

**Guide to the Liturgical Memorials  
In the Chaldean Church Calendar  
(Teacher and Student guide)**

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## **PREFACE**

At the Chaldean Synod meeting convened in the period 3 – 10 August 2019, and presided by His Beatitude Patriarch Mar Louis Raphael Sako, at the summer residence in Ainkawa (Arbil – Iraq), the convening fathers produced an updated list of the saints, martyrs and doctors of the Church of the East for inclusion into the Liturgical Calendar of the Chaldean Church for 2020. As this year has been replete with memorials of prominent personalities that allow us to recall the history of our church and enliven, in us, the grace of faith, in this land of the East. A land that had been soaked with the blood of the martyrs and nourished by the doctors of the church with their teaching and illuminated by the saints with their life testimonies. Thus, we have published this guide so as to supplement catechising the new generations, in particular, in order to acquaint them with the history of our Church through our saints, martyrs and doctors of the church.

### **The communion of Saints**

Saints occupy a prominent position in our Christian faith, as they are the candles that illuminate our path towards Christ, as they preceded us to the Kingdom of God through their life-giving testimonies, and their profound teaching. In our Eastern Church, our churches are named after our saints and our martyr saints are mentioned in our Liturgical prayers of the hour. Our families, and in particular those in our Christian villages, continue to name their offspring after our Saints; those saints who endeavoured to proclaim Christ through their writings, testimonies and teachings through which they wanted to sustain the faith in our land. The land that received the grace of Christianity since the first century through the evangelization of Thomas, Addai and Mari.

In this context, it is worthwhile alluding to a significant tenet in our Catholic faith and that is the “Communion of Saints” which was introduced into the Apostolic Creed since the fifth century. It is derived from the expression used in the New Testament, indicating the ‘group’ or ‘communion’ reflecting the unity of faith which unifies in the Eucharistic celebration that amalgamates the Christian into Christ and unifies Christians into the oneness of Christ. Likewise, today, we need to embrace the essence of this principal expression: The saints are members of the holy people of God unified in the Holy Spirit through the justification of grace, in charity and in fulfilling the sacraments; they join in prayer for each other.

Congruent to this truth, the communion of saints also encompasses the union with “those who have preceded us in death and are with the angels” (Karl Rahner / Herbert Corgrimmmler, Catholic theology dictionary, “Al-Mashreq” Publications, Beirut, 1985.

## **Distinction between “Worship” and “Reverence”**

In the context of our Christian faith, it is imperative to distinguish between “worship” which is exclusively due to God, incarnate into Jesus Christ, as opposed to the “reverence” we offer to the saints. The two must not be confused with each other; as we do not worship the saints – as some accuse us of – but we adore God “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only” (Matthew 4:10). Whatever the esteem the saints muster, we give them the reverence they merit as assigned by the Church, while the ultimate goal of that reverence helps us in deepening our worship to God.

We consequently notice that most of our churches, including those named after martyrs and saints, that the Crucifix of our Lord surmounts the altar, as He is the essence of our salvation. While the image of the patron saint of the church, centres either one or both sides of the altar; a clear indication to the order of reverence in our faith.

## **The familiarity of our faithful with the biographies of our Saints**

If we pose the question “how far do our faithful know about the biographies of those great saints, without whom the faith would have not descended through the generations to this current day?” We would conclude that this knowledge is scarce. This is attributed to a number of factors which can be summarised as follows;

- Lack of emphasis on presenting the lives of our saints through the sermons, catechism classes .... etc. This holds true in the past and continues through to our current day.
- The influence of the evangelical groups whether in our homeland or abroad. Those groups restrict their teaching to the Holy Bible without embodying it into the lives of believers whom the Apostolic Churches elevates to the ranks of beatification and sainthood.
- The majority of the faithful are reluctant to engage into in-depth reading and tend to peruse shorter scripts through social media. Whilst some are inclined to read novels, they still prefer the contemporary ones.
- Lacking in the adoption of modern means for portraying the biographies of the saints in the form of short plays or video clips. We see those means more prevalent in portraying the lives of the Holy Bible saints or for a large number of the saints of the Western church as well as the saints of the Maronite and Coptic churches (hence we can identify that some of our faithful are more familiar with those saints than they are with our Eastern saints).
- The prominent scholars in our Eastern churches and our orientalist have exerted tireless efforts in introducing the biographies of our saints. We will refer to some of those scholars in the classification of the memorials that we have included hereafter, particularly those whom we have adopted their writings as resources

