Christians in early 20th century, he ordained many priests, monks and deacons, and sent them to very remote areas as far as ‘Bitlis and Van’ where the faithful had lost their clergy and forgotten about Christianity. Dressed as lay people, they baptized so many Syriac and also Armenian Christians who no more had any clergy (Johnson, 2006, pp. 12-14).

The week before he died, when he saw his last article in the Patriarchal Magazine, he said: “I don’t like death to break my pen, because the Church and our youth still need my pen, but may God’s will be done.” Mor Philoksinos Yuhanon Dolabani departed for his heavenly abode on 2 November 1969. He is entombed in Deyr ul-Zafaran Monastery. The feast of Mor Philoksinos Yuhanon Dolabani is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 2 November.

## **276. St. Phocas of Sinope, the Martyr**

**(? - A.D. 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 (Smith & Wace, 1887; 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, A.D. 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 entombed 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 John Chrysostom (Ivanios), the gold-mouthed (A.D. 347-407). Mor Gregorius of Naziansus (A.D. 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.

## **277. Phocas, Bishop of Sinope**

**(A.D. ? – 117)**

Phocas was a Bishop at Sinope in Pontus (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). From youth he led a virtuous Christian life, and in his adult years he became the Bishop of Sinope. Saint Phocas converted many pagans to faith in Christ. At the time of a persecution against

Christians under the Emperor Trajan (A.D. 98-117), the governor demanded that the saint should renounce Christ. After fierce torture they enclosed Saint Phocas in a hot bath, where he died a martyr in the year A.D. 117 (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2011/09/22/102695-hieromartyr-phocas-the-Bishop-of-sinope>). In the year 404, the relics of the saint were transferred to Constantinople (July 22). A homily in his honour was composed by Saint John Chrysostom (d. A.D. 407) on the occasion. The feast of Phoccas is celebrated on 22 July and 13 October in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **278. St. Poemen of Egypt**

**(c. A.D. 340 – 450?)**

Abba Poemen (means “shepherd”) was an Egyptian monk born around A.D. 340. He is an early Desert Father, the most quoted Abba (Father) in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.

Abba Poemen lived in a monastery in Scetis, one of the first centers of early Christian monasticism. In 407 A.D. the monastery was overrun by raiders, scattering the monks. Abba Poemen and Abba Anoub, along with a handful of monks, fled to Terenuthis, on the river Nile (<https://infogalactic.com/info/Poemen>). After leaving Scetis, Abba Poemen and his group first lived in an abandoned pagan temple. The various raids on Scetis were a turning point in desert monasticism. The remaining diaspora comprising Abba Poemen and his group kept alive the collective wisdom of the monks of Scetis by creating the bulk of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.

Abba Poemen was a wise shepherd rather than a desert ascetic. He was known for his tolerance of the weakness of others. Once some of the older monks approached Abba Poemen for his advice on how to treat monks who fell asleep during their prayers. They were inclined to wake the sleeping monk, while Abba Poemen took a more compassionate approach, advising, “For my part, when I have seen

a brother who is dozing, I put his head on my knees and let him rest.” Abba Poemen was opposed to giving harsh penances to those who slipped spiritually.

Abba Poemen was also described as a charismatic speaker who still taught more by example than by lecturing others. When a visiting monk asked him if he should assume a role of authority over the brothers he was living with, Abba Poemen responded by saying, “No, be their example, not their legislator.” Judgment of others was also foreign to his nature. He once stated that, “A man may seem to be silent, but if his heart is condemning others, he is babbling incessantly.” His sayings make up one seventh of the entire *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. Many of his sayings and deeds are also preserved in the *Paradise of the Fathers*.

Poemen said, “Do not give your heart to that which does not satisfy your heart.” He also said, “If you are silent, you will have peace wherever you live.” Abba Poemen heard of someone who had gone all week without eating and then had lost his temper. The old man said, “He could do without food for six days, but he could not cast out anger.” Abba Isaac came to see Abba Poemen and found him washing his feet. As he enjoyed freedom of speech with him he said, “How is it that others practice austerity and treat their bodies rigidly?” Abba Poemen said to him, “We have not been taught to kill our bodies, but to kill our passions” (<http://www.omhksea.org/2012/08/abba-poemen-brief-life-and-sayings/>).

Repentance and grieving over one’s sins is the beginning of the Divine path is the teaching of St. Poemen. When we repent and stand against evil we will do good and begin to do the will of God. If we do not repent then we will not recognize our evil actions and continue to go against the will of God. This is why we so often find ourselves separated from God. This effort is mostly a struggle with our thoughts. We must be ever watchful and ever ready to attack thoughts which are temptations to go against the will of God (<http://orthodoxwayoflife.blogspot.com/2011/08/saint-poemen-on-beginning-of-spiritual.html>).

It is not the elimination of thoughts that we seek as this is impossible but the ability to minimize and resist them. How do we do this? In general, Saint Poeman would say, “the thing you need most is a sober mind.” One way to do this is to avoid those situations, places and people who lead to conditions that arouse thoughts that tempt us. Why maintain a friendship with a person who continually is asking to do things which you know are not proper? Why engage in discussions that you know will lead to heated arguments where you end up saying things you wish you had never said? Act on eliminating these temptations from your life. This combined with a life of prayer, repentance and regular participation in the sacraments will bring you closer to God. Saint Poemen says, the cure is obvious but not easy to do as we must exercise our will to order our lives in a way that avoids undue temptations. The feast of Poemen of Egypt is celebrated on 27 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **279. St. Polycarp of Smyrna**

**(A.D. 69 – 155?)**

Polycarp was born in Smyrna (Modern Izmir, Turkey) around A.D. 69. Even though he was born in a non-Christian family he became a disciple of Mor Yuhanon *Evangalisto* and studied Theology. He in early life must have many who could tell of things they had heard from actual disciple of our Lord. He was trustworthy source of information concerning the first age of the Church (Smith & Wace, 1887). St. Irenaeus and writer Papias became his disciples later on.

He was ordained Episcopo by Mor Yuhanon in his youth itself. In A.D. 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 (68?, Quasten, 1949) 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: "Leave me just as I am. He who enables me to endure the fire will also enable me to remain on the pyre without moving, without the security afforded by your nails" (Quasten, 1949, pp. 77-78). 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 (A.D. 138 – 161) on 23 February A.D. 155 (e.g., Cross & Livingstone, 1974; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2001; *Encarta*, 2001). Quasten (1949) gave the date 22 February 156. But in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* this event is recorded to have happened in A.D. 167 or A.D. 168 in the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180).

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

## **280. Mor Polycarpus Geevarghese**

**(A.D. 1933 – 2011)**

Geevarghese, the fifth son of Mathew Philipose, Pallivadekethil, Chennithala and Elyamma was born on 5 April 1933. He completed his studies from Primary School, Elavumood and S. N. High School, Mannar (*Evangelical Association of the East*, 1994).

He survived a fatal attack of typhoid in 1948. He joined Evangelical Association of the East (EAE) in 1955 and lived at Perumbavoor. Mor Yulios Elias Qoro, the delegate of Antioch, ordained him Korooyo in 1956. Following that, he joined Manjinikkara dayro and studied Theology and Syriac under the tutorship of Very Rev. Yacoub Ramban, Madappat and Mooshe Salama Ramban.

In 1957, Yulios Elias Qoro ordained him priest. He served Kottumala and Kozhichal churches in Kasargod from 1957 to 1959 and established a church at Pakkanikkad. He also served at Cheerady

church, South Karnataka in 1959. According to the interest of Very Rev. George Kureekkal Corepiscopo, the Mission Director of Hanover he went to Hanover in 1961, joined Karmala Balika College, and secured B. A. (Hons).

Fr. Geevarghese was interested in politics and became a member of the Congress party in 1970. He was the District vice-president of the Congress party in Karnataka. Along with political activities, he carried on his ecclesiastical duties and established St. Antony's High School in Hanover and Cheeradi High School, Karnataka.

H. B. Baselios Paulose II elevated him to the rank of the Corepiscopo in 1978. He established St. George High School in Nellyadi in 1978, which was upgraded to a Junior College in 1985.

He took up the responsibility as the administrator of the Evangelical Association of the East (EAE) in 1985. Upon the resignation of Mor Athanasius Paulose Kadavil II in 1986, Geevarghese Corepiscopo was nominated as the next Metropolitan. Patriarch H. H. Ignatius Zakka I consecrated him under the name Mor Polycarpus as the Metropolitan of EAE which is directly under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch and has its own constitution.

In 2006 Mor Chrysostomos Markose was consecrated and appointed by the Patriarch as the assistant metropolitan as Mor Polycarpus could not carry out his duties as the administrator of EAE due to health reasons.

The bishop who had been leading a life of rest passed away due to cardiac problems on 6 March 2011. He was entombed on 9 March at St. Antony's Syrian Cathedral, Jeppu, Mangalore. Mor Polycarpus is commemorated on 6 March.

## **281. Pontius Pilate and his wife Procula**

**(? – A.D. 39?)**

Pontius Pilate was a Roman governor under the Emperor of Tiberius in the First century. Pontius Pilate's date of birth is unknown. He is believed to have hailed from the Samnium region of central Italy. After the deposition of the eldest son of Herod, Archelaus (who had succeeded his father as ethnarch), Judea was placed under the rule of a Roman procurator. Pilate was the fifth, succeeding Valerius Gratus in A.D. 26. Roman Emperor Tiberius appointed Pontius Pilate prefect of the Roman provinces of Judaea, Samaria and Idumæa, although Pilate is best known for his leadership of Judaea (<https://www.biography.com/people/pontius-pilate-9440686>). While the typical term for a Roman prefect was 1–3 years, Pilate was to hold his post as the fifth Roman procurator for 10 years. His unusually long period of office (A.D. 26-36) covers the whole of the active ministry both of St. John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ (Barnes, 1911).

His duties as a prefect included such mundane tasks as tax collection and managing construction projects. But, perhaps his most crucial responsibility was that of maintaining law and order. Pontius Pilate attempted to do so by any means. What he couldn't negotiate he is said to have accomplished through brutal force.

As governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilate faced a conflict of interests between the Roman Empire and the Sanhedrin Jewish council. When Pontius asked Jesus if he was the King of the Jews, he claimed that Jesus embraced the title, which he never did. This accusation was considered an act of treason by the Roman government.

The Gospels indicate Pontius Pilate's indecision, citing that he conceded to letting Jesus go at one stage of the trial, but later repealed the offer. Matthew 27:24 describes Pontius Pilate as refusing involvement in Jesus' crucifixion: So when Pilate saw that he was

gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.”

The New Testament suggests that Pilate had a weak, wavering personality. Would the mob be just as happy if he had released Barabbas instead of Jesus on the feast day (Mark 15:6). Pilate’s wife sends him word of a revelatory dream she has had about Jesus and urges him to “have nothing to do with that innocent man” (Matthew 27:19), and Pilate abdicates his responsibility to the emperor. In John (19:7–11), Pilate is depicted as having accepted the Christian interpretation of the meaning of Jesus, and he rejects Jewish leaders’ reminder that Jesus has merely said that he is “the king of the Jews” (John 19:21).

The official residence of the procurators was the palace of Herod at Cæsarea; where there was a military force of about 3,000 soldiers. These soldiers came up to Jerusalem at the time of the feasts, when the city was full of strangers, and there was greater danger of disturbances, hence Pilate had come to Jerusalem at the time of the Crucifixion. He would gladly have acquitted Christ, and even made serious efforts in that direction, but gave way at once when his own position was threatened.

The efforts of Pilate to acquit Christ, and thus pass as lenient a judgment as possible upon his crime, goes further to the claim that he actually became a Christian. This belief goes back to the second century and may be found in apocryphal literature such as the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. His rule was brought to an end through trouble which arose in Samaria and was later summoned to Rome to answer their charges, but before he could reach the city Emperor Tiberius had died.

Claudia Procula, according to the third-century early Christian sources such as *Gospel of Nicodemus*, was the wife of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor (<http://orthochristian.com/102542.html>). It is known from the ancient tradition that Pontius Pilate and his spouse were executed. They may have been executed not for their faith in

Jesus Christ as there was no punishment for worshipping “other gods” in the Roman Empire. However, those who refused to perform divine honors before an emperor’s statue could be executed. The memory of Pontius Pilate and his wife Procula is observed in the Syriac Orthodox Church on 25 June.

## **282. Mor Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza**

**(c. A. D. 352 – 420?)**

According to the biography written by Mark, his disciple, Porphyrius was born at Thessalonica in c. A.D. 352 (Smith & Wace, 1887). His parents were Christians and hailed from a good family. He was educated in the scriptures and secular subjects.

When he was about 25 years, he renounced the world and retired to the desert in Scete, Egypt. At the end of five years, he left for Jerusalem, and spent another five years in a cave near Jordan. Because of his austerities he became ill and again visited Jerusalem where he met Mark who became his disciple and companion.

At the request of Prophyrius, Mark visited Thessalonica and the proceeds of the share of Porphyrius’ parental property was distributed to the poor and to various monasteries. Prophyrius supported himself by manual labour.

Porphyrius was ordained priest (against his will) by John, Bishop of Jerusalem, who entrusted the sacred relic of the True Cross with him. After serving as a priest for three years, in the year A.D. 395, on the demise of Areneas, he was ordained Bishop of Gaza by John of Caesarea. At that time the population of Gaza was almost entirely pagan and the presence of a zealous Bishop was a much awaited blessing. The cessation of a severe drought at the beginning of the second year of his episcopate, was attributed to his prayers and those of the Christians. Subsequently a large number of heathen inhabitants

were converted to Christianity. This was followed by other conversions, arousing great anger among the heathen population, which vented itself in severe persecution.

Porphyrius endured all the ill-treatment which made the persecutors change their mind. At the same time he sent his deacon Mark and his minister Borocas to Constantinople to obtain the protection of the Emperor, and his sanction for the demolition of idol temples.

Through the power and advocacy of Mor Chrysostom (d. 407) an order was obtained to destroy the idols and close down the temples, which was executed. Still a dominant section of the inhabitants remained idolaters. They kept out Christians from all lucrative offices and forbid them from the enjoyment of their property. At this juncture Mor Porphyrius sought the permission of Mor John of Caesarea to resign as he could not stand or make good the situation. Mor John consoled him and accompanied him to Constantinople to obtain an order to demolish the temples. After having visited a famous anchorite, named Procopus at Rhodes, on their voyage, they arrived at Constantinople on 7 January A.D. 401 (Smith & Wace, 1887). They with the help of Mor Chrysostom, who was on good terms with Eudoxia, the Empress, obtained orders from Arcadius for destruction of heathen shrines. Moreover, an endowment and other privileges were secured for the Christians of Gaza and Caesarea. A large sum was granted for the erection of a church and a hospice for strangers in the city.

The Bishops reached Majuma, the port of Gaza, on 1 May and Cynegius, the commissioner, executed the imperial orders for the destruction of the temples. A solemn fast was declared by Porphyrius, with the view to understand the divine will in the matter of pillaging the temple of Marnas (known for its architectural uniqueness). The confusion was whether to destroy the temple or convert it into a Christian church. Finally, the temple was destroyed and a cruciform church was built according to the plan furnished by Eudoxia. The

church was dedicated by Mor Prophyrius on Easter day (A.D. 405 or 406).

The heathen population of Gaza, who was in majority took revenge on this high-handed destruction and at the spread of Christianity in the city. Several Christians were killed and Mor Prophyrius barely escaped the massacre. The Bishop's house was pillaged and he took refuge in the house of an old woman. Later, the woman with her grand-daughter embraced Christianity. The young girl, Salaphtha, became a deaconess and subsequently became famous for her asceticism.

Mor Porphyrius in his will directed that a certain sum should be dispensed daily during Lent to the poor of the city according to his custom during his life, and that in default the whole sum should devolve on the church of Caesarea. Mor Porphyrius departed for his heavenly abode on 26 February A.D. 419/420. He is commemorated on 26 February in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **283. Moran Porphyrius, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A. D.? – 412)**

Porphyrius (Porphyros) was the twenty-seventh Patriarch of Antioch from A.D. 404 to 412. He succeeded Moran Flavian I (A.D. 381-404). For a long period Porphyrius had been in holy orders and he seems to have spent his life in Antioch. Moran Flavian's death occurred almost during the same period of Chrysostom's deposition and exile (Smith & Wace, 1887).

Constantius, a trusted friend of Chrysostom marked out as Flavian's successor, was accused at Constantinople as a disturber of public peace. Porphyrius was ordained by Acacius, Antiochus and Severianus. The house of Moran Porphyros was attacked by some



opponents who wanted to burn it down. Porphyrius got the protection of the general in command and the crowd was dispersed by the army.

The influence of Moran Porphyrius with ruling powers was enough to make the people attend the church. However, there was resistance and Porphyrius obtained a decree, from Arcadius on 18 November 404. Those who opposed Moran Porphyrius were ordered to be expelled from the churches and were forbidden from holding religious meetings elsewhere.

The feast of Moran Porphyrius is celebrated on 1 December in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **284. Prochoros, Bishop of Nicomedia**

### **(First Century)**

Prochoros is the name of one of the seven Deacons of the Church at Jerusalem, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 6:5). He is believed to have been one of the seventy-two emissaries and afterwards Bishop of Nicomedia in Bithynia (Smith & Wace, 1887).

There is an apocryphal writing titled "*History of Apostle John*" which is ascribed to Prochoros. The narrative begins with the parting of the Apostles and St. John's mission to Asia. He suffered shipwreck on the voyage but arrived safely at Ephesus accompanied by Prochoros, his disciple. There he restored the life of a man, who had been slain by a demon, destroyed the image of Diana (Artemis) and expelled the demon which had harboured there.

St. John was sent in exile to Patmos by the command of the Emperor. On the voyage to the Island he restored a drowned man to life, stilled a tempest and healed a guardsman. There are accounts of miracles that he performed while in exile which include his refutation of a learned Jew in a public dispute, numerous miracles of healing and raising the dead.

St. John spent fifteen years in Patmos and he converted almost the whole island. He was given permission to return to Ephesus, but he retired to a solitary place in the island and there he dictated the Gospel to Prochoros. After finishing the Gospel, it was left as a memorial of his work among the inhabitants of Patmos. He then left for Ephesus and spent twenty-six years there where he breathed his last. Prochoros and six other disciples conducted the burial of St. John, the Apostle (Smith & Wace, 1887).

## **285. St. Proclus, the Patriarch of Constantinople**

**(A.D. ? - 446)**

Proclus was ordained Reader in the Church in his childhood. He studied in the schools of rhetoric at Constantinople. He became secretary to Atticus, who ordained him deacon and priest. On the death of Atticus, some desired Proclus as the new Patriarch. Some others were in favour of Philippus but the majority wished for Sisinnius who was ultimately appointed the Patriarch (Smith & Wace, 1887). Sisinnius ordained Proclus Bishop for Cyzicus but the people there refused to receive him and he remained at Constantinople.

On the death of Sisinnius, the old rivalry broke out between partisans of Philippus and Proclus. A third person, Nestorius was chosen by the emperor. In A.D. 429, on a festival of St. Mary, Proclus gave a sermon on the incarnation which was later inserted at the beginning of the Acts of the Council of Ephesus. On the deposition of Nestorius, Philippus and Proclus appeared as rivals for the third time. This time again Maximinianus was selected to avoid a crisis.

When Maximinianus died in A.D. 434 (on Thursday before Easter) Proclus was enthroned by Bishops at Constantinople. In A.D. 438, Proclus transferred the relics of St. Chrysostom, his old master,

from Comana to Constantinople and interred them with great honour in the church of the Apostles (Chediath, 2006). It was during the time of Proclus that the Trisagion came into use. Twenty-seven homilies are ascribed to Proclus which include the nativity of our Lord, Epiphany, Resurrection, etc.

Proclus was a wise shepherd and a man of reconciliatory temper but strictly adhering to the Orthodox faith. He won over those who differed from him by persuasion rather than force. Proclus most probably passed away in July A.D. 446 or 447.

