

Patriarchate of the East

554 Arballo Drive
San Francisco, California 94132
U. S. A.

From the Patriarchal
Church of

Cell
The East

Prayers and Blessing Receive

Our Brothers in Apostolic Service, the prelates, and our Beloved Children in Christ, the priests, deacons, and all the children of the Church of the East, peace of the Lord be with you always.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and His Government is upon His shoulder; and His name is called wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God of the universe, The Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6.)

God is beyond the comprehension of man, and so throughout history, He has manifested himself in symbols and forms that were understandable to man's mind.

It was this manifestation that was foretold to the prophets, preached by the apostles, and witnessed by martyrs and confessors. The "Child of Wonder" The Prince of Peace" was born in Bethlehem of Judea, some twenty centuries ago.

The elements, angels and men, all with one accord and spontaneity recognized the event, and rendered Him their glory and worship.

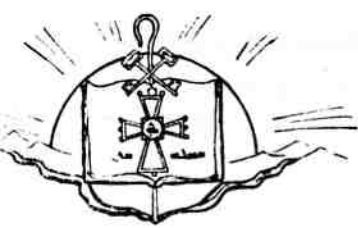
The star and the heavenly host from above, the Magi and the shepherds from below, rendered their praise and thanksgiving to Him who was born on that day; "The Temple of God the Word."

Mar Narsai, the Harp of Spirit, the unequalled master of the divin drama, described the event in these words; "In the village of David the promise made to David was fulfilled, and the course of prophecy finally rested in Bethlehem."

This most holy event is being celebrated to-day once again by the Holy Apostolic and Catholic Church of the East throughout the world, and by millions of other Christians who believe in the Messianic mission of our Redeemer.

Furthermore, to the Assyrian people, this divine event is a reminder of the history of the adoption of the Christian faith by their forefathers nearly twenty centuries ago, and also of the turbulent yet glorious history of that faith.

The experiences thus acquired are now being put to good use. The confidence and understanding which have been steadily growing between the Assyrian people in the Middle East and their Governments; their Moslem neighbours and fellow-citizens have given us great joy and satisfaction.



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This confidence and understanding between the Assyrian community and Islam had indeed existed from the very beginning, and the Church of the East had been greatly respected and favoured by Islam.

Its contributions in sciences and learning during the Abasid Khalifait; have been generously recorded in the noble Arab history of that period.

It was only the outside political interests that upset this friendship and cordial understanding which has been now through the wisdom of the governments concerned restored, and will by God's grace persist to the end of time.

In this context we wish especially to draw your attention to our recent apostolic visit to Iraq after 37 years forced absence from that country, at the invitation of His Excellency Ahmad Hassan Bakr, President of Iraq, and a full account of which has already been given to all of you.

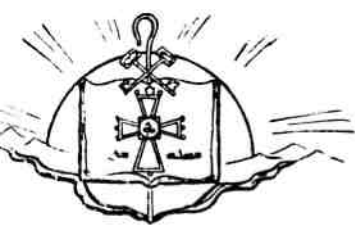
The importance of this visit for the Assyrian community in Iraq and, indeed, the Middle East in general cannot be exaggerated, for the first time the confidence and trust which had existed for centuries between the Church of the East and Islam and which had been disturbed to the breaking point, by developments, especially of the First and Second World Wars, and the intervening events, has once again been restored.

The credit for this act of great wisdom, and of humanity and justice is to be attributed fully to the President of Iraq.

It is our earnest prayer that God may grant to the President and all those responsible with him the wisdom and strength to bring peace and prosperity to all the citizens of that historic land; which is cradle of mankind, of monotheistic religion, and of all sciences and learning as they have progressed down to this day, and have illuminated the whole world.

The Church of the East and the Assyrian community in Syria and Lebanon also continue to live in peace and tranquility, enjoying equal rights as citizens of those lands. It is our prayer that God may bless abundantly the Presidents and the governments of both of these historic countries.

We wish to remind you, our beloved children in Christ, of the private audience which we had with His Imperial Majesty, Mohammad-Reza Shah Pahlavi Aryamehr, some twenty years ago; of the interest which His Majesty has personally shown towards the Assyrian community in Iran, and of the kindness of the Iranian Government towards the Church of the East, which is living in tranquility and progressing as it did in past centuries. We pray for God's abundant blessing upon His Imperial Majesty His Government, and the historic nation of Iran.



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The Church in India likewise keeps in close touch with us and it is constantly in our prayers. It is needless to say that all the religions and Churches in India enjoy equality and freedom to worship according to the tenets. May God bless the President and the Government of India, and to our Church in that land grant peace and progress in loyalty to Holy Apostolic teaching and the Canons of the Church of the East.

Finally, we pray that God may grant health and wisdom to the President of the United States of America, and guide our congress in all its deliberations for the peace of the world and the good of this great land where thousands of Assyrians live as happy and contented citizens.

In closing, we pray that God may grant you all, our beloved children in Christ, the joy of the birth of His only begotten Son, Maran Eshoo M'Shikha, and that He may make us all worthy to raise our voice with the heavenly host and sing: "Praise to God in the highest on earth peace, and good hope to all mankind."

And may the peace which He came to give to all men, without exception of race, language or colour, become of a reality in our day.

Grace and mercy of our Worshipful God be with us all, amen.

Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII
By Grace,
Catholicos Patriarch of the East

Written in our Patriarchal Cell,
San Francisco, California U.S.A.
Christmas 1970.