for our work. However, and despite those extensive, efforts we continue to realise a deficiency in publicizing the biographies of the Eastern saints. This is particularly evident in our catechism curricula across all stages of education. In this respect I would highlight another issue lying in the fact that the majority of our faithful employ educational programmes from Lebanon and Egypt as no significant efforts have been exerted towards producing curricula specific to our Church, that aim to witness to Christ through the lives of our saints.

- The political and social turmoil that befell our homeland over the last two decades, had resulted in the migration of a significant number of our families overseas and their immersion into a different culture detached from their inherent oriental roots. Despite the genuine efforts extended by our parishes in the diaspora, a new generation has emerged that is fully assimilated into the western culture, with no particular interest in the stories of its ancestors and origins and roots of its faith, instead it was satisfied with being Christian in whichever way possible. As such, a majority of our faithful are living their faith today severed from their inherent eastern roots! Isn't this an omission that needs to be addressed?

### **And How about our Students?**

It is regrettable that our young generations have attained cursory knowledge about the saints, this was evident through a survey conducted with 42 male and female students in the intermediate and secondary schooling stages, who also attend catechism classes at three churches in Baghdad, noting that they are exemplary students for their colleagues in the other churches within the same age group. The questions below were posed through the survey. The questions ranged in terms of complexity from the relatively simple; basically, their interest in reading up to specifying their favorite saint, and we provided them with multi choices for some of the questions. Their responses came in as follows (percentages are included for each response)

**Do you enjoy reading books? Yes:** 25 responses (59.5%), **No:** 17 responses (40.5%)

**What attracts your attention in books? Images:** 15 responses (35.7%), **Information:** 19 responses (45.2%), **Dialogue:** 7 responses (16.6%), **Q & A:** 11 responses (26%)

**Do you enjoy reading novels? Yes:** 26 responses (61.9%), **No:** 16 responses (38%)

**How far are you familiar with the meaning of the church feast days and the saints' memorials? Not familiar:** 5 responses (11.9%), **somewhat familiar:** 28 responses (66.6%), **fairly familiar:** 9 responses (21.4%)

**Who is your favourite saint? None:** 11 responses (26.1%), **St. Charbel:** 14 responses (33.3%), **St. Rita:** 4 responses (9.5%), **St. Joseph:** 3 responses (7.1%), **the**

**Virgin Mary:** 3 responses (7.1%) And there were **2 other saints who attained one vote.**

The responses to the survey indicate that the majority of the students do not enjoy book reading and they are deprived of this type of education due to their being influenced by virtual reality (the Internet) in which they are more readily immersed. The survey results also reflect the fact that what mostly attracts them in books is information, followed by images then by Q & A items, then dialogues, though in a far lesser degree.

Despite the lack of interest in books, the majority do enjoy reading novels, perhaps due to what these convey in terms of emotions and thrilling and exciting events. A significant majority share the cursory knowledge in the biographies of saints, while a smaller percentage confirm an even lesser degree of knowledge. This is a reasonable conclusion considering that the catechism curricula cover some stories about the lives of the saints, as such the students had cursory exposure to the saints' biographies. It is noticeable that this group are most affected by St Charbel followed by a fairly large proportion who do not have a favourite saint, which points to the fact that they are not touched by the biographies of the saints. Smaller percentages are influenced by other saints; St Rita, St Joseph and our Holy Mother Mary.

It is worth highlighting that this surveyed group are familiar with the saints mentioned in the Bible and who are well known, like our Holy Mother and St Joseph. Interestingly, they are more familiar with non-Eastern saints like St Charbel (Lebanese saint) and St Rita (Italian saint) and this is an indication of the lack of familiarity with our saints and Eastern martyrs together with their stories.