## **286. Procopius, the Great, Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 303)**

Procopius was a native of Jerusalem, but lived at Bethsan (Scythopolis). His earlier name was Neanius. His father, Christopher, was a Roman and a Christian. But the mother, Theodosia, remained a pagan. His father died when he was a child and the young child was raised by his mother. Having received an excellent secular education, he was introduced to Diocletian in the very first year of the emperor's accession to the throne, and he quickly advanced in government service. Towards the end of the year 303, when open persecution against Christians began, Neanius was sent as a proconsul to Alexandria with orders to mercilessly persecute the Church of God.

On his way to Egypt, near the Syrian city of Apamea, Neanius had a vision of the Lord Jesus, similar to the vision of Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts of the Apostles 9:1-9). At that moment a radiant Cross appeared in the air. Neanius felt an inexpressible joy and spiritual happiness in his heart and he was transformed from being a persecutor into a zealous follower of Christ. From this point in time Neanius became favorably disposed towards Christians and fought victoriously against the barbarians (<https://oca.org/saints/>

lives/2000/07/08/101966-greatmartyr-procopius-of-caesarea-in-palestine).

When the Roman Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 284-305) launched the last and the most ruthless of the ten persecutions against the Christians in Palestine in April, A.D. 303 Procopius was the first person who received the crown of martyrdom in that country (<https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/301-600/procopius-first-of-the-palestine-martyrs-11629634.html>). Eusebius, who became the Bishop of Caesarea, was alive at the time. Eusebius has left an account of the martyr which is summarised below.

Procopius was a godly man, for even before his confession he had given up his life to great endurance. He ate only bread, and drank water; and he took nothing else other than these two. Occasionally he took food every second day, and sometimes every third day; oftentimes he passed a whole week without food (also, see, Butler, 1866). He was well skilled in the sciences of the Greeks, but much more in that of the holy scriptures. He was admirable in all virtues, particularly in heavenly meekness and humility (Butler, 1866). He ministered in the orders of the Church in three ways: First, he had been a Reader; and in the second order he translated from Greek into Aramaic; and in the last, which is even more excellent than the preceding, he performed the function of an exorcist.

“Now it happened that he was sent from Baishan (Bethsan or Scythopolis) to our city Caesarea, together with his brother confessors. And at the very moment that he entered the gates of the city they brought him before the Governor: and immediately upon his first entrance the judge, whose name was Flavianus (Flavian), said to him: ‘It is necessary that you should make sacrifice to the gods’: but he replied in a loud voice, ‘There is no God but one only, the Maker and Creator of all things.’”

Then the judge commanded him to offer sacrifice to the emperors (Diocletian, Herculus, Galerius and Constantius), who were four in number; but the holy martyr of God laughed still more at this saying,

and repeated the words of the greatest of poets of the Greeks [Homer], ‘the rule of many is not good: let there be one ruler and one sovereign.’

“And on account of his answer Flavian sentenced Procopius to be beheaded. And this took place on the seventh day of the month Heziron (June), in the first year of the persecution in our days. This confessor was the first who was consummated in our city Caesarea.” By night Christians took up his much-tortured body, and with tears and prayers, they buried him.

There is another account which describes that his mother, went to the emperor to complain that her son did not worship the ancestral gods. Neanius was summoned to the procurator Judaeus Justus, where he was solemnly handed the decree of Diocletian. Having read through the blasphemous directive, Neanius quietly tore it up before the eyes of everyone. This was a crime, which the Romans regarded as an “insult to authority.” Neanius was held under guard and was sent in chains to Caesarea of Palestine, where the Apostle Paul once suffered. Struck by the great faith and courage of the Christians, and seeing the firmness of her son in bearing terrible sufferings, Theodosia became repentant and subsequently she was also executed. The feast of Procopius is celebrated on 1 June in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **287. St. Rabula of Edessa**

**(A.D. 350 ? – 435)**

Rabula (Rabbula) 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 (Smith & Wace, 1887; Aphrem, 1963; Burkitt, 2009).

Once while listening to an evangelical talk in Mor Abraham monastery in Kenneshrin he felt a desire to listen to and study the

word of God. On his conversion Rabula went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and was baptized in the river Jordan (Smith & Wace, 1887). Later he learned Theology from Mor Eusebius of Smishath (Chalcis) and Aakkak Episcopo of Aleppo (Acacius of Beroea). When he returned to Kennishrin he lived away from his family and made his wife and children lead an ascetic life (Chediyath, 1987). He freed his slaves and shared his riches with the poor in Kenneshrin, Aleppo and Edessa and joined Mor Abraham monastery.

He was ordained a priest in A.D. 388 and in A.D. 411 (412?) after the death of Bishop Diogenes of Urhoy (Edessa) Rabula was ordained as the successor by the Patriarch of Antioch. He took care of the sick and poor of the city, especially widows and orphans (Smith & Wace, 1887).

Rabula believed that it was not enough to denounce the actual teaching of Nestorius and prohibit the reading of his writings but to attack at its souls in heretical work of Diodore of the Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia. The pen of Cyril of Alexandria was strong enough to achieve this object. The heresy of Nestorius that Mary was not truly the mother of God was put to rest. Rabula was remarked by Cyril as ‘the pillar and ground of the truth to all the easterns’ (Smith & Wace, 1887). 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* (addressed to Mother of God, Saints and Martyrs, on repentance, on cross, the resurrection, the foot-washing, the Eucharist, etc.). Rabula has a chief share in the publication of *Peshitta*.

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

## **288. St. Romanos of Antioch, the Martyr**

**(A.D.? - 303)**

Several faithfuls were martyred in the tenth persecution under Diocletian in A.D. 303. The hatred of Galerius, the adopted son of Diocletian, being stimulated by his mother, fuelled the persecution (<http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/foxs-book-of-martyrs/the-tenth-persecution-under-diocletian-a-d-303.html>).

The day fixed to commence the bloody persecution was the 23rd of February A.D. 303, that being the day on which the Terminalia was celebrated. Terminalia was an ancient Roman festival in honour of god Terminus. The cruel pagans boasted they would put an end to Christianity. On the appointed day, the persecution began in Nicomedia with a large number of officers and assistants in charge. The churches of the Christians were invaded and all the sacred books were seized and burned. This was done in the presence of Diocletian and Galerius, who, not contented with burning the books, had the churches levelled to the ground.

The above vandalism was followed by a rigorous edict commanding the destruction of all other Christian churches and books. The edict was torn down from the place where it was affixed. The man responsible was arrested, severely tortured, and then burned alive. All Christians were imprisoned; and Galerius privately ordered to set fire to the imperial palace so that Christians might be accused as the culprits, and a plausible pretence given for carrying on the persecution with greater severities. Many houses were set on fire, and whole Christian families perished in the flames; and others had stones fastened around their necks, and being tied together were driven into the sea.

The persecution lasted for ten years. It is impossible to ascertain how many were martyred, or to enumerate the various modes of martyrdom. Racks, scourges, swords, daggers, crosses, poison, and famine were made use of in various parts to exterminate the Christians.

The city of Phrygia, consisting entirely of Christians, was burnt, and all the inhabitants perished in the flames.

Romanus, a native of Palestine, was a deacon of the church of Caesarea and an exorcist at the time of the commencement of Diocletian's persecution (Eusebius of Caesarea, 1861; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV). During one of the persecutions against Christians Romanus resettled at Antioch, where he encouraged Christians in the faith by his example and fervent preaching (<https://www.holytrinityorthodox.com/calendar/los/November/18-02.htm>).

When the governor of Antioch, Asklepiades, was considering the destruction of the Christian church, Romanos called out to the believers to stand up for their sanctuary. He persuaded them, that if they managed to protect the church, then down here on earth would be rejoicing, and if they were to perish in defense of the church, there would still be rejoicing in the heavenly Church.

After a while, a pagan celebration, Terminalia, started in the city and many people from the surrounding areas had come to Antioch. Romanos began denouncing idol-worship and called on all to follow Christ. They arrested him and subjected him to torture. During the tortures the martyr saw in the crowd the Christian boy Barulas and, having directed the gaze of the governor to him, he said: "The young boy is smarter than you in your old age, that he does know the True God. You however worship mere idols." The governor Asklepiades gave orders to bring the boy to him. To all the questions of the governor, Barulas firmly and without fear confessed his faith in Christ, the True God. Asklepiades in a rage gave orders to fiercely whip Barulas, and then to behead him. Before his death the holy lad asked his mother, who was present at the execution, to give him something to drink, but the mother quieted him down to endure all the torments for the Lord, Jesus Christ. She herself placed her son's head on the block, and after the execution entombed him.

As per another account, being condemned for his faith at Antioch, Romanus was scourged, put to the rack, his body torn with



hooks, his flesh cut with knives, his face scarified, his teeth ripped from their sockets, and his hair plucked up by the roots. Soon after he was ordered to be strangled on 17 November A.D. 303. The Martyr Romanos was sentenced to burning, but a sudden gust of rain extinguished the fire. The saint began glorifying Christ and insulting the pagan gods. The governor gave orders to cut out his tongue (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. IV), but even after deprived of his tongue Saint Romanos continued loudly to glorify the Lord. Then the torturers sentenced him to hanging. The feast of Romanos is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 15 March and 18 November.

## **289. Sts. Ruphos & Zosimus**

**(A.D. ? – 107)**

Saints Ruphos (Rufus) and Zosimus are the second century Christian martyrs. They lived in Antioch and were martyred with Saint Ignatius of Antioch during the persecution of Christians under the Roman emperor Trajan (<https://www.redirectify.com/people/rufus-and-zosimus.html>; Aphrem, 1963). They were killed by beasts in the Roman arena. Their feast is celebrated on 20 December in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **290. St. Sabas, Abbot, the Martyr**

**(A. D. 334 – 372)**

St. Sabas (Sava, Sabbas, Savva, Saba) the Goth was born in the Buzau river valley and lived in what is now the Wallachian region in Romania, which was a Gothic territory at the time ([http://freya.theladyofthelabyrinth.com/?page\\_id=646](http://freya.theladyofthelabyrinth.com/?page_id=646)).

In the year A.D. 370, the Gothic king Athanaric set about to persecute the Christian section of the Gothic population. He ordered religious ceremonies that the Christians would find unacceptable. In refusing to participate, the Christians would reveal that they were neither part of the community nor interested in its well-being. Athanaric thought that this would bring down their Heathen neighbors' enmity upon them.

But among them were the two most illustrious Saints Nicetas and Sabas. The latter was by birth a Goth, converted to the faith in his youth, and a faithful imitator of the obedience, mildness, humility, and other virtues of the apostles. He was affable to all men, yet dignified; a lover of truth, modest, of few words, and a lover of peace; yet zealous and active. He took delight in singing the divine praises in the church, and adorning the altars (Butler, 1866).

Sabas often spent whole days and nights in prayer, and devoted his whole life to the exercises of penance. Christians were compelled to eat meat which had been sacrificed to idols. Some heathens who had Christian relations, desiring to save them, prevailed upon the king's officers to present them ordinary meat which had not been offered to the idols. Sabas condemned this impious collusion, and not only refused to eat such meat, but protested aloud that whoever should eat them would be no longer a Christian, having by that scandalous compliance renounced his faith. He was banished from his town, though was recalled later. The next year the persecution was renewed, and a commissary of the king arrived at St. Sabas's town in search of Christians. Some of the inhabitants offered to swear on the victims that there were no Christians in the place. Sabas appeared, and stepping up to those who were going to take that oath, said: "Let no man swear for me: for I am a Christian." The commissary commanded that he should present himself and Sabas boldly did so. The commissary asked the by-standers about his material possessions: and being told he had nothing besides the clothes on his back, the commissary despised him, saying: "Such a fellow can do us neither good nor harm."

The persecution was renewed with much greater fury in A.D. 372, before Easter. They pulled Sabas out of bed and dragged him naked. When it was day, Sabas said to his persecutors: "Have not you dragged me, quite naked, over rough and thorny grounds? Observe whether my feet are wounded, or whether the blows you gave me have made any impression on my body:" and indeed they could not perceive any marks. The next day Atharidus commanded his hands to be tied, and caused him to be hung upon a beam of the house, and soon after ordered his servants to carry him and the priest certain meat that had been offered to idols. They refused to eat it, and Sabas said: "This pernicious meat is impure and profane, as is Atharidus himself who sent it." One of the slaves of Atharidus tortured him but he felt no more pain. Atharidus, being informed of these particulars, gave orders that he should be put to death.

Hereupon they threw him into the river and strangled him in the water, which happened on 12 April. The Christians of the place guarded his body from birds and beasts and sent it to his country, Cappadocia. The feast of Saba(s) is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 13 April.

## **291. St. Sabas, Ascetic**

**(A.D. 439 - 532)**

Sabas was a native of Mutalska in Cappadocia. He led a solitary life for many years in several places in the East. Later he founded a monastery in Palestine between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea (the Wadi en-Nar). With reluctance he accepted ordination to priesthood in A.D. 490 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). In A.D. 492, the Patriarch of Jerusalem appointed him Superior of all the hermits in Palestine. The feast of St. Sabas is celebrated on 27 August in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **292. St. Sabina, the Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 126)**

Sabina was a noble pagan, the widow of Senator Valentinus and the daughter of Herod Metallarius (<http://www.monstrousregimentofwomen.com/2015/08/saint-sabina-martyr.html>). She lived in Rome and was converted to Christianity by her female slave (servant?), Serapia (Seraphia). Seraphia was, a native of Antioch in Syria, who was a zealous Christian, and served God in the holy state of virginity (Butler, 1866). Serapia had come to Rome with her parents. After their death, she gave everything she owned to the poor and then had sold herself into slavery, thus entering Sabina's household.

The persecution of Adrian beginning to rage, Beryllus, governor of the province, caused Sabina and Seraphia to be apprehended, and the latter was beaten to death with clubs in c. A.D. 119 (126?). Sabina was discharged out of regard to her quality and friends. Sabina retrieved Serapia's remains and buried them in her family's tomb.

Sabina was accused of being a Christian by the Prefect Elpidius. She was beheaded because she publicly embraced the new religion, courageously professing her faith in Christ. Sabina underwent martyrdom on 29 August in the year 125 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Hadrian. (<http://www.stsabina.org/history.html>). In A.D. 430, Sabina's relics were brought to the Aventine in Rome, where a basilica was built in her honor (<http://antiochian.org/node/19405>). The feast of Sabina is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 13 March.

## **293. Saliba Bar Khayrun, Malphono**

**(c. A.D. 1253 – 1340)**

Saliba Bar Khayrun was born in c. A.D. 1253. He was well versed in the Syriac language and proficient in its calligraphy. He is the father of monk Yeshu. When his wife died he became a monk and was ordained priest in A.D. 1323 (Aphrem I, 2003).

Saliba Bar Khayrun was called the ‘Malphono of the East’. Until A.D. 1340 he continued to transcribe manuscripts. He composed a *husoyo* for the festival of St. Ephrem, beginning thus: “Praise to the teacher of divine wisdom.”

The note worthy contribution of *Malphono* Saliba Bar Khayrun is the revision of the calendar of the festivals for the whole year ascribed to Jacob of Edessa. In the revision, he added festival of a group of saints, particularly the ascetics and martyrs of Tur’abdeen.

## **294. St. Seraphion, the Confessor**

**(? – A.D. 370?)**

St. Seraphion (Serapion), surnamed Scholasticus, was the Bishop of Tmuis in Egypt. He was a friend of Athanasius (d. A.D. 373) and St. Antony (d. A.D. 356) and occupied a position of some importance in the theological struggles of the 4th century (Smith & Wace, 1887). He is called the confessor in the time of Arian supremacy under Emperor Constantius. He seems to have been the companion of St. Antony towards the end of his life.

There are two epistles ascribed to Serapion, one to a Bishop Eudoxius, who had been put to torture; the other a long epistle addressed to the hermits dwelling in the deserts praising their peculiar mode of life. Serapion kept up a correspondence with Athanasius

which gives an account of the mode of Arius' death. It was written about the year A.D. 358.

Athanasius addressed a series of doctrinal epistles to Serapion, in which he contends against a form of the Macedonian heresy which troubled Egypt. Its followers admitted the divinity of Christ, but asserted that the Holy Spirit was a creature and differed only in degree from an angel.

The date of death of St. Serapion is not known for certain. The feast of St. Seraphion, the Confessor is celebrated on 19 May along with his companions in the Syriac Orthodox Church.

## **295. St. Serapion, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(? – A.D. 211)**

Serapion was the ninth Patriarch of Antioch (A. D. 191-211) and an ecclesiastical writer. He was an eminent theologian of the times. Jerome and Eusebius of Caesarea have eulogized his theological writings (Smith & Wace, 1887).

Eusebius mentions three of his books in the Church history (Smith & Wace, 1887; Wace & Piercy, 1999; Quasten, 1949.) – (1) A private letter addressed to Caricus and Pontius against Montanism [Montanism- was an apocalyptic movement in the latter half of the second century which proclaimed that the heavenly Jerusalem would soon descend near Pepuza in Phrygia (Cross & Livingstone, 1997)], (2) the letter sent to Domnius against Jewish will-worship. (Domnius had given up Christianity at the time of persecution) (3) An article addressed to the believers in Rhossus, Syria against the Docetic Gospel wrongly attributed to St. Peter. (Docetism, considered the humanity and suffering of Christ as apparent rather than real). “If Christ suffered he was not God; if He was God he did not suffer.”

Docetists are mentioned in 1 John 4:2; 2 John 7- “denying that Christ has come in the flesh.”

Serapion also acted against the influence of Gnostics in Osroene and consecrated Palut as the metropolitan of Edessa. Gnosticism- a teaching about the distinction between ‘creator God’ and the supreme remote and unknowable divine being (Cross & Livingstone, 1997).

In his history of the patriarchs, Metropolitan Dolabani of Mardin has recorded that Persian Christians were under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchs of Antioch. A catholicate was allowed in Persia in the fifth century considering the feud between Rome and Persia. Those coming from Persia to Antioch (which was under the Roman Empire) to get ordained were considered spies and were assassinated. Moreover, the journey was tedious in those days. When the political situation changed the office of catholicate in Persia was abolished in 1860 as per the decision of the universal synod. The feast of Moran Serapion is celebrated on 14 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **296. Sts. Sergius & Bacchus**

**(?- A. D. 303)**

Sts. Sergius and Bacchus were officers in the Roman army on the border of Syria (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2001). They were very close to Roman Emperor Maximian. Feast of the two saints are observed in the Churches in East and West. However, a detailed account of their life is not recorded anywhere.

The tradition is that Sergius and Bacchus were not willing to worship Jupiter for they were Christians. As a punishment they were dressed in female attire and were walked to Risafe, a city in ruins in Central Syria. At Risafe, they were beaten and Bacchus died there. Sergius was beheaded after being tortured. The year of the martyrdom is either A. D. 303 or A. D. 312. Theodora, wife of Justinian (A. D.

500-548), presented a jewelled cross to one of the Churches of St. Sergius which Persians carried off in one of their invasions. Chosroes, King of Persia, returned it to Gregory, Patriarch of Antioch (?) in A. D. 593 (Smith & Wace, 1887).

In A. D. 431 Bishop Alexander of Hierapolis renovated the church, which was built over the tomb of Sergius. The church at Risafe and the tomb are now famous pilgrim centres. The Byzantine Emperor Justinian I renamed Risafe as Sergiopolis. Justinian built churches in the name of Sergius at Istanbul and Palestine. The Church celebrates the feast of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus on 7 October.

## **297. St. Sergius, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(? – A.D. 546)**

St. Sergius was the 38th Patriarch of Antioch (A.D. 544-546). He succeeded St. Severius, the Great (A.D. 512-538), after six years during which time the control of the See was taken up by Chalcedonians. The original name of Sergius was Beth Chartae. He was a monk of Hala or Arena, and a priest of Tella or Constantina in Osrhoene before his elevation to the See of Antioch (Smith & Wace, 1887). John of Ephesus, the Syrian Chronicler (d. A.D. 587) has recorded that St. Sergius died at Constantinople (where he chanced to be). Moran Sergius was succeeded by Paul II, the Black of Alexandria (A.D. 550-575). The feast of St. Sergius, the Patriarch of Antioch, is celebrated on 1 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.



## 298. Mor Severios Paulose

(A.D. 1910 - 1962)

Paulose was born on 6 November 1910 as the son of Ittoop (Kunjittoop), Mulayirikkal of Valiya Pally, Cherai and Elachi, Vallathukaran, Nedumbassery. He was affectionately called Kunju at home. He had two brothers, Yacoub and Varghese. Yacoub was the son by his father's first marriage. Paulose used to stammer in his childhood. He started talking as well as walking only by the age of three (*Mor Severios Smaranika*, 1962).

He attended school only when he was eleven years old and for the next three years, he learned Syriac from Fr. Varghese, Murimattom, the parish priest of Ayyampilly church. When he was fourteen, he joined Rama Varma Union School, Cherai to pursue English education.

Mor Athanasius '*Valiya thirumeni*' of Alwaye ordained him deacon at St. George church, Arakkunnam in A.D. 1926. He continued his High School education thereafter and passed school final examination in 1929. He shifted his stay to Thrikkunnath Seminary, Alwaye as per the orders of Mor Athanasius. Deacon Geevarghese Vayaliparambil and Deacon Paulose Mulayirikkal were classmates at the Seminary. He improved his knowledge in Syriac under the tutorship of Malphono M. T. Ittira. Mor Athanasius ordained him priest in A.D. 1930.

Father Paulose was an expert in the rendition of Syriac songs and transcribing Syriac books. He could also assist the junior deacons in their studies. Fr. M.I. Paulose, Mulayirikkal and Fr. M. Kuriakose, Vanchithattil were elevated to the order of Rambans by Mor Athanasius Paulose at Thrikkunnath Seminary, Alwaye on 19 August 1934.

Rev. Paulose Ramban shifted his stay to Koratty in 1939 and constructed '*Sinai Ashram*' in the name of '*Mor Kuriakose Sahado*'. The Syrian Christians in Mambra used to go to Thabor church in

Peechanikad to participate in the Holy Eucharist until then. A church as well as a church building came up during his five years stay at Koratty.

The general body meeting of the diocese of Cochin convened as per the Bull No. 30/1944 of Mor Athanatius of Alwaye in Karingachira church on 10 May 1944 nominated Rev. Paulose Ramban to the office of the Metropolitan. Even though there were some impediments for the same the Patriarch Moran Mor Aphrem I consecrated him under the name Mor Severios and Fr. Geevarghese, Vayaliparambil under the name Mor Gregorius at the St. Mary's church, Homs, Syria on 4 August 1946.

It was Mor Athanasius Paulose '*Valiya thirumeni*' of Alwaye, the spiritual mentor of Paulose Ramban, who endeavored to lift him to the rank of the Metropolitan. For sixty years from 1886 to 1946 (at the demise of Mor Deevannasios Shem'vun), the Cochin diocese was under the administration of Malankara metropolitans. Hence, the diocese had no assets or institutions of its own. The diocese had rejuvenation from the time Mor Severios took up the reins of diocesan administration.

On 28 February 1951, '*Valiya thirumeni*' laid the foundation stone of Sion Seminary at Koratty and the construction work started. At the inauguration on 17 April 1958, the speech delivered by Mor Severios was remarkable. "On this occasion we remember with gratitude the sacred memory of H. H. Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem I, who raised us to this position. As he has departed from us forever, he cannot share our happiness, offer felicitation or issue a Bull of blessing on this happy day. How can I express my deep sorrow at this great loss? The only consolation is that his spiritual presence is here with us."

Mor Paulose could acquaint himself with many in Malankara due to his stay and training with Mor Athanatius at Alwaye. He could also establish a strong friendship with the delegate of Antioch, Mor Yulios Elias Qoro. Following the peace accord signed in 1958, an

attempt was made to transfer St. Mary's Syrian Simhasana church, Arthat, which was directly under the administration of the Patriarch of Antioch, to the Cochin diocese. This triggered off many problems in Kunnamkulam.

Mor Severios arrived on a Wednesday 14 March 1962 at Kunnamkulam by night to conduct the feast of Mor Ostathaeos Sleebea on 19 March. In the context of litigations going on in court, many priests and lay people helped him in his efforts against the object of foundation of the church. From 1959 onwards, Mor Yulios Elias Qoro, the delegate of Antioch, was not allowed to enter the Simhasana church. Mor Severios walked two furlongs to Arthat Valiya Pally (on a Friday evening) on 16 March 1962. He experienced chest pain on the way and returned to Simhasana church on Saturday 17 March. The chest pain aggravated after lunch and he succumbed to it.

His assistants stated his desire to be entombed in Koratty Seminary. Many assumed if he was entombed in the Simhasana church, it would enhance and support the reasons for bringing the Simhasana church under the diocese of Cochin. On the strength of this argument, his mortal remains were interred on the south side of the church. His anniversary is observed on 17 March.

## **299. St. Severios, the Great**

**(A. D. 459? - 538)**

Severios was born at Sozopolis, Pisidia (Smith & Wace, 1887; Brooks, 1903). His father was a member of the Council of the city. The biographical details of Severios come down to us from his friend Zachariah of Gaza.

After the death of his father, Severios (the third son) went to Alexandria to study Greek, Latin, and rhetoric. Later in A. D. 486 he went to Beirut and studied law and practiced as an advocate there. At

Beirut, he read widely on theology and published a book praising St. Paul - *Encomium of the Apostle Paul*.

Severios was baptized in A. D. 488 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974) at Tripolis. It is not certain whether his parents were Christians. In A. D. 490 Severios visited Jerusalem and joined the monastery of Peter between Gaza and Majuma (Smith & Wace, 1887). He became ill due to strict ascetic practices in the monastery. Later he founded a monastery of his own.

Bishop Eppippanios ordained Severios Priest. He lived at Constantinople during A. D. 508-511. Patriarch Flavian II (A. D. 498-512) was removed from the Throne in A. D. 512. Severios was enthroned Patriarch on 6 November 512 (Brooks, 1903; Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Douglas, 1978; Aphrem I, 2000). After assuming the position as Patriarch, he continued the monastic life style. He demolished all luxurious facilities built by his predecessor (Aphrem, 1963).

In A. D. 518 Justin I, a pro-Chalcedonian emperor, came into power and the writings of Patriarch Severios were burned. Anybody having in his or her possession the writings of Mor Severios were tortured. Subsequently, on 29 September A. D. 518, he was exiled from Antioch to Alexandria (Brooks, 1903; Aphrem I, 2000).

The teachings of Patriarch Severios on the incarnation is famous. "His conception of the incarnation was, that all the human qualities remained in Christ unchanged in their nature and essence, but that they were amalgamated with the totality of hypostasis; that they had no longer separate existence, and having no longer any kind of center or focus of their own, no longer constituted a distinct monad. On the contrary, the foci had become one. The monads were conjoined; the substratum in which the qualities of both natures inhered no longer had an independent subsistence, but formed a synthesis, and all the attributes subsisted in this composite hypostasis" (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV, p. 641).

The above confession of faith is repeated during the fracture and commixture in the holy *Qurbano*. That is, "He is One Immanuel, and

is indivisible into two natures after the unity. Thus we believe and thus we confess and thus we confirm . . . “The fifth diptych remembers Mor Severios as “Patriarch Mor Severios, the crown of the Syrians, that rational mouth and pillar and teacher of all the holy Church of God, the meadow full of flowers who always preached that Mary is undoubtedly the Mother of God.”

The responsory (*Manisso*) of Mor Severios sung in the beginning of the celebration of holy *Qurbano* also proclaims the basic tenet of the Church regarding the incarnation of God, the Word. “. . . and did become incarnate of the Holy and glorious pure virgin, Mother of God, Mary; who did become man, being God without change, and was crucified for us.”

Patriarch Severios was a prolific writer. He has prepared a liturgy and several other prayers for special occasions, a list of which is available (Aphrem I, 2000, pp. 93-96). Mor Severios foreseeing his death called his disciples and said: “It is good that I am going to join Jesus Christ. You will also come to me there and will again unite.” He spent about twenty years in hiding (A. D. 518-538) and departed for the heavenly abode on 8 February (Saturday) 538 at Sakha, Egypt at the age of seventynine. The feast of Moran Severios is celebrated on 8 February in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

### **300. Mor Severius Geevarghese**

**(A.D. 1851 – 1927)**

Geevarghese was born as the youngest son of the vicar of Kottayam Valiyapally Fr. Cherian Philipose Edavazhikkal and Kunjachi on 12 November 1851 (28 *Thulam* 1027). He was ordained deacon on 10 August 1862 (29 *Karkkidakam*) by the delegate of Antioch, Mor Coorilos Yuyakkim, at Kottayam Cheriyaapally. His father Rev. Fr. Philipose 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 priest on 25 April 1875 (13 Medam, Easter Sunday) at Kottayam Puthenpally by Mor Joseph Divannasios Pulikkottil. The foundation stone for Kottayam 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. Geevarghes was able to celebrate the Holy *Qurbano* in the church. The delegate of Antioch, Mor Athanasius Shem'un 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 (A.D. 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.

Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese 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 the See of Antioch, St. Osthatheos Sleebea 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 Qurbono 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 Paulose of Always and his successor Mor Dioscorus Thomas. 11 June is celebrated as his memorial day.

### **301. Mor Severus Sabukht, Bishop of Qinnésrin (A.D. 575? – 667)**

Severus was a skilful and famous Doctor, a mathematician, a philosopher, who explored the obscurities of astronomical and natural sciences. He was born at Nisibin. He became a monk and was educated in the Monastery of Qinnésrin (a city southwest of Aleppo and east of Antioch). The monastery is also known as the ‘Eagle’s nest’ where Greek was taught extensively. He acquired knowledge of Greek, Syriac language and literature and of the Persian language. Later he spent his life teaching the writings of all the Syrian scholars, philosophy, theology, and mathematics. He was most proficient in astronomy, and even excelled the Greeks in this field (<http://www.syriacstudies.com/2015/0?9/10/severus-sabukht-d-667/>).

Many pupils studied under him, the most famous of his disciples were the Patriarch Athanasius II (d. A.D. 686), and Jacob of Edessa



(d. A.D. 708). In A.D. 638 Severus was ordained a bishop of the city of Qinnésrin (his monastery?). He is also known as “Severus, the Mathematician.”

The writings of Severus cover the fields of theology, philosophy, and mathematics; of which very few have come down to us. He was one of the foremost scientific writers of his time. His works are mainly scientific or philosophical in character, although little has been translated into English. The details of his writings can be found online (<http://www.syriacstudies.com/2015/0?9/10/severus-sabukht-d-667/> and [http://roger-pearse.com/wiki/index.php?title=Severus\\_Sebokht](http://roger-pearse.com/wiki/index.php?title=Severus_Sebokht)).

Mor Severus Sabukht passed away on 20 July A.D. 667 at an advanced age. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of Mor Severus on 20 July.

## **302. Mor Shalito, Hermit**

**(A.D. 320? – 415?)**

Mor Shalito was a hermit in the monastery of Mor Paccomius. He was interested in reading biographies of saints and studied in detail the scriptures, both the Old and the New Testaments. He was in charge of the monastery for five years. His rendition of songs was excellent and his humility was a model worthy to be emulated.

His first miracle occurred regarding a man possessed of a demon. Shalito drove out the demon in the name of Christ. Other hermits were jealous of his activities and so he left the monastery of Mor Paccomius and lived in another monastery for ten years. He led a life of solitude inhabiting mountains and caves.

He could overcome many temptations by the strength provided by the Holy Spirit due to his prayers and vigil. Shalito strongly resisted the heresy of Arius. He recognized the error of Arius through a vision. The vision enlightened him thus, “the heresy of Arius is darkness; it

will be wiped off by the light which is the Orthodoxy of the Church. Lord Jesus will enable the victory over heresy. It will be destroyed like paper thrown into fire. The True Faith will conquer and destroy all heretical teachings and deceptions.”

He also had a vision about Mor Augen. Mor Shalito left to live with his brothers after receiving this vision. ‘We will receive a great signal. A man, who is blessed like the apostles who were sanctified by God and filled with the Holy Spirit, will lead us. You will be like the apostles of Jesus. You will travel eastward to spread the Gospel. You will sow the seeds of the word of God in the fields of human minds. You shall uproot the teachings of Arius and rectify his errors’.

His vision proved right when Mor Augen joined Mor Shalito and his brothers. Together they worked in the vineyards of Christ propagating the True Faith. They visited Nisbis in Mesopotamia under the leadership of Mor Augen.

Three years later the epidemic, plague, hit Shar’oto village. Many people died and Mor Augen asked Mor Shalito to pray for the city and to drive away the angel of Death. The village was soon free of plague, which had taken the lives of one thousand two hundred and three people. They returned to Mt. Izla soon after relief was effected.

Once a snake bit him while he was sleeping. He killed the snake on the spot and spoke thus, “O, Serpent! Don’t you know that God has given us power and authority to crush snakes and scorpions and to exorcise evil spirits? None of your evil tactics will work with us.” Though it was a venomous snake, the poison did not affect him.

Mor Jacob of Nisbis (d. A.D. 338) before his consecration as a Bishop accompanied Mor Augen and Mor Shalito to Botan region in Qardu Mountains. They constructed a church in Zariklo where there was a temple (Zorababel) of heathens.

On another occasion when these three saints were resting in a mountainous valley they chanced upon a dragon (a huge serpent with wings) attacking a child and killing it. Mor Shalito raised the child

to life making the villagers very happy. There was great rejoicing over the risen child and celebrations went on for three days.

He returned once again to Mt. Izla. From the monastery there, he started on a long missionary journey to Mt. Sobo near Beth Zabady. He walked across the River Tigris as St. Peter, the disciple did. On the mountain, he had to endure a harsh winter with heavy snow fall. The area was engulfed in darkness making it impossible to see the sun or the moon for many months. He left for Maranashaf village and could evict evil spirits dwelling there. He also converted many a Kurdu to Christian faith. He could also raise a man from death in the village Farzoon (Arslan, 2005).

Mor Shalito baptized many as well. When he arrived in the village Moelo, he came to know about the death of Mor Augen. He himself departed for the heavenly abode in his ninety fifth year. A monastery was constructed where his remains were interred. It is called monastery of Mor Shalito. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 15 November (Translated from *Saints Syriaques* by Rev. Dn. John Anderson, student of St. Ephrem's Seminary, Ma'arat Saidnaya, Syria in January 2010).

### **303. St. Sharbil and his sister Babai, Martyrs**

**(? - A.D. 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 A.D. 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 skilful 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 entombed 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 Orthodox Church. In some places their feasts are celebrated on 27 February and 14 October.

## **304. St. Shem' un of Qartmin**

**(A.D.? - 433?)**

Yuhannon, the father of Shem'un (Samuel), was a wealthy man who was the leader of his village Eshtin, near a town called Sawro, Mardin. Yuhannon did not have children and he always gave alms to the needy and the poor of his village. He ceaselessly prayed to God to give him a child. (<http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/st.%20shmuel.htm>). God heard his prayer and he was blessed with a son who was named Samuel. An angel of God appeared to Yuhannon and said: "The child will become famous and the name of the Lord will be glorified."

Samuel (Shemvun or Shemoun ) grew up in the fear of God. He completed his studies in the village school. At the age of puberty, he started to love the ascetic life and he chose for himself to be alone. He built there a monastery and eight brothers came to live with him. God gave his father another son, Shomir, who helped his brother in the building of the monastery.

Samuel later moved to the mountains above Nusaybin (Nisbis). Many brothers joined him and in a few years the number of monks grew to about thirty. Mor Karpos, the bishop of Sawro, came to visit him and ordained him a priest. The bishop visited Samuel as he was fleeing the persecution of the Persians. The troops of Shappur II (A.D. 310-379) took over the region of Amida, Dara, Edessa, and Harran and burned the houses. Some of the troops climbed the mountain and burned Mor Samuel's monastery. The troops took Karpos to their Marzaban (leader) which is mentioned in the inscriptions of Nusaybin and asked him many questions about his religion. He wanted Mor Karpos to deny Jesus which he did not and subsequently they cut his head off. Mor Samuel was able to retrieve the body of the martyred bishop. He entombed him with great honor in the monastery which he afterwards renovated.

Later on, Mor Samuel left the monastery secretly and took with him the relics of Mor Karpos. He came to the village of Qartmin

where he settled in the south near the spring. In Qartmin, there was a leader named Saliba. His four year old son was sick. His father took him to Mor Samuel to seek his prayers for his son and he recovered from his illness. Once Shemoun, a disciple of Mor Samuel, went out to collect water from a well. He found there some girls washing clothes. Some evil thoughts came to his mind. He was not able to fill his pot with water. He returned to his Abbot ashamed and told him the story. Mor Samuel said: "Let us go from this place before we are caught up in the trap of Satan." Shemoun said: "Let it be as you will (wish?), my Abbot." When they finished the Morning Prayer they left asking God to prepare a place for them to dwell. They were guided by the angel of the Lord to build a monastery at a new site.

In the year A.D. 407 Mor Samuel healed Theodora, the daughter of King Arcadius, who was possessed by a demon. In gratitude Theodora built a glorious dome in the monastery of Mor Samuel. The monastery received further benefaction in the days of the victorious king, Theodosius the Younger, who in the first year of his enthronement sent his servants with gold. Subsequently, they built a (round) house of eternity (that is, a house of saints), a church in the name of the Mother of God, a double House of Martyrs to the North, another house outside of it which is called House of the Apostles and a church in the name of Forty Martyrs of Sebastia. Before the death of Mor Samuel there were 400 monks in the monastery.

St. Samuel entrusted the monastery to his disciple Mor Shemoun (Simeon) and departed for his heavenly abode in the year A.D. 409 (?). His body was entombed in *Beth Qadishe* (the tombs of saints). However, the calendar of the Istanbul Diocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church dates the death in the year A.D. 433 and the feast on 19 January ([http://www.suryanikadim.org /content/takvim.pdf](http://www.suryanikadim.org/content/takvim.pdf)). The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Mor Samuel of Qartmin on 18 January.

**Note:** - Most of the details of this write-up are drawn from the translation of Rev. Fr. Dale Johnson from Syriac.

### **305. Shem'un Quqai**

(? – A.D. 514)

Shem'un was a deacon in Geshir O Kishir, in the province of Antioch near the village, Harim. He was engaged in making clay pottery. The Syrian word quqai means one who makes clay pots. Hence he was known by the pseudonym, quqai.

As he was moulding clay he sang melodious songs. Some of these songs were written down by the monks in the Abbey at Harim and they were presented before Mor Jacob (Yacoub) of Sarug (A.D. 451 – 521). Mor Jacob encouraged his talent in person and prompted him to continue his song compositions.

His songs translated to Greek were shown to Patriarch Mor Severius of Antioch (A.D. 459 – 538). The Holy Father asked Shem'un to continue with his compositions.

He led a simple life and he was a scholar. His friends also helped him in composing songs. We learn about Shem'un Quqai from the historical records of Mor Yacoub, the Metropolitan of Edessa from A.D. 640 to 708 (Aphrem I, 2000). Birth of Christ, miracles, crucifixion, resurrection, St. Mary, other saints, prophets etc formed the content of his songs. Seven of his songs about the incarnation of Jesus are preserved in the British Museum (De Lacy O Leary, 2000).

### **306. Morth Shirin, the Great Martyr**

(Sixth Century)

Shirin was born in a noble Persian family. She had the intensive 'Magian' education that had 'always brought forth fruit for the devil'. Shirin was raised under the close protection of her father, a Zoroastrian master (teacher of a Persian religion founded in the sixth century B.C. by the prophet Zoroaster) perfectly versed in the doctrines of



Zoroaster (Walker, 2006, pp. 231-232). In an effort to shield his daughter from the influence of the Christian villagers of Beth Garmai, Shirin's father entrusted her to a Persian foster mother who instructed her in the Zoroastrian yashths (tenets?). Shirin's conversion at the age of eighteen places her in open revolt against their 'magian' family.