### **This is where the idea for producing this guide originated**

This is where the idea for producing this guide originated; upon discussing the request initiated by the Baghdad Committee for Christian Education, throughout organising a course for the Intermediate and Secondary school Catechism teachers, I thought of creating this guide so that it can be a tool in the hands of our beloved teachers and students, and for anyone who yearns to quench their thirst from those pristine springs that transmitted to us, throughout history, the "Living Water" (John 4:10). The guide provides a profile synopsis about the lives of the saints, the martyrs, the monks, the hermits, the scholars, the Patriarchs and Bishops, as well as the rest of the memorials included in the calendar of the Chaldean Church. It also offers the means for comprehending the spiritual notions of our history and the lives of our saints, martyrs, consecrated persons, and scholars in the land of the East... It also accompanies them in their prayers through the orders of prayers listed at the end of the book.

In this context, I would like to point out that that **this guide is not a historical or liturgical book, it is rather a Catechism book** that helps the teachers and students in

getting acquainted with the stories of those who preceded us on the path of holiness. This entailed that we did not fully pursue historical precision in listing some of the names, dates and places, except for where it was necessary. Also, we did not fully scrutinize the liturgical principles for the memorials; our focus was more on the morals that the student will receive from the life of those personalities. It is also worth noting that I am not a history or theology scholar, hence I implore those interested in those two aspects, to realize my aim in producing this modest guide, offering beforehand my gratitude for any comments, suggested amendments, that I may receive.

### **The difference between a Memorial and a Feast**

As mentioned above, this guide covers the “Memorials” without delving into the liturgical “Feasts”, as the latter do not lack references, and in this respect, I would like to point to a vital reference prepared by Fr Dr Mansour the Redemptorist, titled “**The Splendour of the Feasts**” (Baghdad 1998, with subsequent reprints), and another important liturgical book by Bishop Jacques Isaac titled “**Liturgical Prayers throughout the Liturgical year**” (Najim Al-Mashreq” Publications (28) , Baghdad 2011) where he specifically just covers the significant memorials and feasts. This is in addition to the majority the catechism curricula which expound our feasts due to their congruence across the churches and liturgies.

However, it would still be useful to offer a brief explanation where we outlay the difference between a “feast” and “memorial” in the general sense. With feasts we celebrate all those salvific events lived by our Lord Jesus Christ (His birth, baptism, transfiguration, resurrection, His ascension ...etc.), the memorials, on the other hand, are specific to the saints. This distinction is due to the fact that Christ is the pinnacle of our faith and hence feasts constitute a source of our salvation, while all saints rank in the second place as they help us in the attainment of that source.

In this regard we would refer to our Holy Mary who is distinguished amongst all the other saints, in having both “feasts” and “memorials” dedicated for her throughout the liturgical year. This is attributed to the fact that Our Lady’s feasts are directly related to her son Jesus, hence celebrating the event becomes a “feast”; for instance, we celebrate the feast of the Virgin Mary’s Assumption into Heaven as we believe that Christ assumed her in heaven. While we “remember” the “Virgin Mary the protector of crops” as it is an event specific to the intercession of Mary on behalf of farmers. We also celebrate a “feast” for Saint Joseph, on the fourth Sunday after the Advent (in December) as it relates to the birth of Christ.

This distinction between the “feast” and “memorial” is quite pronounced during the liturgical celebrations, as a feast would attain greater liturgical expression through the prayers, hymns, symbols and splendid ceremonials, whereas a memorial would lack these. In our renewed Chaldean Mass Missal for 2020, there is a clear distinction

between the “Sunday and Feast day” Masses and those celebrating the “Memorials and Ordinary days”.