The hagiographer meticulously chronicles the abortive efforts of Shirin's extended family to bring her back to their 'paternal religion'. Shirin's family calls first on her foster mother to persuade her. Masquerading as a Christian, the Persian woman urges Shirin to have consideration for 'her own brothers' and at least to restrict her Christianity to private worship. Instead the young convert grows bolder in her rejection of the pagan error. Her brothers and other relatives confine her to the house. Shirin's relatives threaten her and implore her not to 'do offence to their family' by abandoning their ancestral faith. Subsequently she received the crown of martyrdom. The feast of Shirin (Sheerin), the Persian martyr is celebrated on 8 February in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

There is another virtuous woman by name Shirin, who lived in the sixth century A.D. The details of the life of Shirin (sixth century, who is not a martyr) come from the Martyrios, an East Syrian monastic writer, who himself testifies that Shirin had a major influence on his own spiritual formation (Brock & Harvey, 1998).

Shirin was a laywoman and was under monastic vows, a descendant of the early Syriac Church. She lived in the village known as Halmon, in the Beth Nuhadre district, Iraq. She was a spiritual advisor to monks as well as to laywomen. She lived a perfect life of asceticism in all its vigour. Each evening she sustained herself with a small cake made out of pulse and some boiled vegetables. Along with this food she drank water and subsisted herself while her face was radiant with the grace of the Holy spirit.

For much of the time, Shirin ate only once every four days, or even just once a week. She stood continuously for long hours in prayer and meditation in spite of her fatigue and old age. She spent

most nights without any sleep, being occupied with continual singing of the Psalms and recital of prayer. During day time she read scriptures and the lives of holy men. She was very happy to receive strangers and to see to their comfort. Monks and other strangers visited her from different places to receive her blessings.

### **307. Morth Shmuni and her seven children & Eliazar (BC ? - BC 164 ?)**

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

It came to pass also, that seven brethren with their mother were taken, and compelled by the king against the law to taste swine’s flesh, and were tormented with scourges and whips. But one of them that spoke first said thus, what would you ask or learn of us? We are ready to die, rather than to transgress the laws of our fathers. Then the king, being in a rage, commanded pans and caldrons to be made hot: Which forthwith being heated, he commanded to cut out the tongue of him that spoke first, and to cut off the utmost parts of his body, the rest of his brethren and his mother looking on. Now when he was thus maimed in all his members, he commanded him being

yet alive to be brought to the fire, and to be fried in the pan: and as the vapors of the pan was for a good space dispersed, they exhorted one another with the mother to die manfully, saying thus, The Lord God looks upon us, and in truth has comfort in us, as Moses in his song, which witnessed to their faces, declared, saying, And he shall be comforted in his servants.

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

After him was the third made a mocking stock: and when he was required, he put out his tongue and that right soon, holding forth his hands manfully. And said courageously, these I had from heaven; and for his laws I despise them; and from him I hope to receive them again. In so much that the king and they that were with him, marvelled at the young man's courage, for that he nothing regarded the pains.

Now when this man was dead also, they tormented and mangled the fourth in like manner. So when he was ready to die he said thus, it is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God to be raised up again by him: as for you, you shall have no resurrection to life.

Afterward they brought the fifth also, and mangled him. Then looked he unto the king, and said, you have power over men, you are corruptible, you do what you will; yet think not that our nation is forsaken of God; But abide a while, and behold his great power, how he will torment you and your seed.

After him also they brought the sixth, who being ready to die said, Be not deceived without cause: for we suffer these things for

ourselves, having sinned against our God: therefore marvellous things are done unto us. But think not you, that take in hand to strive against God, that you shall escape unpunished.

But the mother was marvellous above all, and worthy of honourable memory: for when she saw her seven sons slain within the space of one day, she bore it with a good courage, because of the hope that she had in the Lord. Yea, she exhorted every one of them in her own language, filled with courageous spirits; and stirring up her womanish thoughts with a manly stomach, she said unto them, I cannot tell how you came into my womb: for I neither gave you breath nor life, neither was it I that formed the members of every one of you; But doubtless the Creator of the world, who formed the generation of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also of his own mercy give you breath and life again, as you now regard not your own selves for his laws' sake. Now Antiochus, thinking himself despised, and suspecting it to be a reproachful speech, whilst the youngest was yet alive, did not only exhort him by words, but also assured him with oaths, that he would make him both a rich and a happy man, if he would turn from the laws of his fathers; and that also he would take him for his friend, and trust him with affairs.

But when the young man would in no case hearken unto him, the king called his mother, and exhorted her that she would counsel the young man to save his life. And when he had exhorted her with many words, she promised him that she would counsel her son. But she bowing herself toward him, laughing the cruel tyrant to scorn, spoke in her country language on this manner; O my son, have pity upon me that bore you nine months in my womb, and gave you such three years, and nourished you, and brought you up unto this age, and endured the troubles of education. I beseech you, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, and consider that God made them of things that were not; and so was mankind made likewise. Fear not this tormentor, but, being worthy of your brethren, take your death that I may receive you again in mercy with your

brethren. While she was yet speaking these words, the young man said, whom wait you for? I will not obey the king's commandment: but I will obey the commandment of the law that was given unto our fathers by Moses. And you, that have been the author of all mischief against the Hebrews, shall not escape the hands of God. For we suffer because of our sins. And though the living Lord be angry with us a little while for our chastening and correction, yet shall he be at one again with his servants. But you, O godless man, and of all other most wicked, be not lifted up without a cause, nor puffed up with uncertain hopes, lifting up your hand against the servants of God: For you have not yet escaped the judgment of Almighty God, who see all things. For our brethren, who now have suffered a short pain, are dead under God's covenant of everlasting life: but you, through the judgment of God, shall receive just punishment for your pride. But I, as my brethren, offer up my body and life for the laws of our fathers, beseeching God that he would speedily be merciful unto our nation; and that you by torments and plagues may confess, that he alone is God; And that in me and my brethren the wrath of the Almighty, which is justly brought upon our nation, may cease. Then the king being in a rage, handed him worse than all the rest, and took it grievously that he was mocked. So this man died undefiled, and put his whole trust in the Lord. Last of all after the sons the mother died.

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

## **308. St. Silas, one among the Emissaries**

**(A.D. ? – 50)**

Saint Silas, probably born at Rome was a missionary and companion of Apostle St. Paul. It is generally believed that the Silas in Acts (15:22, 32) and the Silvanus in 2 Corinthians (1:1), and 2 Thessalonians (1:1), and 1 Peter (5:12) are the same (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Silas>). Acts 15:22 first mentions him as one of the “leading men among the brethren.” They sent Silas to Antioch (now Antakya, Turkey), where he is identified as a prophet (Acts 15:32).

Silas was sent with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to communicate the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem to the Gentile community in Syria ([https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=447](https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=447)). Silas was one of the Elders of the church at Jerusalem. His name may indicate him to have been a Hellenistic Jew. He appears to have had the rights of a Roman citizen (Acts 16:35-39). He supposedly remained in Antioch until he was chosen to join Paul on his second journey. With Paul, Silas traveled through what is now Turkey, visiting Syria and Cilicia, the churches which they strengthened; from Derbe they went to Lystra where they were joined by St. Timothy. Their journey brought them to Galatia and Troas, from where they sailed to Macedonia.

Silas and Paul were beaten up and imprisoned for healing a slave girl possessed by “a spirit of divination.” After their release, they missioned in Thessalonica. Expelled, they went to Beroea, where Silas remained with Timothy while Paul traveled to Athens. He later rejoined Paul at Corinth. Sometime later he apparently joined Apostle St. Peter, whom he seems to have served as secretary; 1 Peter 5:12 suggests that he wrote this letter with Peter, and some scholars give him a prominent place among the New Testament writers. Tradition says he was the first bishop of Corinth and that he died in Macedonia (<http://www.saintsilas.org.uk/section/111>).

## **309. St. Silvanus, the Martyr**

**(? – A.D. 305?)**

Silvanus was the Bishop of Gaza, a martyr victimized during the persecution of Maximin. He is believed to have served as a soldier before he was ordained priest. He was very successful in the conversion of pagans. He endured his persecution with great courage. Finally, he with thirty-nine others was condemned to the copper mines of Phaeno, in Palestine. Before his martyrdom he was elevated to the episcopate (Smith & Wace, 1887). Eusebius speaks of him with great admiration. He suffered death by decapitation on May 4 (A.D. 408?). The feast of St. Silvanus and his companions is celebrated on 4 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **310. St. Silvester I, the Patriarch of Rome**

**(A.D. ? – 335)**

St. Silvester I succeeded St. Miltiades in A.D. 314, soon after the publishing of the Edict of Milan which granted freedom to Christianity. He was the son of a Roman named Rufinus (Thurston & Attwater, 1990). Emperor Constantine upon his conversion to Christianity received baptism at the hands of Silvester (Cross & Livingstone, 1974), whereupon, in gratitude he endowed the Church with the provinces of Italy. There are arguments that Emperor Constantine remained a catechumen until he was in his death-bed and was baptized after the death of St. Silvester.

Silvester is also referred to as the first Pope after the Church emerged from the catacombs. It is during his episcopacy the ecumenical council met in June A.D. 325 at Nicea in Bithynia. St. Silvester had sent two delegates (Vitus and Vincentius) to the council

(Smith & Wace, 1887; Cross & Livingstone, 1974). Emperor Constantine gave the palace of Lateran to Silvester where the Lateran basilica as the cathedral church of Rome was established. Constantine conferred primacy of Rome over all other bishops and temporal dominion over Italy. In A.D. 330 Emperor shifted his capital from Rome to Byzantium. Emperor built the first church of St. Peter at Vatican. Silvester built a church at the cemetery of Priscilla where he himself was entombed in A.D. 335.

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

## **311. Simeon of Jerusalem, the Martyr**

### **(14 ? B.C. – A.D. 106)**

Mor Simeon was the second Bishop of Jerusalem. He was appointed the successor to Mor Yacoub (d. A.D. 62) the first bishop, saint, disciple and martyr (Wace & Piercy, 1999). He was the son of Cleophas called Alphaï. It is recorded that his mother, Mariam (John 19: 25) was at the foot of the cross at Calvary. He was older than Jesus by eight or nine years. He was present along with the disciples and St. Mary at the house of Mark awaiting the Holy Spirit (The Acts 2: 1-2).

The Christians in Jerusalem fled to the banks of the River Jordan under the leadership of Simeon before the enemies encompassed the city. They settled down in the small town Balla (Pella?) near Bisan (Abdul Ahad, 1948).

Titus (Thithose) conquered Jerusalem in A.D. 70, destroyed the temple, murdered six lakhs people and the rest of the Jews were taken as slaves. Simeon returned to Jerusalem after the persecution and got himself engaged in the service of the Church.

Even though the Church flourished greatly during his time, two heresies were widely prevalent: Nazareans and Ebionites. The former



considered Christ as a great prophet and an ordinary man whose biological parents were Joseph and Mary. Meanwhile, the Ebionites spread many superstitions and sanctioned divorce.

Vespasian and Domitian ordered the execution of all who were of the race of David but Mor Simeon eluded them. Later when Emperor Trajan renewed the edict for execution, Mor Simeon was caught, bound and condemned to be crucified. It is believed that Mor Simeon was one hundred and twenty years old when he was martyred.

The Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates Mor Simeon who had been the bishop of Jerusalem for forty-three years on 27 April.

## **312. Mor Simeon of Persia, the Martyr**

**(A.D.? – 344?)**

Mor Simeon, surnamed Bar-Saboe`, was the 9th Catholicos of Seleucia and Ctesiphon on the Tigris. He succeeded Papas in A.D. 326. He probably had been the assistant to Papas (Smith & Wace, 1887). According to Sozomen, The Magi and Jews excited King Sapor against the Christians, and subsequently the Catholicos was imprisoned. Many Christians suffered martyrdom. Mor Simeon suffered martyrdom on Good Friday (c. A.D. 344?). The feast of St. Simeon of Persia is celebrated on 17 April in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **313. St. Simeon, the Aged & Morth Hannah, the Prophetess**

**(BC ? - BC 4 ?)**

Simeon was a citizen of Jerusalem, a righteous and devout man as can be seen from the Gospel according to Luke 2:22 - 38. When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of

Moses, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. There was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." The prayers on the day of the presentation of the Lord to the temple do mention that Simeon was five hundred years old.

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

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

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

## **314. Mor Simon Zaytuni**

**(A.D. ? - 734)**

St. Simon of Harran, more commonly known as Mor Sham'un al-Zaytuni of Harran, was a metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church in southeastern Turkey during the 8<sup>th</sup> century ([https://orthodoxwiki.org/Simon\\_of\\_Harran](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Simon_of_Harran)).

St. Simon, the son of Mundhir, was a native of Habsnas in Tur Abdin, Turkey. He undertook religious studies and eventually became a monk at Dayro d'Mor Gabriel (Qartamin) around A.D. 657. In A.D. 682, the Saint was ordained to priesthood and was appointed the Abbot of Dayro d'Mor Gabriel.

St. Simon is credited with building many churches and monasteries in Tur'abdin. He carried out different projects, using a treasure (he found hidden in a cave?) found by his cousin David, one of which was planting 12,000 olive trees that eventually met the demand for oil of all the churches and monasteries of Tur'abdin. This earned him the nick name the Zaytuni (the Man of Olives). Because he was on good terms with the Muslim governor of Nisbis he could restore some churches in Nisbis. In addition, he built a mosque and school for the Muslim population of the city. He also made arrangements for copying manuscripts. At the time of his death there were 180 copies of manuscripts in the library of the monastery.

In A.D. 700, St. Simon was elected Metropolitan of Harran, a city about twenty miles to the south of Edessa (modern Urfa), and became known as one of the greatest prelates of his age in the Church of Antioch. After his consecration to the episcopacy the Saint

established a school in his home village, Habsnas. In A.D. 726 he attended the council of Manazgird.

In addition to his asceticism, piety and godliness, he was a man of learning. He wrote many books in defense of the faith of the Syrian Orthodox Church. St. Simon entered eternal sleep on 1 June A.D. 734 and is commemorated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 1 June.

### **315. St. Simon, the Stylite (Younger)**

**(A.D. 521 – 596)**

Saint Simeon the Stylite (Younger) was born at Antioch. His father was a native of Edessa (Smith & Wace, 1887). His mother, Martha, was a native of Antioch (d. 551).

Simeon joined the monastery at a very young age. He attached himself to a community of ascetics living within the enclosure of another pillar-hermit, named John, who acted as their spiritual director ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simeon\\_Stylites\\_the\\_Younger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simeon_Stylites_the_Younger)). It is believed that he lived upon a pillar for 68 years. For eight years until John died, Simeon remained near his master's column, so near that they could easily converse. The ascetic practices were similar to that of St. Simon, the stylite (Elder) who departed for his heavenly abode in A.D. 459.

After John's death Simeon gave full rein to his ascetical practices. Evagrius describes that he lived only upon the branches of a shrub that grew near Theopolis, where his monastery was situated. Simeon the younger was ordained priest and was thus able to offer the Holy Sacrifice in memory of his mother. On such occasions his disciples one after the other climbed up the ladder to receive Communion at his hands. As in the case of most of the other pillar saints a large number of miracles were believed to have been worked by Simeon the Younger. He was credited with the gift of prophecy (Smith & Wace, 1887).

Towards the end of his life the saint occupied a column upon a mountain-side near Antioch called the “Hill of Wonders”, and it was here that he entered eternal rest in A.D. 596.

## **316. Mor Simon, the Stylite**

**(A. D. 390 - 459)**

Mor Simon is the first among the pillar ascetics. The term stylite originated from the Greek word ‘*stylos*’ which means pillar. Simon was born in the village of Sesan, a place on the border of Cicia and Syria (Smith & Wace, 1887; Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Douglas, 1978).

Simon was a sheperd at a young age. While in the field with sheep, he saw a vision. Later, he disposed of his properties and the assets of his aunt, which had been entrusted to him. He distributed part of the proceeds among the poor and the needy. The remaining assets he took to the monastery of Eusebona at Tell ‘Ada, situated between Antioch and Aleppo. He joined the monastery with his brother Shemse when he was in the teens.

Later, he dug a pit of about 4 ft in the garden and stood in the pit for about two months. After the midnight prayer he used to stand with a big stone hung around his neck. He also stood on a roller to resist sleep in the night. His fellow hermits were jealous about these practices of Simon and raised some false accusations against him. Thus, he left the monastery of Eusebona. The head of the monastery gave him four coins which he refused to accept and said: “May your prayers be the viaticum for me.”

Mor Simon reached the village Telanissur, Dair Sem’an. He sat beneath a tree and prayed, “O God, My Lord, by Thy will you protected me from all adversities. Help and guide me until I reach the heavenly abode.” He then travelled and reached the monastery of

Maris. Maris is the son of Barathoon and was the head of the village. He healed several sick people while staying in this monastery.

Mor Simon was in the habit of observing the forty-day lent in all its seriousness. During the forty-day lent he did not eat anything. In A. D. 423, he prepared a platform of about 4 ft. high and stood on it for about five years. Mor Simon was going around the nearby villages to preach Gospel. Angels, prophets Elijah and Moses appeared to him. Several miracles happened through the intercession of Mor Simon.

Mor Simon spent about forty years on a pillar. He prayed, “O Lord, my God, let not the hands of mortal men be necessary for my help. Let not me step down from this pillar to see men on earth. Help me O Lord to end my life on this pillar on which I ascended by your grace. According to Thy will accompany the soul of Thy servant from this place.”

Mor Simon had ulcers on his foot because of standing for long on the pillar. He suffered a lot for about nine months. Emperor Theodosius sent three Bishops to request Mor Simon to step down from the pillar. However, he spent time in prayer and fasting. In A. D. 459 (July) several people gathered around the pillar to listen to his words. Mor Simon departed for the heavenly abode probably on Wednesday July 27. His body was kept on the pillar for nineteen days in order to agree upon the place of burial. The body was carried in a funeral procession from the Fort of Simon (where he spent his time as a pillar ascetic) to Antioch. The body was entombed in a church at Antioch constructed by King Constantine. An evil spirited man touched the coffin during the funeral procession and was healed.

Now there are four churches near the pillar of Mor Simon. Those who followed his ascetic practices are called stylites. Daniel is one of the prominent disciples of Mor Simon. The Syriac Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Mor Simon, the stylite, on 27 July.

## 317. St. Simon, the Zealot

(? – A.D. 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).

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 A.D. 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). The feast of Simon, the Zealot is celebrated on 10 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **318. Sisinnius, the Patriarch of Constantinople (Fourth/fifth Century)**

Sisinnius was a priest in the area of Elaea and had become known for his virtues and piety, as well as for acts of charity ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisinnius\\_I\\_of\\_Constantinople](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisinnius_I_of_Constantinople)). After the death of Atticus, Patriarch of Constantinople, the Patriarch’s throne lay vacant for some time, as there was controversy about the choice of a



successor. According to the dominant view, this period was about four months and ended with the election of Sisinnius in February 426. For the consecration and its establishment, Emperor Theodosius II convened a meeting chaired by Theodotus of Antioch (d. 428).

Sisinnius passed away on 24 December 427. The calendar of the Syrian Orthodox Church contains the name of Sisinnius who is commemorated on 23 November. However, it is not certain whether the two are one and the same person.

## **319. Sophia, the Martyr**

### **(Second Century A.D.)**

The Holy Martyrs Saint Sophia and her daughters were born in Italy (<http://www.st-sophia.com/st-sophia/>). Sophia (which means wisdom) was a pious Christian widow who named her daughters - - Faith, Hope and Love. Faith was twelve, Hope was ten, and Love was nine. Saint Sophia raised them in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Sophia and her daughters did not hide their faith in Christ, but openly confessed it before everyone.

An official named Antiochus condemned them before emperor Hadrian (A.D.117-138), who ordered that they be brought to Rome. Hadrian urged them to offer sacrifice to the goddess Artemis. The young girls remained steadfast in their faith (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/1999/09/17/102638-martyr-sophia-and-her-three-daughters-at-rome>). Then the emperor ordered them to be tortured. They burned the holy virgins over an iron grating, then threw them into a red-hot oven, and finally into a cauldron with boiling tar, but the Lord preserved them.

The youngest child, Love, was tied to a wheel and they beat her with rods until her body was covered all over with bloody welts. Each of the daughters were tortured. After undergoing unspeakable

torments, the holy virgins glorified their Heavenly Bridegroom and remained steadfast in the Faith. They subjected Saint Sophia to another grievous torture: the mother was forced to watch the suffering of her daughters. She urged her daughters to endure their torments for the sake of the Heavenly Bridegroom. All three maidens were beheaded, as they joyfully bent their necks beneath the sword.

In order to intensify Saint Sophia's inner suffering, the emperor permitted her to take away the bodies of her daughters. She placed their remains in coffins and loaded them on a wagon. She drove beyond the city limits and reverently buried them on a high hill. Saint Sophia sat there by the graves of her daughters for three days, and finally she gave up her soul to the Lord. Even though she did not suffer for Christ in the flesh, she was not deprived of a martyr's crown. Instead, she suffered in her heart. Believers buried her body there beside her children. A very detailed account of the torture and trial comparable to that of Morth Shumni can be found in other websites (e.g., <http://www.st-sophia.com/st-sophia/>). (There is a mention of Morth Sophia of Edessa in the calendar of the Syrian Orthodox Church, whose feast is on 5 November).

## **320. St. Stephen, the Martyr**

**(? – A. D. 35/36)**

Stephen was a Jew who spoke Greek. Historians do not record his birthplace. He was probably born abroad and later came to live in Jerusalem (White, 1991). He may have been educated in Alexandria. Saul and Stephen are believed to be of same age (Pollock, 1985).

After the Pentecost, many were converted to Christianity. Of the converts, there were two sets of people - - the Hebrew speaking natives and the foreigners who spoke Greek. Stephen belonged to the second group. Jerusalem had an ethnically mixed population and the

apostles tended to be more traditional, whereas Stephen and others were Hellenists with a modern outlook (Day, 2002). At Jerusalem the Greek speaking, Jewish converts were a minority. “Now in those days, when the number of disciples was multiplying there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists (Greek speaking Jews), because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution” (of food by the apostles as practiced by the early Jerusalem Church) (Acts. 6:1). Then the twelve summoned the multitude of disciples and said, “it is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables” (Acts. 6:2). Therefore, the apostles asked the faithful to choose seven men of good reputation; full of Holy Spirit and wisdom to be appointed for the business for the apostles themselves had no time for it. The apostles ordained them the first Deacons (Acts. 6:6). Among the seven, Stephen was the head. The fourth diptych of the Holy Qurbano remembers him as “the illustrious Saint Stephen, chief of the Deacons, and first of the Martyrs.”

Deacon Stephen was an effective speaker and performed miracles (Acts 6:8). This provoked hostility of the elders of some synagogues in Jerusalem. They were not able to resist the wisdom of Stephen. Then they secretly introduced men to accuse him of blasphemy (impious speaking about God). Stephen was seized and taken to Sanhedrin (the Jewish Council). According to Pollock (1985) seventy-one judges sat on great benches which curved either side of the President’s place in the Half of polished Stones (p. 24). He had to face trial there. They also set up false witnesses who said: “. . . we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us” (Acts 6:13-14).

Stephen countered their accusations carefully and concluded saying, “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the just one, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers” (Acts 7:51). As the members of the council listened to Stephen, they became furious and ground their teeth at him in anger. But Stephen, full of

Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right side of God (Acts. 7:54-56). They took him outside the city and stoned him. The murderers laid their clothes on the ground to be guarded by Saul, who would later become St. Paul. As Stephen died, he cried: “Lord, do not charge them with this sin” and he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts. 7:59-60). The feast of St. Stephen, the Martyr, is celebrated on 8 January.

## **321. Susanna, Virgin & Martyr**

**(A. D. ? - 295?)**

Susanna (Suzanne) was nobly born in Rome, and is said to have been niece to Pope Caius. Having made a vow of virginity, she refused to marry; on which account she was impeached as a Christian, and suffered with heroic constancy a cruel martyrdom (Butler, 1866).

Susanna’s father, Gabinius, had raised her with great care in the fear of God and love of Jesus Christ, and she had made a private vow of virginity. Diocletian, wishing to obtain the consent of this very beautiful maiden to marry his favorite, Maximian, sent a certain Claudius, another member of her family, to propose the espousals. She refused to consent, making known to her father and Saint Caius her vow, and saying that even if she had not resolved to conserve her chastity, she would not wish to marry a man responsible for the massacre of an infinite number of Christians. The Emperor’s messenger was converted by her confession of faith and became a fervent penitent.

When Diocletian received no answer from his messenger concerning the results of the commission, and then learned of the conversion of Claudius, he was very irritated; then with Claudius he arrested Suzanne, Gabinius her father, and several other Christians. He had Suzanne beaten in her residence, then had her decapitated

secretly. The emperor's wife, Prisca, who was also a Christian, buried her body clandestinely and prayed to her as a holy martyr. ([https://sanctoral.com/en/saints/saint\\_susanna.html](https://sanctoral.com/en/saints/saint_susanna.html)).

Sufferings to the martyrs were the most distinguishing mercy, extraordinary graces, and sources of the greatest crowns and glory. All afflictions which God sends are in like manner the greatest mercies and blessings; they are the most precious talents to be improved by us to the increasing of our love and affection to God, and the exercise of the most heroic virtues of self-denial, patience, humility, resignation, and penance. They are also most useful and necessary to bring us to the knowledge of ourselves and our Creator, which we are too apt to forget without them. Wherefore whatever crosses or calamities befall us, we must be prepared to bear them with a patient resignation to the divine will; we ought to learn from the martyrs to comfort ourselves, and to rejoice in them, as the greatest blessings. How base is our cowardice, and how criminal our folly, if, by neglecting to improve these advantageous talents of sickness, losses, and other afflictions, we make the most precious mercies our heaviest curse!

## **322. Sts. Tharakkos, Prokkos & Andronikkos**

**(A.D. ? - 304)**

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

The three martyrs were apprehended at Pompeiopolis in Cilicia during the persecution under Diocletian and Maximian. They were

interrogated at Tarsus, Mopsuestia and Ensarba (Anazarbus), North Syria by Maximus and Demetrius. Important exchanges between them alone are reproduced here for brevity.

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

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

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

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

Maximus: Sacrifice to our gods and leave these subtleties.

Tharakkos: I cannot renounce the law of God.

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

Maximus: Sacrifice to gods, and enjoy my friendship.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Maximus: Turn him and strike him on the belly.

Prokkos: Lord, help thy servant!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pegasus, the jailor replied: “Yet see here! I swear that no one has applied anything whatever to his wounds, or even had admittance to him. He has been kept in chains in the innermost part of the prison.

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

Pegasus: I do not know.

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

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

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

The third examination was held at Anazarbus. They all were firm in their faith. Therefore, they were tortured and sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts. A public show was ordered at the

amphitheatre, which was one mile away from Anazarbus. A bear, a lioness and other animals were loosed on the three Christians, but they all refused to harm them, fawning around them and licking their wounds. Maximus was very furious at this and ordered to behead them. Guards were put in charge of the bodies of the martyrs. In the night a violent storm of thunder and rain dispersed the guards. The faithful distinguished the three bodies by a miraculous ray of light which streamed on them. They carried them on their backs and then kept them in a cave on the neighboring mountain. The Christians of Anazarbus communicated the matter to the church of Iconium and also to the faithful of Pisidia and Pamphylia.

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

### **323. St. Thecla, the Martyr**

**(? – A. D. 70?)**

The biography of Thecla is not available in most of the books. The details given here are taken from a small book bought from the site of the tomb of Thecla during my visit to Homs, Syria in May 2000. The tomb and other structures at Ma'aloula (Ma'aloula is about 35 kilometers away from Maa'rat Saidnaya, Damascus, Syria) are under the control of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch.

In A. D. 45, St. Paul reached the city of Iconia on his way to Greece. Iconia (Iconium) is in Asia Minor near the border of Greece. St. Paul preached there and the speech inspired Thecla. However, her parents discouraged her. Her father was the governor of Iconia. He gave order to drive away St. Paul and to burn his daughter, Thecla. They arranged a fire to burn Thecla. Many people gathered there to see this. Thecla came forward and said: "O God of St. Paul, accept



Thy maiden's soul for I wish to embrace you." Suddenly the sky became cloudy and thunder and lightning came with a sudden down pour. The fire got extinguished. Those gathered there become afraid and they ran home.

After the above incident Thecla stayed at the house of Onivoros, her neighbour. That family was praying for Thecla. Then, her father ordered that Thecla be thrown to wild animals. They sat at her feet like sheep. The crowd wondered at this sight and praised God. Then, Thecla was tied to the horns of a bull. Fire came down and the rope was burnt and the bull attacked those assembled there to see the torture. Thecla was tortured by being made to stand in a room full of serpents. The serpents left the room. At last, the governor gave orders to execute her by beheading. However, Thecla escaped to Antioch.

The governor and the people of Antioch hastened to see Thecla. The governor asked Thecla about her journey. Thecla said: "I am the maid of God who created everything. I believe in Jesus Christ and in his Holy Cross." Thecla repeated the speech of St. Paul that she heard at Iconia. Thus, the governor believed in Jesus Christ. When she reached Al-Kalamoun (a place between Saidnaya and Malula, near Damascus, Syria) a few farmers were sowing wheat. Thecla raised her eyes to heaven and prayed that the wheat may be ready to reap. In a short while, the wheat field was ready for harvesting. The soldiers who were following her got confused and Thecla escaped capture.

Thecla reached Malula, which is a hilly place. She was so tired that she could not climb the hill. She knelt down and prayed: "God, you saved me from wild animals, the blasing fire, and the torture of my father. You helped me to travel a long distance and to reach this place safely." At this time the rock on which she was standing split into two and she landed safely in the opening. A stream started flowing beneath her feet. This rock is still there at Malula. She spent the rest of her life in this den in prayer, and worship of God. She used to pray for the sick and they were healed. She lived in the den eating green leaves and drinking water until her death. The Arabic word Malulin

means ‘the mother of ailing’. The people at Malula speak the Aramaic dialect of Syriac, which Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke.

There are references to St. Thecla in the books titled - - (1) *Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla* (Smith & Wace, 1887; Quasten, 1949; Cross & Livingstone, 1974), (2) Book of women and (3) Book of Thecla. Davis (2001) in the book titled - *The cult of St. Thecla: A tradition of women’s piety in late antiquity* – has cited the three books and included information gathered from Asia Minor and Egypt. Catherine Burris of North Carolina University and Lucas Van Rompay of Duke University (2002) in their thesis titled - - *Thecla in Syriac Christianity, preliminary observation* – observes that Davis (2001) has left out the Syrian traditions about St. Thecla. The 97th Cathedral Homily of Mor Severios of Antioch is about St. Thecla which he delivered on her feastday, September 24. Mor Severios has compared the sufferings of Thecla to that of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3) and to that of Daniel (Daniel 6).

Early Church fathers have affirmed about St. Thecla (Abdul Ahad, 1948). The prayers on the feast of St. Peter & St. Paul do mention this Martyr. The prayer at the time of death of faithful seeks the intercession of St. Thecla, the Martyr (Abraham, 1981). The feast of Thecla is celebrated on 24 September.

## **324. St. Themotheos of Gaza**

**(A. D. ? – 304?)**

During the second year of Urbanus’ reign as the governor of Palestine, the persecution was more violent than the first. In the first, orders were given in respect of the rulers of the Church, but in the second a strict ordinance was promulgated that compelled all persons to offer sacrifice to dead idols.

And when these commands of the emperor were put into effect, the blessed Themotheos, in the city of Gaza, was bound in fetters and

brought before Urbanus. He was charged that he did not comply with the law to worship idols. Themotheos was pious and of good virtues. Even before he was brought before the governor, he had already endured severe sufferings from the inhabitants of the city of Gaza. The people of the city of Gaza were present in the judgment hall of the governor.

And the judge cruelly employed against him severe tortures, and showered upon his body terrible scourging without number, inflicting on his sides horrible lacerations, such as it is impossible to describe; but, under all these trials this brave martyr of God suffered the conflict like a hero, and at last obtained the victory in the struggle, by enduring death by means of a slow fire: for it was a weak and slow fire by which he was burned, so that his soul could not easily make its escape from the body, and be at rest (Eusebius of Caesarea, 1861). And there he was tried like pure gold in the furnace of a slow fire, manifesting the perfection and the sincerity of his religion towards his God, and obtaining the crown of victory which belongs to the glorious conquerors of righteousness. And because he loved God, he received, as the meet recompense of his will, that perfect life which he longed for in the presence of God, the sovereign of all. The feast of St. Themotheos of Gaza is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 20 August.

## **325. Mor Themotheos Yacoub**

**(A. D. 1916-1986)**

Yacoub (Kunjhi) was born on 31 July 1916 as the second son of Philippos and Mariamma, Parekulam, Thrikkothamangalam. He completed his school education from the Middle School, Vakathanam and the High School, Puthuppally.

The theological studies of Yacoub were under Rev. Fr. Itteera, V. Rev. Kochuparambil Geevarghese Ramban, His Grace Mor

Themotheos Augen, and His Grace Mor Dionysius Michael. In 1932, Yacoub was ordained Subdeacon (*Korooyo*) by H. H. Patriarch Moran Elias III. In the same year he was ordained Fulldeacon by Mor Dionysius Michael on 24 *Medom* M. E. 1107. In 1941, on the feast of the Ascension of Our Lord, he was ordained Priest at St. Ignatius Simhasana Church, Kottayam.

On 11 September 1976 Fr. Yacoub Parekulam was ordained Ramban and on 19 April 1979 Ramban Yacoub was ordained Metropolitan by name Themotheos by H. B. Catholicos Mor Baselius Paulose II. Mor Themotheos Yacoub served the Church as a teacher in different seminaries such as Mor Aphrem Seminary, Chingavanam; St. James Seminary, Perumpilly; Mor Julius Seminary, Malelcruz Dyara; and M. S. O. T. Seminary, Vettikkal, Mulanthuruthy. His Grace was an example for a life of prayer.

In 1975, His Grace founded St. Mary's Bethlehem Patriarchal church in his ancestral property for maintaining the true faith. His Grace celebrated Holy Qurbono on 18 January 1986 on the anniversary of Mor Dionysius Michael, at Pampady. On January 22 His Grace spoke at length about holy relics in connection with the relics of Saint Behanam at Poykkattussery St. Behanan's church. His Grace fell sick on that evening and departed for the heavenly abode on 10 February 1986 at 9.10 p. m. at Ankamaly. The mortal remains are interred at St. Mary's Bethlehem Patriarchal church, Thrikkothamangalam. The anniversary of Mor Themotheos Yacoub is celebrated on 10 February.

## **326. Theodora, the Syrian Empress of Byzantine**

**(A.D. 500? – 548)**

The Council of Chalcedon was held in A.D. 451. The Byzantine state adopted the resolutions of the Chalcedon and thus started persecuting those who rejected them. The Byzantines killed some of those who rejected the decisions of the Chalcedon and exiled others. Many died as a result of the severity of persecution, and still others were dislodged. In this crucial period, God sent to the Church Mor Ya`qub Burd`ono (d. A.D. 578), one of the greatest and foremost among the leaders of the Syrian Orthodox Church. Mor Ya`qub Burd`ono protected the Syrian Orthodox faith and encouraged its followers to preserve the Orthodox faith that it received from the righteous Apostles and Fathers.

Mor Ya`qub went to Constantinople and was received with great honor by Empress Theodora, who was the daughter of a Syrian Orthodox priest from Mabug (Manbej), near Aleppo and the wife of Emperor Justinian. Empress Theodora helped the non-Chalcedonian Syrian and Coptic bishops, who were being persecuted and executed. She accommodated the bishops in her palace, thereby reducing their suffering perpetuated by the Byzantine State.

Theodora, the Empress of Byzantium, from A.D. 527 to 548, was born in A.D. 500 (497?) in the Syrian city Mabug (Manbej). Her father was Theophil (Acacius?), son of Me`no, a Syrian priest from the village of Kamua in the Azal mountain adjacent to the Syrian district of Jazirah. Theodora was brought up in a Christian environment at the home of her father, the virtuous Syrian Orthodox priest. Her father died when Theodora was seven years old (Wace, 1911).

Theodora was not only beautiful but intelligent. This probably won Justinian's love so much so that he appealed against the old

Roman law which forbade a patrician marrying a non-Roman citizen. Justinian and Theodora were married in A.D. 525 (*Britannica*, 2016). Her father agreed for the marriage on condition that he should not free her daughter to accept the Chalcedonian faith of two natures. In A.D. 527, Justin, who was the Emperor of Byzantium and Justinian's father died. On 4 April 527 the couple were crowned Emperor and Empress (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). The consuls and magistrates took legal and religious oath which officially declared them equal rulers of Byzantium.

Justinian was a protector of the faith of the Council of Chalcedon, which the Byzantine state had adopted. In spite of this, Queen Theodora held on to the faith of her Syrian fathers who rejected this Council and its resolutions. The tempests of ferocious persecution and their sweeping torrents failed to shake her faith (Zakka I, 2000; <http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/St.%20Theodora%20Empress.htm>).

Theodora's intelligence and political acumen made her Justinian's trusted adviser. The most significant event during their rule was the Nika revolt of January 532 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). The two rival groups started a riot at Hippodrome. Justinian and his officials were unable to control the crowd and were prepared to flee. But Theodora spoke up and gave a moving speech: "Every man must sooner or later die, and how could an Emperor allow himself to be a fugitive? When you reach safety, will you not regret that you did not choose death in preference?" Her determined speech convinced Justinian and his officials and they attacked Hippodrome and emerged victorious.

In the past, Emperresses had not been involved in the administration. Theodora brought about a change to this tradition. Theodora is credited with influencing many reforms, some of which expanded the rights of women. Her name is mentioned in nearly all the laws passed during the period (*Britannica*, 2016). She is also responsible for building hospitals and convents as a refuge for the homeless women.

Justinian and Theodora built aqueducts, bridges, and more than twenty-five churches.

The details of Empress Theodora's life are based on the account of the Syrian Chronicler, St. John of Ephesus (d. 586?) who had close relationship with her family and knew her quite well. Theodora's enemy, the Chronicler Procopius, has given a different account to tarnish her glory (Wace, 1911).

Theodora on her deathbed requested Justinian that he should protect her small community of non-Chalcedonian refugees there. Justinian agreed to the request and kept his promise. Theodora passed away on 28 June A.D. 548 at the age of forty-eight (fifty-one?). Her body was entombed in the church of Holy Apostle at Constantinople which they had built. The Syrian Orthodox church venerates her memory on 28 June.

## **327. Theodorus, Hermit**

**(A.D. 314 –367)**

Theodorus, also known as Abba Theodorus, was the disciple of Pachomius. Theodorus, the Sanctified, was the disciple and spiritual successor to Pachomius and played a crucial role in preventing the first Christian coenobitic monastic federation from collapsing after the death of its founder. Theodorus was born in Upper Thebais in c. A.D. 314. His parents were wealthy but Theodorus did not find any happiness in the worldly things and possessions. At the age of eleven or twelve, on the feast of Epiphany he dedicated himself to God by the inspiration of Gospel. He spent his time in prayer and sometimes did not eat anything for a whole day (Butler, 1800). He lived in this manner at his house with his devout mother.

At the age of fourteen he joined the company of monks in the diocese of Latopolis (Esna, Egypt). The reputation of St. Pachomius

drew him to Tabenna. Once his mother wanted to see him which Theodorus thought will tempt him to look back to the world. Theodorus did not allow his mother to visit him. Edified by the conviction of Theodorus his mother joined a nearby nunnery which was established by St. Pachomius. She had the opportunity to see her son among the company of monks. At the age of twenty-five Theodorus was one among the company of Pachomius and accompanied him on his visit to monasteries under his care. Theodorus was ordained priest at the age of 30.