In our Chaldean rite, there are some “memorials” that are celebrated in a manner similar to “feasts”, i.e. they attain the same rank. In the liturgical Divine Office of daily prayer, we communicate a message on the “Friday of Gold” (which is the memorial of the first miracle performed by the apostles), the message proclaims that “it is celebrated as a feast”. There are also some significant memorials relating to saints in our rite, whose memorials have been nominated as a “feast” in the prayer book throughout the liturgical year and those are: Saint John the Baptist (his feast day is celebrated on the third Mass as John is the ‘predecessor’ of Christ and the one preparing the way, hence his prominence in our church), Saint Korkis (Georges) – his fame has reached out far and wide and has become a global saint -, Saints Peter and Paul (in conjunction with their feast celebrated by our church in Rome, as they were martyred on 29 June), saint Thomas (the patron saint of the Chaldean Patriarchate, and the one who evangelised Mesopotamia; our land).

Another specific dimension to our Chaldean rite is that Lent is preceded by the “memorial of the faithful departed” and is culminated by the “Friday of Martyrs and witnesses to the Faith” on the first Friday of Easter. Following on, “The Saints Celebrations” start, and these are referenced as “Sheera” in our eastern tradition, they stem from the faith in Christ rising from the dead, where we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord in communion with the saints. These celebratory “seasons” in our calendar are; Church of Al-Tahira (the Immaculate) in Mosul, the monastery of saint Korkis (Georges) in Mosul, the monastery of Saint Michael also in Mosul, and the monastery of Saint Oraha.

### **How should we read into the stories of the Saints?**

The stories of the saints were written in ancient times for the people of those times. In order for us to understand the story today and extract its inherent spiritual dimensions, we need to read those stories in our contemporary language whilst comprehending the style adopted in those times.

It is worthwhile noting that stories of the saints and together with them, the martyrs, monks, friars and scholars, are not news reports that aim at transmitting literally the happenings through the lives of a saint and as such are not concerned with the minute detailed facts, as much as their ultimate concern to convey the holiness of that person, to the recipient of the story, to enable the recipient to follow the path of the saint and journey towards holiness.

We consequently observe that some authors of the stories of the saints, resort to exaggerating some aspects, and include some mythical elements that cast a distinctive



impression on the life of the saint enthusing the reader, thus fulfilling the aim of conveying holiness to the recipients. Saints biographies are characterised by lengthy dialogues with governors and kings, where the story elaborates the various attempts of those rulers to coerce the Christians in denouncing Christ and reverting to the worship of idols, whilst threatening them with punishment and torment should they not succumb to their orders. Some authors have even formed some convergence between the story of the saint and events in the Bible, in an effort to bring the saint's story closer to the life of his teacher, Jesus. Hence, we do not need to be surprised here as that style was customary in those days and if the biographies were to be written today, they would have been written in a different style.

So, we have summarised, in this guide, the biographies from the reference resources, in order provide the teacher and student with a comprehensive view on the lives, works and holiness of the saints. So, we have removed the bulk of the mythical elements and selected, where necessary, some of the shorter dialogues that are expressive and valuable for the faith life of the modern recipient.

We also have adopted the first-person style where each saint tells his / her own story in order to create some sort of a relationship and closeness, as holiness is not restricted to anyone neither it is out of reach; those who preceded in holiness have paved the path so that we may walk on the same path, today. Furthermore, holiness is not an outdated concept that we only read about in ancient stories and novels, they rather constitute the story of all generations, and to this day, the church continues to beatify and canonize many of the contemporary faithful who managed to physically manifest their testimonies to Christ. We, as well, can attain this holiness as we read the stories of the saints relishing this hope.

### **How is Holiness to be comprehended?**

If we diligently scrutinize the conceptual understanding of holiness held by some Christians, we would identify that it encompasses a fair degree of misunderstanding. Through our Christian faith we can readily identify that the saints are normal beings similar to us, they walked in Christ's path and fulfilled his will, in accordance with the mission that have been called for. Hence, the church elevated them to a degree of holiness in order to become examples that we follow throughout the generations. Moreover, they have become intercessors for us with our father Lord and His son Jesus Christ.