Pachomius retired to a small monastery in Paban. Theodorus went to Paban every evening to assist Pachomius in his exhortation to the monks there. Theodorus repeated the exhortations to the monks at Tabenna. Theodorus suffered from frequent violent head-aches, and Pachomius told him that greater spiritual advantages accrue to our souls from diseases and involuntary afflictions, when received and suffered with patience, than from voluntary abstinence and longer prayers (Butler, 1800).

Fellow monks requested him to take over the charge as head of the monastery when Pachomius fell sick at Paban about two years before his death in A.D. 348 (?). Pachomius called on Theodorus to preach to the brothers despite his youth, and eventually appointed him steward of Tabennese after several new monasteries had been built. Retiring to the monastery of Phbow, Pachomius gave Theodorus complete control over Tabennese, though recalled him from the position after witnessing several monks under Theodorus' watch violating the monastic rules without reprimand. Having failed to prove his governing ability and once more in a position no higher than when he had entered the monastery, Theodorus became a personal assistant to Pachomius and remained relatively quiet for some years. Theodorus accused himself of having fallen into vanity and presumption, for which he served the community in the last rank for two years.

In 348 (?) Pachomius died, naming the brother Petronios as his successor rather than the clearly better qualified Theodorus. The



federation of monasteries was falling apart, and Theodorus rushed to Tabennese to placate the rebels. Soon after his arrival, Theodorus was the new leader, though he claimed to be only acting on behalf of Horsiesios (Orsisius). For eighteen years Theodorus administered from Pachomius' old headquarters in Phbow, using techniques far more assertive than those of his predecessors, such as constantly shuffling the offices and locations of the most ambitious monks.

St. Theodorus instructed, comforted, encouraged and corrected everyone with a sweetness which gained the heart of everyone. He performed many miracles and foretold many things. Theodorus predicted that he would soon die. Within a few months his prediction came true, and Horsiesios once more took his place as the head of the communities in both title and authority. Theodorus prepared fervently for his departure and entrusted the community to the care of Orsisius and entered into eternal rest on 27 April A.D. 367. The feast of St. Theodorus is celebrated on 16 May in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **328. St. Theodosia, Virgin & Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – 307?)**

Theodosia was from the city of Tyre, Lebanon. A virgin, who was not even eighteen years old, was brought before Uranus, the governor of Palestine (Eusebius of Caesarea, 1861). She was brought before the tribunal of the governor on the second of Nisan (A. D. 307 ?) for confessing her faith in God.

Theodosia was commanded to offer sacrifice. She refused to offer sacrifice like a heroine and defied the imperial orders. Urbanus was filled with rage and ordered to torture Theodosia (by combing her sides and breast with iron combs). Again she was asked to offer sacrifice. She with a loud voice addressed the governor: "Why, oh man, do you deceive yourself, and not perceive that I have found the

thing which I prayed for to obtain at your hands? I rejoice greatly in having been deemed worthy to be admitted to the participation of the sufferings of God's martyrs: for indeed, for this very cause, I stood up and spoke with them, in order that by some means or other they might make me a sharer in their sufferings, so that I also might obtain a portion in the kingdom of heaven together with them, because so long as I had no share in their sufferings, I could not be a partaker with them in their salvation. Behold therefore now, how, on account of the future recompense, I stand at present before you with great exultation, because I have obtained the means of drawing near to my God, even before those just men, whom but a little while ago I entreated to intercede for me." Then that wicked judge, seeing that he became a laughingstock, and that his haughty threats were manifestly humbled before all those who were standing in his presence, did not venture to assail the girl again with great tortures like the former, but condemned her by preparing the verdict to throw her into the depths of the sea (Eusebius of Caesarea, 1861).

After he passed the condemnation of this pure girl, he proceeded to the rest of those confessors, on whose account this blessed maiden had been called to this grace, and they were all delivered over to the copper mines in Palestine. The feast of St. Theodosia is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 3 April and 27 May.

## **329. Theodosius, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D. ? – 896)**

Theodosius (original name was Romanus) was born at Tikrit and became a monk and studied at the monastery of Qartmin (Aphrem I, 2003; Wright, 1894). He was a physician and was the author of a medical Syntagma. He was consecrated Patriarch of Antioch in A.D. 887. He consecrated 32 Metropolitans and Bishops.

The important works of Moran Theodosius are: (1) On the hidden mysteries of the house of God, (2) A compilation of 112 Pythagorians Maxims and proverbs, and (3) A synodical epistle and (4) A Lenten homily in Arabic. Patriarch Theodosius departed for his heavenly abode at his monastery in A.D. 896.

### **330. St. Theodotus, the Martyr**

**(A.D.? – 304?)**

Theodotus was a devout Christian who had been brought up by a maiden called Thecusa. He was an innkeeper at Ancyra in Galatia (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. II). He is described as a dealer of provisions elsewhere. Theotecnus, the governor, was entrusted with the duty of offering all provisions sold in the market to the gods first which would render the consumers unfit to receive Holy Communion. Theodotus supplied the Christians with bread and wine (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV) which was not offered to the gods.

In the early years of Diocletian's persecution, the Christians in the villages pursued their occupations and enjoyed daily worship, while those in the cities were suffering tortures and death at the hands of Theotecnus, the governor. Theodotus fearlessly assisted the imprisoned Christians and entombed the martyrs at the risk of his life.

Soon afterwards there was an annual feast of Artemis and Athene, during the course of which statues of the goddesses were washed at a pond, in which women consecrated to their service bathed in view of the public. At that time there were seven Christian maidens who were imprisoned; one among them was Thecusa (who brought up Theodotus). Theotecnus wanted the maidens to wear the garlands and robes of the priestesses which they refused. So they were condemned to be stripped, carried naked in an open chariot after the idols, and then to be drowned. They were drowned with stones tied to their bodies to prevent them from rising. Theodotus recovered the

bodies and entombed them. Subsequently, Theodotus was arrested and beheaded.

The body of Theodotus was placed on a pyre. Suddenly a bright light shone around it, so that no one dared to approach. Theotecnus ordered it to be guarded all night in the place of common execution. Fronto, who was a priest (farmer?), and had a vineyard where he made wine, came to Ancyra to sell his wine. The gates of the city had been closed. He found the guards erecting a hut of willow branches wherein to spend the night. The soldiers invited him to join them, which he did. Discovering what they were guarding, he made them drunk with his own wine and carried off the martyr's body, placing it in the spot Theodotus had marked as the site of a martyrrium. The Acts purport to have been written by one Nilus, an eye-witness, is also believed to have been a fellow prisoner.

The feast of St. Theodotus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 11 February.

### **331. Moran Theodotus, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D.? - 428)**

Theodotus, the 29th Patriarch of Antioch, succeeded Patriarch Alexander in A.D. 417. He is described as “the pearl of temperance,” “adorned with a splendid life and knowledge of the divine dogmas” (Wace, 1911). Patriarch Theodotus was a true protector of orthodox faith and refuted the three heresies prevalent during those times - Pelagianism, Apollinarianism, and Messalianism.

Patriarch Theodotus called a council in the city towards the end of A.D. 418 and condemned Pelagianism and the anathematized Pelagius. Pelagius was a monk from Britain, whose reputation and theology came into prominence after he went to Rome sometime in

A.D. 380. The Pelagian controversy involved the nature of man and the doctrine of original sin. Pelagius believed that the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin were restricted to themselves only; and thereby denied the belief that the original sin was passed on to the children of Adam and thus to the human race (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22).

Patriarch Theodotus was humble and kind to his clergy. His gentleness brought back the Apollinarians to the church without rigidly insisting on formal renouncement of their errors. Apollinarianism was the heresy taught by Apollinaris the Younger, bishop of Laodicea in Syria about the year A.D. 361. He taught that Jesus was a man; He did not have a human mind but that the mind of Christ was solely divine. Apollinaris taught that the two natures of Christ could not co-exist within one person. Apollinarianism was condemned by the Second General Council held at Constantinople in A.D. 381. The Syrian Orthodox faith is that Jesus is a complete man and God (the Hypostatic Union). The hypostatic union is the term used to describe how God, the Son Jesus Christ, took on a human nature, yet remained fully God at the same time (cf. John 8:58, 10:30; John 1:14). The humanity and divinity of Jesus are not mixed, but are united without loss of separate identity.

In A.D. 426, Theodotus took part in the ordination of Sisinnius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. Theodotus along with the bishops assembled there and addressed a synodical letter to the bishops of Pamphylia against the Messalian heresy (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV). Messalianism is a heresy that originated in about the year A.D. 360 and spread across Syria and Asia. The Messalians denied that the Sacraments, including baptism, gave grace and declared that the only spiritual power was constant prayer that led to possession by the Holy Spirit. In short, Messalians rejected the sacramental life of the Church. The sect was finally anathematized by the third ecumenical Synod of Ephesus in A.D. 431.

After serving the Church as Patriarch for eleven years he departed for heavenly abode in A.D. 428. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Theodotus, Patriarch of Antioch, on 3 June.

## **332. Mor Theophilos, the Patriarch of Alexandria**

**(? – A.D. 412)**

Mor Theophilos, the Patriarch of Alexandria, was consecrated in July A.D. 385 as the successor of Mor Themotheos. Mor Theophilos was the uncle of Mor Coorilos (A.D. 412 - A.D. 444) who was consecrated the next Patriarch of Alexandria after him (Smith & Wace, 1887; Wace & Piercy, 1999; Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

Mor Theophilos who had been the head of the Egyptian Church from A.D. 385 – A.D. 412 for twenty-seven years had been a powerful influence in all matters related to the Church and the nation. Some people have described his procedures as rigid and indiscreet. As these allegations were raised by his enemies it was impossible to confirm whether they were just or honest (Quasten, 1960). Three important events were the basis of these allegations. These are - - (1) Stringent action against idol worshippers (A.D. 391), (2) Counter arguments against Origen (A.D. 399- 401) and (3) The banishment of St. John Chrysostom (A.D. 403).

The northwestern provinces of Egypt were strongholds of idolaters. With the permission of Emperor Theodosius (A.D. 391), the temple of Serapis and other temples were destroyed (Quasten, 1960; Cross & Livingstone, 1974). The statues of Serapis made of various metals and encrusted with precious stones were split to pieces (A superstition prevailed that if anyone approached the idol of Serapis there would be earthquakes). Many mice fled from inside the idol (Wace & Piercy, 1999). The counter reaction was persecution and murder of many Christians. Intense fights were waged in many parts of the country.

Theophilos rejected Origen's claim that the kingdom of Christ would end. In a synod, which met in Alexandria in A.D. 399/400 he condemned Origen. As Origen was denounced a heretic, many monks

and prelates in Egypt were agitated. Criticisms and reactions were delivered in vituperative language. Many monasteries were attacked after this division.

The ascetics who supported Origen had to flee and take shelter in Constantinople. Nearly fifty of them approached St. John Chrysostom (Mor Ivanios) and requested help. He offered them shelter in the areas adjacent to the church of Anasthasia until he could find a solution after writing to Mor Theophilos. This action invited the ire of Theophilos who had elevated Mor Ivanios to the rank of a bishop (on 26 February A.D. 398). May be this contributed to making the situation more complex.

The matter was presented to Emperor Arkadius' consideration. The ascetics requested Queen Eudoxia to bring Mor Theophilos to Constantinople for a trial. He arrived late at Constantinople on a Thursday (in June A.D. 403). The council which had been in session in Oak on the borders of Chalcedon decided to dismiss St. John Chrysostom.

Moran Theophilos passed away on 15 October A.D. 412. In accordance with the custom of Alexandrian patriarchs he had issued twenty six Easter Bulls many of which are theologically enriched. His feast is celebrated on 18 October by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

### **333. Moran Theophilos, the Patriarch of Antioch**

**(A.D.? – 182?)**

Theophilos was born in Mesopotamia. He studied prophetic books in order to question the Christian faith, which led him later on to embrace Christianity (Smith and Wace, 1887).

Theophilos was a clever Apologist. The discourse on faith, a theological perspective written to Autolykus to highlight the

superiority of Christianity over other religions is very famous (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Wace & Piercy, 1999; Douglas, 1978). It presented the chronological history of the Old Testament before Autolycus (a non-Christian friend who was a true searcher of Truth). The logical arguments dealing with Incarnation and the Trinity are noteworthy.

Mor Theophilus endeavored hard to resist the heresy of Marcion and to sustain the people in the True Faith. Marcion (A.D. 80 – 160) had always rejected the Old Testament Books. He alleged that there were many discrepancies in the Old and New Testament Books. According to him, only St. Paul was the true apostle. He argued that the twelve apostles went along the wrong direction, as they became more Judaic. Another of his argument was that there were two gods - - (1) the God of the Old Testament, the Creator and the giver of laws and justice and (2) the God of the New Testament – the Father of Jesus and the source of salvation and mercy (Ferguson, Wright & Packer, 1988; Douglas, 1978). He has contributed to different departments of Christian literature, like Polemics, Exegetics and Apologetics.

Eusebius and Jerome have made many references to his writings (Smith & Wace, 1887; Quasten, 1949; Wace & Piercy, 1999; Malaty, 2005). The most important among them are - - (1) The Apology for the Christian faith addressed to Autolycus, his pagan friend (2) The letter written against the heretical teachings of Hermogenes, (3) the letter against Marcion and (4) Catechetical writings. Theophilus is the first Christian writer in whom we find distinct mention of Trinity in the divine nature (Smith & Wace, 1887).

Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Moran Theophilus (A.D. 169 – 182) the seventh Patriarch of Antioch on 17 October.



## **334. Mor Theophilus Thomas**

**(A.D. 1919 – 1992)**

Thomas was born on 1 November 1919 as the fourth son of Mamachan (Kochukunju) Moothedath and Rebecca. He studied at Kallooppa and Kumband Government Schools.

When Fr. M. P. Thomas, Mookkencheril (later Mor Osthathos Patros) the founder of ‘Sleebadasa’ social institution arrived at Kumbanad for missionary work, Thomas worked in association with him.

He joined Pambakuda seminary after high school education and learned Syriac language under the tutorship of Malpan Abraham Konatt. Baselios Geevarghese II ordained him deacon in 1942. Mor Thimotheus Augen ordained him priest in 1946. He rendered his service at many churches thereafter and joined Theological College, Jabalpur.

When he was the vicar in Bangalore church in 1964, a grand welcome was accorded to the Patriarch Moran Yacoub III. He also served as a vicar in Calcutta and Kuwait. He had an opportunity to visit the Holy Land and to be the guest of the Patriarch along with Mor Athanasius Mathews in 1966. At this time, the Orthodox Managing Committee declared that it was severing its connection from the Holy See of Antioch. Thomas Achan protested against this decision and issued a press release. Mor Augen proscribed him because of this move.

Fr. Thomas came to Mepral, discussed the problems with Mor Coorilos, and returned to the Jacobite Syrian Church. He was ordained Corepiscopos in 1974 at Mepral Church by metropolitans Dr. Mor Athanasius Paulose Kadavil, Mor Gregorius Geevarghese and Mor Coorilos Kuriakose. He then functioned as the Diocese Secretary, member of the managing committee and member of the working committee. He could establish parishes at Bombay, Bhopal, Nagpur and Jabalpur. H.B. the Catholicos appointed him as the Vicar General

of outside Kerala dioceses. Soon after the appointment, he visited all these dioceses along with H. B. Mor Baselius Paulose II. They visited the then Indian President Sanjeev Reddi, Indira Gandhi, central ministers and Governors. They could also plan the inception of a parish in Delhi. H. B. the Catholicos ordained him Ramban at Manjanikkara in February 1978.

H.B. the Catholicos Paulose II elevated Thomas Ramban who had made notable contributions to the Church as a Metropolitan at St. Simon's Church, Velloor on 19 April 1979. Along with him, Mor Themotheos Yacoub and Mor Ivanios Philipose were also consecrated Metropolitans. Serving as a Metropolitan outside Kerala with his headquarters at Delhi, Mor Theophilus Thomas was instrumental in bringing up many parishes and congregations for the Church. Many parishes that were lost to the Church could thus be recompensed.

He was the member and later the executive member of N.C.C.I's commission on faith and order. He served as the President of the Jacobite Youth association for a long period, framed a constitution for its activities, and developed it to its present status.

When MSOT Seminary at Vettical was under construction in Mulanthuruthy, Mor Theophilus Thomas donated a good amount towards its construction and contributed his collection of books to the seminary library. He shifted his stay to the Seminary and henceforth the office for outside Kerala dioceses and headquarters functioned at the Vettical seminary. A cardiac patient, Mor Theophilus breathed his last at Trivandrum on 12 January 1992. His remains are interred at Mor Aphrem Chapel in Vettical Seminary. The Syrian Orthodox Church observes his anniversary on 12 January.

## **335. Mor Themotheos of Alexandria**

**(? – A.D. 477)**

Themotheos was a priest serving under Mor Dioscorus (d. 454) of Alexandria. Both of them were exiled to Libya as they did not support the decisions of the Chalcedon Synod of A.D. 451.

Themotheos could return to Alexandria in January A.D. 457 after the death of Emperor Marcian. Later he was consecrated the Metropolitan of Alexandria. Protherius, the successor of Dioscorus, who was consecrated as the bishop of Alexandria by the supporters of the Chalcedon Synod, was murdered. Mor Themotheos administered the affairs of Alexandria during these calamitous times. He issued an edict insisting on non-cooperation with the metropolitans and priests who accepted the decisions of the Chalcedon Synod.

Mor Themotheos was determined that there should not be any contact with Nestor who argued in support of the two natures of Christ. He sent some priests and prelates to Emperor Leo with the message that by the grace of God the churches and monasteries in Alexandria were run in peace and that their Patriarch stood firmly for the Nicene Creed. He would neither change nor supplement anything to it. He also affirmed that the Alexandrian Church did not recognise the Synod of Chalcedon.

From the lead of some evidences, it can be seen that Mor Themotheos requested Emperor Leo to withdraw the recognition accorded to the Synod of Chalcedon and to convene a fresh synod. The people and social leaders of Alexandria wanted Mor Themotheos to continue as the metropolitan. Emperor Leo forwarded the above-mentioned petition to the metropolitans of Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome and to fifty-five priests and three prelates (one among them was Semavoon, the stylite d. 459) to solicit their opinions. However, their responses were not favourable to Mor Themotheos.

Emperor Leo authorised the military Commander Stilas in A.D. 460 to dismiss Mor Themotheos from the Church and to elect a new metropolitan. Following this order Mor Themotheos with his brother Anatalios was first banished to Gangar and later to Marsuhea, a coastal village, as disputes erupted in the Church again (Wace & Piercy, 1999).

When Emperor Zeno ascended the throne in A.D. 475 he invited Mor Themotheos to Constantinople. His followers welcomed him enthusiastically shouting, 'the one who comes in the name of Christ is blessed'. As Patriarch Acacius closed all churches to prevent his entry he offered the Holy Qurbano in the houses of certain believers.

Mor Themotheos also endorsed and repeated the faith of Mor Yuhanon of Antioch (d. 442) and Mor Coorilos of Alexandria (d. 444) that the word consubstantial with God took flesh and lived among us. On his way to Alexandria from Constantinople, he visited the congregation at Ephesus and declared that the condition according to canon twenty-eight formulated in the Synod of Chalcedon, that the Church of Ephesus should be subjected to the church of Constantinople, was invalid. He returned to Alexandria. But before long, he passed away in A.D. 477. The memory of this saint is celebrated on 10 June by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

### **336. Mor Thomas of Heraclea**

**(A.D.? – 627?)**

Thomas of Heraclea (Tuma of Harqaloyo or Thomas Harkel) is one of the most distinguished and profound learned men, a thorough and prolific writer who attained the peak of the art of literature, and became the master of both subject and form. He belonged to Harqal, a village in Palestine. He studied at the Monastery of Qinnestrin and mastered the Syriac and Greek languages. He became a monk at the Monastery of Tar'eel (<http://www.soc-wus.org/ourchurch/Mor%20Tuma%20Harqaloyo.htm>).