However, some believe that saints are unique beings that cannot be replicated and therefore, those holding this belief, cannot reach the levels attained by the saints, due to their sinful and feeble nature that does not improve. Also, believing that holiness is completely far off and is exclusive to the righteous ones and sin-free! So, the concept

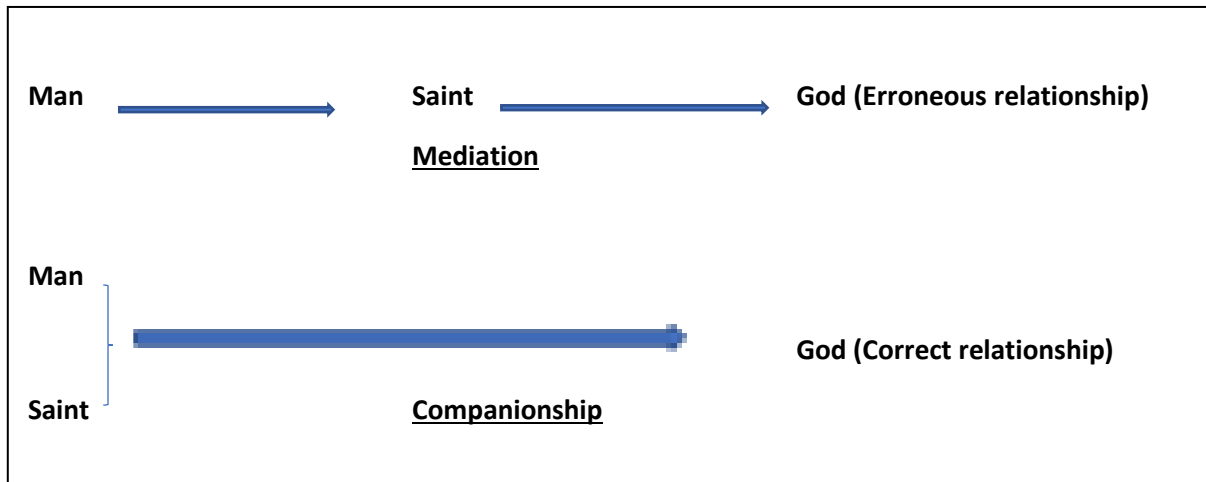
they held for holiness became synonymous with “lack of sin”, which, in actual fact, is an illusional and insubstantial concept that does not exist in reality!

In an article published by “Al-Mashreq” magazine in Beirut (Sixty seventh year, part one, January – June 1993 , p. 40 and 41) , and I quote “And since the saints are unique examples, some of the faithful pray to them expressing their needs and if one has their needs fulfilled they will continue in an act of worship for their entire life and that saint becomes their permanent companion. More often, those needs are insolvable problems that do not occupy the same degree of significance for them but they all relate to life realities that represent, for them, an unbearable reality that they are incapable of dealing with, employing their individual means, hence they aspire for viable solutions offered through the mediation of their saint. They then, occasionally, make that saint their only means to reach out to God who had delegated those saints to deal with the people, where those saints are close to them and are able to answer their immediate needs. Whereas God is quite far off and cannot be reached, hence the saints are extremely popular as they are the only path to connect with God!”. All these are erroneous beliefs that must be reformed, within our young generations, in particular.

### **And what about the concept of intercession?**

As soon as the topic of ‘Saints’ is addressed, intercession is immediately pointed out, as this concept directly relates to them. And this where a problem arises; some believe that intercession means the “mediation” and that the saint is the” mediator” between us and God, by merit of the saint’s unique relationship with God! This understanding is flawed since we actually do not need “mediation” to reach out to God and establishing a relationship with him, we rather need “companionship”. We read the story of an individual saint, and realise how he or she lived their Christian life and their relationship with God, then that illuminates our life’s path and we attain, through that light, a genuine Christian life with God. The saints have been likened to street lamp posts, whose purpose is to illuminate the road helping people to their ultimate destination.

In this context, we are not primarily expected to literally follow their actions, as our times, circumstances and perceptions differ from their times, circumstances and perceptions. If that was the case we would be compelled to live in the desert or the caves or hermitages, and some of us might even have to practice severe austerity.... It is not uncommon that some might be called to adopt that, however by following their examples we meant reflecting upon the lives of the saints and concluding, through the enlightenment of our minds and our faith, the means for living them in our times.