He was ordained Metropolitan of Mabugh in the last decade of the sixth century. He was persecuted by Domitian, the Malkite (Chalcedonian) Bishop of Melitene, supported by the authority of his brother-in-law King (Emperor) Maurice, and escaped to Egypt in A.D. 599, but later returned to his diocese. He went to Egypt for the second time during the Persian siege against Syria and Palestine and resided at a monastery at the Enaton (Nine-Mile stone) in the neighborhood of Alexandria. At this monastery, he undertook the revision of the Syriac version of the New Testament of Philoxenus Polycarp which he collated with four accurate Greek copies, thus producing in A.D. 616 a Biblical version known as the Heracleian version, which overshadowed other versions and whose quality has been unanimously recognized by scholars (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Aphrem I, 2000; Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV).

Mor Thomas made great efforts in order to produce this Biblical version which immortalized his name (for a detailed discussion, see, Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV, pp. 1015-1021). This version spread through the libraries in the East and in the West, and was also used in the Church service. In the Book of Psalms at the Oxford library, there is a note that these psalms were first translated in the time of the Apostle Adai, translated again by Philoxenus of Mabugh, and later by Bishop Thomas of Harqal at Alexandria (Aphrem I, 2000). Thomas also assisted Athanasius I in holding the unity agreement with the Church of Alexandria, and visited the Emperor Heraclius with him at Mabugh in A.D. 627. He also drew up an alphabetically arranged liturgy in ten pages beginning with "Eternal and compassionate Lord," and translated into Syriac the liturgies of Dionysius the Areopagite, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom. The year of his death is not known (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV), but the Syrian Orthodox Church commemorates Mor Thomas on the 26 June.

## 337. St. Thomas, the Disciple

(? – A. D. 72)

St. Thomas, one among the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, was a Jew. He was probably from Galeele (Aphrem, 1964; White 1992). Thomas in Armaic Syriac is known as Teoma and in Greek Didymus (John: 11:16; 20:24). The meaning of these words is twin (The encyclopedia Americana, 1988). The name “twin” was called because of his twin-brother Adai who later was the Episcopo of Edessa (Aphrem Aboodi, 1966; Curien, 1982). Thomas was most probably a carpenter (Britannica, 1988). The Bible has only a few references to Thomas, the disciple. Jesus went to Bethany after the death of Lazarus. Thomas along with other disciples went with Jesus. Thomas said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (John 11:16). The willingness of Thomas to follow Jesus unto death was fulfilled in his life.

On another occasion Jesus said, “And where I go you know, and the way you know” (John 14:4). Thomas said unto Him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going and how can we know the way?” (John 14:5). Jesus said to him “I am the way, the truth, and the life . . .” (John 14:6). Thomas puts questions like a child for he wants to know and believe. After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, He appeared to the disciples and Thomas was not with them (John 20:24). The other disciples said to him, “We have seen the Lord” so he said to them, “unless I see in His hands, the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). Doubt is the first step to belief. Jesus Christ cleared his earnest doubt. “. . . Jesus came and said to Thomas, reach your finger here, and look at my hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and My God !” (John 20:26-28). This confession of faith is repeated in the Holy mass when the second coming of Jesus is commemorated. This proclamation is the sum total of the salvific act of Jesus Christ on earth.

Apart from the New Testament references, Mor Aphrem, the Syrian (306-373); Gregory of Nazianzen (330-395), John Chrysostom (347-407), and Jacob of Sarug (451-521) have described the work of Thomas in India (Panicker, 1989; Koodapuzha, 1984; Kolangadan, 1995-96). These accounts are based on the '*Acts of St. Thomas*' (the doctrine of Addai). Some stone writings, coins and Tamil writings have been triangulated to suggest the work of St. Thomas in India (D'Souza, 1952; Paul, 1997). Moreover, the prayers of Syrian Church fathers written in the 4th and 5th centuries are relied on to establish that St. Thomas preached Gospel in India.

In the *memre*' of Jacob of Sarug, it is said that the lot fell on Thomas to go to India. Thomas was hesitant to go to the black Indians (Panicker, 1989). Then, Thomas was sold as a slave to Haban (Aban), a merchant. It is also mentioned in prayers that he was sold as a mason for the construction of a building for a king (Abraham, 1981, p. 212). This 1st century king's name is given as Gondaphorus (Kolangadan, 1995-96). The king is also referred as Gudnapher (Menachery, 1973). Some coins of Gondophares and Gad (brother of the king) were discovered in North India in the 19th century. It must be said, however, that it by no means certain that Gordophares of the coins is the same person as Gudnapher of the Acts of St. Thomas (Menachery, 1973, p. 3).

St. Thomas was ordered to build a palace for the King. He was entrusted with twenty pieces of silver. However, when the King was absent, he used the silver for charitable purposes. When the King returned, he imprisoned St. Thomas, intending to flay him alive (White, 1991, p. 360). At that juncture, the King's brother died, and when the brother was shown the place in heaven that Thomas's good work had prepared for the King, he was allowed to return to earth and offer to buy the spot from the King for himself. The King refused, released Thomas, and was converted by him. The incident is alluded to in the evening prayer (Bovuso) of the first Sunday after Easter.

There are other accounts regarding the life of St. Thomas in India referred to by other writers. It is said that the King's brother

(Gad) was called to life by St. Thomas after his death (Menachery, 1973). It is also mentioned that St. Thomas attended the marriage of the King's daughter. He was beaten up at the banquet. That person's hand was torn off by a dog, which St. Thomas healed (Panicker, 1989, p. 61). The miracle done at the wedding feast is referred to in the morning prayer of the first Sunday after Easter (Abraham, 1981, p. 213).

The Evangelisation of St. Thomas was primarily in the Kingdom of Gudnapher and then in places under King Mazdai (Menachery, 1973, p. 3). It is believed that St. Thomas landed at Kodungaloor in A. D. 52. He preached gospel to Jews and then to Gentiles. He established houses of worship at Maliankara, Kollam, Niranam, Chayal (Nilakkal), Gokkamangalam, Paravur (Kottakkavu), and Palayoor (D'Souza, 1952; Aphrem, 1964). He appointed elders as priests from four Brahmin families, namely; Shankarapuri, Pakalomattom, Kalli and Kaliyankal and then went to Malakka.

In A. D. 72 he was pierced with a lance on 18 December and entered the heavenly abode on 21 December at Mylapore near Chennai, India. St. Thomas was entombed at Mylapore. On 3rd July A. D. 394 the holy remains were transferred to Urhoy (Edessa) and interred there on 22 August (Aphrem, 1964). The relocation of the relic of St. Thomas to Urhoy is described in the *Hoothomo* of the feastday. Later the holy relics were transferred to the St. Thomas Syriac Orthodox Cathedral in Mosul, Iraq. A portion of the relics was discovered by His Grace Mor Severios Zakka (later Patriarch) in the altar of the St. Thomas church, Mosul, Iraq, during renovation work in 1964.

St. Thomas is considered to be the patron of builders by the Western Church. Three dates are observed as the feast days of St. Thomas. They are: New Sunday (a movable feast), July 3 – transportaion of the relic to Urhoy, and December 21– Martyrdom.



## **338. St. Timothy, the Disciple of St. Paul**

**(A.D. ? – 97 ?)**

St. Timothy (Themotheos), the beloved disciple of St. Paul, was probably a native of Lystra in Lycaonia (Kitto, 1869; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I). His father was a Gentile, but his mother Eunice a Jewess. She, with Lois, his grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5) embraced Christianity, and St. Paul commends their faith.

When St. Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, about the year A.D. 5, the brethren of Iconium and Lystra gave a good testimony to the merit and good disposition of Timothy (Acts 16:1-3). Subsequently, St. Paul took Timothy with him, in order to assist him in propagating the doctrine of his great Lord and Master. Timothy helped and assisted Paul through the whole course of his preaching. St. Paul calls him not only his dearly beloved son, but also his brother, the companion of his labors, and a man of God.

St. Paul refused to circumcise Titus, whereas he circumcised Timothy, born of a Jewess, so as to make him more acceptable to the Jews (Acts 16:3). This might show that he himself was not an enemy of their law. Timothy accompanied St. Paul from Lystra and sailed to Macedonia, and preached at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Being compelled to quit this last city by the fury of the Jews, he left Timothy and Silas behind him to confirm the new converts there (Acts 17:12-14).

The Christians of Thessalonica were under a very heavy persecution learning about which he deputed Timothy to encourage them. The disciple returned to St. Paul, who was then at Corinth, to give him an account of his success. Upon this the apostle wrote his first epistle to the Thessalonians. From Corinth St. Paul went to Jerusalem, and then to Ephesus, where he spent two years. In A.D. 58 he seems to have decided to return to Greece, and sent Timothy and Erastus before him through Macedonia (Acts 19:22) to appraise the faithful of his intention, and to organize the collection of alms he wished to send to the Christians of Jerusalem.

Timothy was afterwards directed to visit Corinth. His presence was needed there to revive in the minds of the faithful the doctrine which the apostle had taught them. 1 Corinthians 16:10 has reference to this: "If Timothy comes, see to it that he does not have anything to be afraid of while he is with you, for he is doing the Lord's work as I am."

St. Paul, on his return to Palestine was imprisoned, and after a two years' imprisonment at Caesarea, was sent to Rome. Timothy seems to have been with him for most of this time, and is named by him in the titles of his epistle to Philemon and to the Philippians (Philemon 1:1; Philippians 1:1). St. Timothy himself suffered imprisonment for Christ and confessed His name in the presence of many witnesses.

Timothy was ordained bishop by St. Paul at Ephesus before St. John arrived there. St. Timothy is always described as the first bishop of Ephesus. St. Paul left St. Timothy at Ephesus to govern that church, to oppose false teachers and to ordain priests, deacons and even bishops.

After apostle St. Paul came to Rome in the year 65, being then very near his death, he wrote to Timothy his second letter, which is full of remarks of kindness and tenderness for his dear disciple. St. Paul desires Timothy to come to Rome before winter (2 Timothy 4:21), and bring with him the cloak, the books, and the parchments which he left at Troas (2 Timothy 4:13).

In the year A.D. 97, under the Emperor Nerva, the angry heathens beat Timothy with clubs and stoned him to death. He was endeavoring to oppose their idolatrous ceremonies on the day of a festival called the Katagogia, on which day they walked in troops, everyone carrying in one hand an idol and in the other a club (Kitto, 1869; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I). They left the body on the spot where they had murdered him, which was removed then by some of his disciples, and interred on the top of a mountain at a small distance from the city. The supernatural manifestations said to have

taken place at the shrine are referred to as a matter of common knowledge both by St. Chrysostom and St. Jerome. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Timothy (Themotheos) on 21 January.

## **339. St. Titus, the Disciple of St. Paul**

**(A.D. 11? – 105?)**

Titus was a native of the island of Crete and a gentile by birth. He was converted to the Christian faith (Kitto, 1869; Butler, 1903; Britannica, 2016). Titus studied Hellenistic philosophy, the ancient poets, and sciences. He led a virtuous life and St. Ignatius, the God-bearer (d. A.D. 107) has testified to his virtues (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2010/08/25/102393-apostle-titus-of-the-seventy-and-bishop-of-crete>).

At the age of twenty, Titus heard a voice in a dream, suggesting that he should abandon the Hellenistic wisdom that could not provide salvation for his soul. After this he wanted to familiarize himself with the teachings of the prophets of God. He first read chapter 47 of the Book of prophet Isaiah, which spoke to him of his own spiritual condition. At about the same time the news reached Crete about the appearance of a great prophet in Palestine and about the miracles he performed. The governor of Crete (an uncle of Titus) sent him to Palestine. The great prophet was the Lord Jesus Christ, born of the most holy Virgin Mary.

At Jerusalem, Titus saw the Lord. He heard His preaching and believed in Him. He witnessed the suffering and death of the savior on the cross. On the day of the Pentecost, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, those who gathered there spoke in various languages among which, one was the Cretan language (Acts 2:11). Later Titus accepted baptism from St. Paul and Paul called Titus, his son (Titus 1:4).

St. Jerome tells us that Titus was St. Paul's interpreter (Butler, 1903). Titus probably wrote what Paul dictated, or translated into Greek what he had written in Latin (Kitto, 1869). It is also argued that Titus is one among the seventy-two emissaries (Luke 10:1). Soon after the conversion of Titus, Apostle Paul took him to Jerusalem about the year A.D. 51. At that time there was a dispute about the converted Gentiles being subjected to the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law (circumcision). On their arrival there, some of the people were desirous that Titus should be circumcised. This was not only refused by Titus, but totally rejected by Paul. "My companion Titus, even though he is Greek, was not forced to be circumcised, although someone wanted it done" (Galatians 2:3).

Paul styles Titus his brother and co-partner in his labors; commends exceedingly his solitude and zeal for the salvation of his brethren. On a certain occasion Paul declared that he found no rest in his spirit, because at Troas he had not met Titus (2 Cor. 2:12-13).

After the controversy of circumcision ended at Jerusalem, Paul sent Titus to Corinth in order to resolve some disputes there (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I). After staying some time at Corinth, Titus went to Macedonia, in order to inform Paul of the state of the Church in that city. About the year A.D. 56(?), Titus again went to Corinth with the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.

Titus was especially entrusted with organizing the alms collection for the poor Christians of Judea and he made a subsequent mission to Dalmatia in A.D. 65 (2 Timothy 4:10). Titus was a zealous representative of St. Paul in Crete. According to tradition Titus was ordained bishop of Crete by St. Paul (Butler, 1903; Thurston & Attwater, 1990). The principal function of Titus was to ordain priests and bishops for the island of Crete (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-8). St. Chrysostom (d. A.D. 407) recorded: "... how great was the esteem of St. Paul for his disciple, Titus" (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. I, p. 261).

When Apostle Paul was taken like a criminal to Rome to stand trial before Caesar, St. Titus left his flock in Crete for some time and

went to Rome to be of service to his spiritual father. After the martyrdom of St. Paul in A.D. 67, Titus returned to Gortyna, the chief city of Crete. St. Titus peacefully guided his flock and toiled in enlightening the pagans with the light of faith in Christ. He was granted the gift of working miracles by the intervention of the Lord. During one of the pagan feasts in honor of goddess Diana (Artemis) (Acts 19:28, 35), Titus was preaching to a crowd of pagans. When he saw that they would not listen to him, he prayed to the Lord, so that the Lord Himself would show the misled people the deceitfulness of idols. By the prayer of St. Titus, the idol of Diana fell down and lay shattered before the eyes of all. On another occasion, St. Titus prayed that the Lord would not permit the completion of a temple of Zeus, and it collapsed. By such miracles St. Titus brought many to faith in Christ.

Titus passed away at the age of ninety-four and was entombed in the cathedral of Gortyna, Crete, six miles from Mount Ida (Kitto, 1869; Butler, 1903). The feast of St. Titus is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 25 August.

### **340. Trophimus, One among the Seventy-two (First Century)**

Trophimus, a disciple of Paul, a Gentile and an Ephesian by birth (Acts 21:29), came to Corinth with the apostle, and accompanied him in his whole journey to Jerusalem in A. D. 58. Trophimos, literally means, “a foster child” (Bromiley, 1996). When the apostle was in the temple there, the Jews got hold of him, crying out, “He hath brought Greeks into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place;” because, having seen him in the city accompanied by Trophimus, they imagined that he had introduced him into the temple (Acts 21:28).

His name is mentioned in the Acts of the Holy Apostles (Acts 20:4) and in Saint Paul's second Epistle to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:20). He was a disciple and companion of Apostle Paul, sharing with him all the sorrows and persecution (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2015/01/04/100082-apostle-trophimus-of-the-seventy>).

He was with Paul in Jerusalem, and the Jews, supposing that the apostle had brought him with him into the temple, raised a tumult which resulted in Paul's imprisonment. In writing to Timothy, the apostle says, "I left Trophimos in Militus, because he was ill" (2 Timothy 4:20).

Trophimus, the one among the seventy-two, was martyred along with St. Paul in Rome (<http://www.orthodox.net/saints/70apostles.html>; [http://biblehub.com/library/hippolytus/the\\_extant\\_works\\_and\\_fragments\\_of\\_hippolytus/the\\_same\\_hippolytus\\_on\\_the.htm](http://biblehub.com/library/hippolytus/the_extant_works_and_fragments_of_hippolytus/the_same_hippolytus_on_the.htm)). Saint Trophimus is commemorated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 14 April.

### **341. St. Urbanus, Bishop and Martyr**

St. Urbanus was one among the seventy-two emissaries (Luke 10: 1). He was ordained by St. Andrew as the Bishop of all Macedonia. Saint Paul refers to Urbanus as 'Great Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ' (Rom. 16:9). Macedonia is a region already rich in tradition and an area recognized throughout the civilized world for its literary and artistic contributions (<http://pemptousia.com/2017/10/october-31-the-life-of-st-stachys/>). St. Urbanus was more than equal to the task of converting Macedonians, who for centuries had a sophistication of ideas on faith that were not easily dislodged. Urbanus set a fine example in Macedonia but did not escape the avenging pagans. He was martyred for the cause of Christ. The feast of Urbanus is celebrated on 7 September in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **342. St. Xystus II of Rome, the Martyr**

**(A.D. ? – c. 258)**

Xystus II (Sixtus II) was the bishop of Rome after Stephen I for about one year. He was martyred under Valerian on 6 August A.D. 258 (Smith & Wace. 1887; Wace, 1911; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III).

Xystus was enthroned on 31 August A.D. 257. The predecessor of Xystus, Mor Stephen was involved in a controversy with Cyprian of Carthage (d. A.D. 258) in the matter of validity of baptism by heretics (rebaptism of heretics?).

Emperor Valerian had already published his first decree against Christians in A.D. 257 forbidding them from assembling in subterraneous caverns to celebrate Holy Mass. In middle A.D. 258, while Valerian was preparing for the Persian war, he ordered to execute bishops, priests and deacons who held assemblies. Those in the official ranks were threatened to be killed, exiled and to be sent in chains to labour if they refused to renounce Christianity.

Xystus was seized by soldiers while he was seated on his Episcopal chair addressing the faithful in the cemetery of Praetextatus on the Appian way (Wace, 1911). There is a reference to a different location, that is, St. Callistus on the Appian way across the road from the cemetery of Praetextatus (Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III; Farmer, 1997). Xystus was beheaded along with four deacons (Januarius, Vincent, Magnus and Stephen) and several companions (Wace, 1911; Thurston & Attwater, 1990, Vol. III).

St. Xystus is one of the most revered martyrs after St. Peter. He has composed a liturgy which is in use in the Syrian Orthodox Church (Aphrem I, 2003). The feast of St. Xystus (Xyste) is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 1 August.

### 343. St. Yacoub Burd'ono

(A.D. 505? – 578)

St. Yacoub Burd'ono (James or Jacob) was born at Tella Mouzalat, near Nisbis, which is fiftyfive mile East of Edessa. Tella Mouzalat is also referred in certain texts as Constantina. He is the son of Theophilus who was a Priest of the Syriac Orthodox Church (Smith & Wace, 1882; Aphrem I, 2000). His parents did not have children for a long time and in pursuance of a vow of his parents he was dedicated to God. At the age of two years, Jacob was entrusted to the care of Eustathius, the chief of the Monastery (*Reesh Dayro*), at Phaselita, near Nisbis (Aphrem, 1963). He learnt Greek, Syriac and the basics of asceticism at the monastery.

One day Yacoub's mother visited the monastery and wanted to take him with her. He was not willing to go home even for a visit and said: "I am fully dedicated to Christ and that my mother has no share in me." After this incident, his mother died in about a year and his father died in about three years (Aphrem, 1963). After the death of his parents he distributed all the properties that he inherited from his parents among poor people and reserved nothing for himself (Smith & Wace, 1882). He said: "Let the wealth of the world be to the world." He released two slaves whom he inherited and left the house and estate to them.

After the training at Phaselita monastery, Jacob was ordained Deacon and subsequently became a Priest. Jacob was reputed for working miracles, and sick people came from far and near to be healed by him. St. Jacob raised the dead, restored the blind to sight, gave rain, and even made the Sun stand still. When Edessa was attacked by Chosroes I, after the capture of Batnae and other towns on the Euphrates, the prayers of St. Jacob saved the people and Chosroes was scared by a terrible vision (Smith & Wace, 1882). His fame spread all over the East. The Empress Theodora, a zealous member of the Jacobites (Syrian Orthodox Christians were called Jacobites after the



leadership of St. Jacob) wanted to see him. However, Jacob was not inclined to go to Constantinople. Later, in a vision, Severus, the Patriarch of Antioch, and Mor John, the late Bishop of Tella, directed him to go to Constantinople to which he obliged. He went to Constantinople in about A. D. 528 and remained there in a monastery for fifteen years (Cross & Livingstone, 1974).

On the arrival of St. Jacob at Constantinople, Theodora received him with honour, but the court had no respect for him. Justinian, the Emperor, had resolved to enforce the Chalcedonian decrees universally, and the Bishops and clergy who refused to accept the decrees were punished with imprisonment, deprivation, and exile. As a result, Jacobites were deprived of their spiritual pastors and for about ten years many churches had to forgo the sacraments. The faithful were not ready to accept the sacraments from the heretics. Chalcedonians were known as the Melchites (*Malchoye*- the royal party or the Emperor's men) since the emperor ardently supported them.

Al-Harith (Aretas) Ibn Jabalah al-Ghassani, the Sheik of the Christian Arabs (A. D. 530-572), appealed to Theodora, and Jacob was given a little freedom. At that time, a number of Bishops from all parts of the East, including Theodosius of Alexandria, Anthimus, the deposed Patriarch of Constantinople, Constantius of Laodicea, John of Egypt, Peter and others came to Constantinople to mitigate the displeasure of the emperor. But they were detained in a castle in a kind of honourable imprisonment. They ordained Jacob Bishop of Edessa in c. A. D. 541 (the date given by Asseman). Some authors have given the date as 542 or 543 (Cross & Livingstone, 1974; Aphrem I, 2000).

The Syriac Orthodox Church should gratefully remember Yacoub Burd'ono for he is responsible for restoring the Church from extinction by his indomitable zeal and untiring activity. The Church was threatened by the persecution of the imperial power. The Christological doctrine (two natures in Christ) set forth by the Chalcedon synod (A.D. 451) was not acceptable to the Syriac

Orthodox Church. Although the political and dynastic storms swept that portion of the world, efforts of St. Yacoub preserved the Church whereby the Church since 6th century has been known as the Jacobite Church.

Yacoub Burd'ono travelled on foot the whole of Asia Minor, Syria and Mesopotamia, the adjacent provinces, and even to the borders of Persia. He both exhorted the faithful and sent encyclicals encouraging them to maintain the true faith. He ordained eighty-nine (27?) Bishops and two Patriarchs (Smith & Wace, 1882). The Patriarchs probably are Sergius (A.D. 544-547) and Paul II (A.D. 550-578). Aphrem (1963) has recorded that in A. D. 550 St. Yacoub (Jacob) with the help of Augem, the Episcopa of Selucia, ordained Paul of Egypt as Patriarch of Antioch. Justinian, the Emperor, and the Catholic Bishops were angry at the successful missionary labour of St. Yacoub. Rewards were offered for his capture. However, in his beggar's garb, aided by the friendly Arab tribes and their chiefs and the people of Syria and Asia, he eluded all attempts to seize him (Cross & Livingstone, 1974). His labours strengthened the Syrian Orthodox Church. Imperial persecution could not repress his work. Although there were many converts to Islam after the Arab invasion of Syria (c. A.D. 640), the Jacobite Church continued to produce a number of writers.

Yacoub Burd'ono is known by the surname Baradaeus. The surname Baradaeus is derived from '*baradai*' (clad in rags) or the ragged mendicant's garb, patched-up out of the old saddle-cloths which he used for his swift and secret journeys in Syria and Mesopotamia to avoid arrest by the imperial forces (Smith & Wace, 1882; Douglas, 1978). John of Ephesus states that the origin of his surname is that he cut a coarse robe into two pieces, and wore one-half as an under garment, and the other half as an upper garment without changing them during summer or winter until they grew quite ragged and tattered. Burd'ono, the nickname is derived from the Syriac word "*Burd-o*" meaning saddle-cloth. The origin of the word from Arabic, Greek and Latin equivalents are detailed in Smith & Wace (1882, p. 329).

In the fifth and sixth centuries a large body of Christians in Syria repudiated those who had supported the Council of Chalcedon (A. D. 451) for affirming the dual nature of Christ. The Christological teaching of the Chalcedon can be summarized as: “We confess one and the same Christ Jesus, the Only-begotten Son, whom we acknowledge to have two natures, without confusion, transformation, division or separation between them. The difference between these two natures is not suppressed by their union; on the contrary, the attributes of each nature are safeguarded and subsist in one person” (Poulet, 1956, pp. 240-241). Some writers refer to the Syrian Orthodox faith as monophysitism, which is totally wrong. Monophysitism is a Christological teaching of Euthyches that human nature of Christ was absorbed by the divine (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1988). Monophysitism is not the tenet of the Syriac Orthodox Church. The term ‘mono’ suggests one simple Nature whereas ‘Mia’ refers to a composite Nature (<http://sor.eua.edu>).

The Christology of the Syriac Orthodox Church is known as Miaphysitism. Miaphysitism holds that in the one person of Jesus Christ, Divinity and Humanity are united in one “nature”, the two being united without separation, without confusion, and without alteration. Both natures (in Greek *Physis*) in Christ are in a state of indivisible and insoluble hypostatic union (retains all the characteristics of both). Euthyches (A.D. 378-454) maintained that the Human Nature of Christ disappeared in the Divinity or the Divinity absorbed the Humanity. The Syrian Orthodox Church did not accept this heresy at any time.

The Syriac Orthodox Church affirms that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Son of God, who took a perfect manhood without sin, and who bore the human sins on the cross and died for the sake of all humanity. Jesus made his human body one with his Divinity without mixing nor mingling nor changing. The teachings of St. Athanasius of Alexandria and St. Cyril of Alexandria are very important in understanding the tenet of Christology of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

Like many Copts, Ethiopians, and Armenians, Syriac Orthodox Church holds that Christ is not “in two natures” (human and divine) but is “one nature out of two natures.” St. Severios, the Patriarch of Antioch (A. D. 459-538), taught that “... all the human qualities remained in Christ unchanged in their nature and essence, but that they were amalgamated with the totality of hypostasis; that they had no longer separate existence, and having no longer any kind of centre or focus of their own, no longer constituted a distinct monad. On the contrary, the foci had become one. The monads were conjoined; the substratum in which the qualities of both natures inhered no longer had an independent subsistence, but formed a synthesis, and all the attributes subsisted in this composite hypostasis” (Smith & Wace, 1887, Vol. IV, p. 641).

Mor Yacoub Baradaeus, the Bishop of Edessa, was instrumental in organizing their community. Hence, they have been termed Jacobites (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2001). There were trustworthy Bishops who supported Yacoub Burd’ono. They include Mor John of Asia, Mor Ahudeme’ (the Persian King Kizra Anusharvan put him to death.) and Mor Yulian. John of Asia, a contemporary of Yacoub Burd’ono, has written two biographical accounts about him. They are: *Anecdota Syriaca*, Vol. II, edited by J. P. N. Land in 1875 (pp. 249-253; pp. 364-383) and *Ecclesiastical history* Part III, Payne Smith’s translation (pp. 273-278, 291). Bar Hebraeus account of Mor Yacoub Burdono written in 13th century in the *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* relies on the above mentioned books (Cited in, Smith & Wace, 1882).

Yacoub Burd’ono passed away at the monastery of Romanus or Cassianus on 30 July, 578 (Douglas, 1978; Aphrem I, 2000). His episcopate is said to have extended over thirtyseven years, and his life, according to Renaudot to seventythree years. According to a short account by Cyriacus, Bishop of Mardin, the remains of Yacoub Burd’ono were kept at the monastery of Cassian until A. D. 622 (621?). Thereafter the relics were transferred to his monastery of

Phaselita, near Tella Mouzalal by Mor Zakkai, the episcopa of Tella (Aphrem, 1963). He has written a liturgy in fifteen pages beginning with “O Lord, the most holy Father of peace” and several letters, which were published in Syriac. A portion of the relics of Yacoub Burd’ono was interred at St. Stephen’s Basania church, Chelad, Kothamangalam by Saint Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil. The feast of Mor Yacoub Burd’ono, the protector of faith, is celebrated on 28 November.

### **344. Mor Yacoub III, the Patriarch**

**(A. D. 1912-1980)**

Yacoub (Sleeba) was born at the village Barthle, near Mosul, Iraq on 13 October 1912. His parents were Touma and Smooni. He had his primary education in the village Barthle.

In 1923, he joined the monastery of Mor Mathai. In 1924, Mor Clemis Yoochanon ordained him Subdeacon (*Korooyo*). In 1929, H. H. Patriarch Elias III ordained him *Youfadyakno*. During 1931-33 Deacon Sleeba was a teacher of Syriac at the Theological Seminary, Beirut. On 20 *Karkkidakom* 1933 H. H. Patriarch Aphrem I Barsoum ordained him Ramban and named him Abdul Ahad.

In 1932, Mor Julius Elias, the delegate of the Holy apostolic see of Antioch in India, went to Homs to participate in the election of the Patriarch. After the enthronement of H. H. Aphrem I, on 30 January 1933 Ramban Abdul Ahad accompanied Mor Julius Elias to India. Mor Julius Elias ordained Ramban Abdul Ahad Priest in 1934 at Manjinikkara Dyara. During 1934-1946 Priest Abdul Ahad served the Holy Tomb of St. Elias III who ordained him Deacon. He was also a teacher at Manjinikkara Dyara.

In 1946, Abdul Ahad Ramban returned to Mosul, Iraq. Along with the Ramban, Mulayirikkal Paulose Ramban and Vayaliparambil

Fr. Thomas Varghese went to Homs to be ordained Bishop. During 1946-50 Abdul Ahad Ramban was in charge of the Mor Aphrem Theological Seminary, Mosul. In 1950, H. H. Patriarch Aphrem I ordained him Bishop for the Beirut and Damascus dioceses by name Mor Severios Yacoub.

H. H. the Patriarch Aphrem I departed for the heavenly abode on 23 June 1957. On 27 October 1957, Mor Severios Yacoub was enthroned to succeed Late Moran Mor Aphrem I. Immediately after the enthronement, H. H. Yacoub III sent an apostolic bull (No. 82 dated 11 November 1957) clarifying his intentions to bring about peace in the Church. This bull was released when the church case was in favour of the Patriarch side as per the High Court order. His Holiness Yacoub III sent another bull No. 497 dated December 16 accepting the Catholicos Mor Baselius Geevarghese II. On 3 January 1963, Mor Baselius Geevarghese II breathed his last. Subsequently, on 22 May 1964, His Holiness Yacoub III, the Patriarch of Antioch & All the East canonically ordained Mor Themotheos Augen Catholicos at Kottayam.

His Holiness Yacoub III ordained thirteen Bishops and two Catholicos during his reign of 23 years as the Patriarch. The Syriac tunes of His Holiness are considered to be the best and are recorded as a valuable reference for those who learn Syriac tunes (*Ekkara*). His Holiness was a scholar and the paper presented at the Gottingen University, West Germany, in 1971 revealed his mastery of the faith of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

His Holiness visited the Pope in 1971 and 1980 and entered into dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. As a result two joint declarations were signed. The orphanage at Achani, Lebanon; the theological seminary at Lebanon; Mor Severios College, Beirut; the diocesan headquarters at Bab Touma, Damascus; Mor Aphrem library at Damascus are the fruits of the labour of H. H. Yacoub III.

Since 1960, the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church is a member of the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.). H. H. Yacoub III took

the initiative to send several Priests and Bishop for higher studies abroad. Also, delegates were sent to the theological conferences around the world whereby the glory of the Church was known to the Christian world.

His Holiness Yacoub III departed for the heavenly abode on 26 June 1980 at the age of sixty-eight years. On 28 June the mortal remains were entombed at the St. George Cathedral, Damascus. The mortal remains of the Patriarch were transferred from St. George Cathedral to St. Peter and St. Paul Cathedral at Mor Aphrem Monastery, Ma'rat Saydnaya on 29 June 2016. The feast of H. H. the Patriarch Yacoub III is celebrated on 25 June.

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

**(A.D.? - A.D. 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 entombed it by reciting Psalm 51. This martyr’s memory is celebrated on 27 November.

## **346. Mor Yuhanon Bar Afthunia**

**(A.D. 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 A.D. 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 (A.D. 521), a period of persecution, he managed the administration of monastery wisely and patiently. Many were healed by his devout prayers. After 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 A.D. 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 (A.D. 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 Syriac Orthodox Church.

## **347. Moran Ignatius Zakka I, the Patriarch of Antioch (A.D. 1933 – 2014)**

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

Basheer Iwas, father of Senaherib, who had graduated from the University in Istanbul, was a professor in the Military Engineering College. After a few years of teaching, Basheer moved to Iraq and

started a wood-working factory. Young Senaherib lost his father, when he was ten-years old and his mother when he was twelve years of age. The loss of his parents made a deep impact on Senaherib and after deep contemplation he felt the calling of God and decided to pursue a life dedicated to the Lord.

At the age of thirteen, in 1946, Senaherib became a student at St. Ephrem Monastery while doing his secular studies at the Holy Virgin Mary's and the St. Thomas' Syrian Orthodox Church School, in Mosul. At the seminary, he was called Zakka, and on 28 November 1948 he was ordained a *korooyo* by H. E. Mor Athanasius Touma Kasseer and on 8 February 1953 he was ordained *afodyaknoh* by H. E. Mor Gregorius Paulos Behnam. On 6 June 1954, Zakka was ordained Ramban by His Grace Mor Gregorius Paulos Behnam.

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

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

In 1962 and 1963, Patriarch Yaqub III delegated Ramban Zakka as observer at Second Vatican Council in Rome. On 17 November 1963, exactly six years after becoming a priest, he was ordained Bishop by Patriarch Yaqub III by name Mor Severios for the Diocese of Mosul. On 1 September 1964, Mor Severios Zakka discovered the holy relics of St. Thomas in the walls of the St. Thomas Cathedral, Mosul. A portion of the relics of St. Thomas, the Apostle, was given to Malankara in 1965 when Catholicos Mor Augen I paid a visit to

the Patriarchate. A small portion was again presented to Mulanthuruthy Marthoman church in 1994.

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

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

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

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

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

St. George Cathedral at Bab Touma, Damascus and the Patriarchal headquarters had many limitations in space. Keeping in view, the expansion, in 1996, Patriarch Zakka I established St. Ephrem Seminary at Ma'raat Sydnaya, Syria with chapel, synod hall and other facilities. His Holiness has ordained more than fifty bishops during the patriarchal reign. Some of the major literary works of His Holiness are - - *Doctrine of Incarnation and Salvation, The Seven Sacraments, Yacoub III: Life and Apostolic Visit to Middle East and Latin America, Apostolic Visit of Yacoub III to North America, Mor Aphrem, the Syrian, Mor Jacob of Edessa, Mor Dionysius Talmahari, Story of Seven Sleepers – a perspective from the Syriac Sources, Syrian Orthodox Church through the Ages, Syriac Literature in the sixth century, Position and Role of Women in the Church, Religious Virtues and Family Welfare.*

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

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

## **348. St. Zeno, Ascetic**

### **(Fourth/Fifth Century)**

The venerable Zeno was born in the city of Pontus into a rich family (Theodoret, 1990; Smith & Wace, 1887). He was the neighbour of Mor Basalius, the Great of Caesarea.

Zeno served at the court of Emperor Valence (A.D. 328 – 378, co-emperor from A.D. 364). So it is inferred he must have lived in the last part of the fourth century or the first half of the fifth century. Theodoretus, the bishop of Cyrus, is recorded to have visited him. Tillemont claims that Theodoretus' period was from A.D. 393 to A.D. 453. Meanwhile some others say Zeno died during the reign of Emperor Leo (A.D. 457 – A.D. 458).

After the death of Emperor Valence he left the army and settled for a monastic life and many people assert Mor Baselius had a hand in this transformation. He lived in a cave near Antioch observing a rigid ascetic life. In his cell he had neither bed nor fireplace. He lived without the comfort of basic amenities like a lamp, an oven, vessels or bottles (Theodoret, 1990). The ascetic wore old rags, strapless slippers and consumed only bread and water. The visit of Theodoretus is described as a happy event. He went to church every Sunday and received the Holy Mysteries. He ate only once in two days. The bread was supplied to him by an acquaintance. He had to make a tedious journey to bring water from a far away well.

Zeno led this solitary ascetic life for forty years. He was immersed in reading holy books. He had not completely given up his family property as his siblings were underage. Later he entrusted his share of wealth to Patriarch Alexander of Antioch (A.D. 412 – 417) whom he considered as his divine caretaker.

Zeno escaped the persecution and murder let loose by Isaurian. What happened to his later life is not clearly known. The feast of the ascetic Zeno is celebrated on 22 November by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

## **349. St. Zenobius and his Sister Zenobia, Martyrs**

**(A.D. ? – 290?)**

Zenobius and his sister Zenobia were born in Aegae in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). From childhood, they were raised in Christian Faith by their parents, and they led pious lives ([http://www.goarch.org/chapel/saints\\_view?contentid=263](http://www.goarch.org/chapel/saints_view?contentid=263); [http://www.antiochian.org/node/16782&gws\\_rd=cr&ei=WtQBWKnDG8WAvwTXvpo4](http://www.antiochian.org/node/16782&gws_rd=cr&ei=WtQBWKnDG8WAvwTXvpo4)).

Zenobius and Zenobia distributed their inherited wealth to the poor. The Lord rewarded Zenobius with the gift of healing various illnesses. He was also chosen bishop of a Christian community in Cilicia.

As bishop, St. Zenobius zealously spread the Christian Faith among the pagans. When Emperor Diocletian (284-305) began persecuting Christians, Bishop Zenobius was the first one to be arrested and brought to trial before Governor Licius. “I shall only speak briefly with you,” said Licius to the saint, “for I propose to grant you life if you worship our gods, or death, if you do not.” Zenobius answered, “This present life without Christ is death. It is better that I prepare to endure the present torment for my Creator, and then with Him live eternally, than to renounce Him for the sake of the present life, and then be tormented eternally in Hades.”

By the order of Lycius, they nailed him to a cross and tortured him. St. Zenobia, his sister, saw his suffering, and bravely confessed her own faith in Christ before the governor. She was also tortured. The saints were ultimately beheaded. The priest Hermogenes secretly entombed their bodies in a single grave. The feast of Sts. Zenobius and his sister Zenobia is celebrated in the Syrian Orthodox Church on 30 October.

## **350. St. Zosimus, Solitary**

**(Third Century?)**

The Holy martyr Zosimus (Zosimos or Susima), the solitary, was an anchorite monk during the time of the persecution of emperor Diocletian in the late third century, who joined after his release from prison with the prison warden Athanasius to live out their lives together as hermits ([https://orthodoxwiki.org/Zosimus\\_the\\_Hermit](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Zosimus_the_Hermit)).

The monk Zosimus, who was from Cilicia, had been seized and subjected to fierce torture for his faith. Athanasius, a prison warden, witnessed the torture of the Zosimus. Seeing him unharmed after the torture, Athanasius came to believe in Christ and was baptized.

When Zosimus was released, Athanasius joined with him and traveled into the wilderness. There, they found a crevice in a mountain in Cilicia that became their shelter, and where they lived as hermits until their death. The feast of St. Zosimus is celebrated on 5 November in the Syrian Orthodox Church.





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