### **We Learn and we Pray**

As I end this preface, I would like to sum up the purpose of this guide in two main goals; we learn and we pray and in order to realise this purpose we included the orders of prayers, in the last section of the guide covering one or two or more categories of the memorials. I truly urge families or small church groups – even through the various social media means, as an alternative – to pray for those saints and reading their biographies where they can benefit from these biographies in sustaining their spirituality and establishing a faith culture centred around our saints in the land of the East, a land that we are honoured to belong to. Towards the end of the book, I present some recommendations and ideas for our Chaldean Churches’ catechists for the sake of deepening our knowledge and faith in the role our saints play in our lives.

In this occasion, I would not miss expressing my gratitude to the Christian Education Committee / the Baghdad committee from whom the idea of this guide, emanated. Also, in this regard, I would like to extend my gratitude to my dear friend father Jinan Shamil for all his assistance with the references and advice he offered in advancing this project. I also extend my thanks to the artist deacon Bassam Sabri Ingara for his design of the book cover.

I would like to particularly dedicate this guide to my brothers and sisters, the catechists at the various study levels in parishes, and to our beloved students at the intermediate and secondary school levels; may our Lord bestow upon them His grace, through the intercession of the saints, to help them grow in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man (Luke 2:52). I also dedicate this guide to all the faithful in our church, the Catholic Chaldean Church of the East, to glorify our Lord through His saints as it is now and ever shall be. God is the Arbiter of Success.

**Fr Albair Hisham Na’oum**

**29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 On the fourteenth anniversary of my ordination**

## **The Categorisation of the memorials in this Guide**

A question may arise as to the inclusion of the memorials into the liturgical calendar? And in what order? And what criteria was applied in selecting a particular Memorial Day? The Church, usually assigns the date of the martyrdom of the saints or their assumption into heaven as the Memorial Day for that saint. Alternatively, the church, selects a significant event through the saint's life so that it may be remembered by the faithful throughout the generations. Additionally, the Church preserves in remembrance, historical events that are marked as "memorials" in its calendar.

Prior to the addition of the new list of saints and martyrs to the 2020 calendar, there were some notable memorials in the season of Epiphany (which is the liturgical season following the feast of the baptism of our Lord Jesus, and continues for seven weeks). This is the addition to the other Moveable and non-moveable memorials in accordance with the liturgical norms. In listing the new names, our Church leadership had favoured distributing those memorials over the Fridays of the year beginning with the Easter season until the end of the year. As Friday gains particular relevance since it is a holiday for the faithful in our countries. For the countries abroad to where our people have migrated, some of our faithful have transferred these memorials to the following Sunday Masses, in tandem with the practice adopted by the Roman Catholic church. There is still room for exploring the topic of fixing the dates of those memorials within the Patriarchal calendar.

In term of this guide, I have adopted the liturgical memorials categorisation below. As mentioned earlier, I have adopted the educational and the spiritual aspects more than the historical and liturgical aspects. I have included the category of each memorial alongside its title in the text.

### **1. Biblical Personality**

These comprise of ten Biblical Personalities, some of which refer to a single character (John the Baptist, St. Stephen, St. Joseph, St. Thomas) or refer to two characters (Peter and Paul) or refer to groups (The Four Evangelists, St. Shmouni and her sons, the seventy-two disciples and the twelve disciples memorial – Noserdale Sunday). There are also two memorials for St. Joseph (his intercession and memorial as the patron saint for labourers). All these biblical personalities as well as their memorials are mentioned in the New Testament, except for St. Shmouni and her sons, as this story is mentioned in the book of Maccabees (7: 1 – 14) in the Old Testament; the faithful continue to recount her story to this current day.

In describing the majority of those personalities, we consulted the "Holy Bible Encyclopaedia" ('Source of Life' publications, Beirut / Lebanon, 1993). We listed the

story of the seventy-two disciples, in its entirety from the Holy Bible (The Good News Arabic Version). In terms of the twelve disciples' memorial we have included the relevant Sunday reading. As for the martyr St Shmouni, who is also mentioned in the Bible, we listed her biography based on the "Biographies of Martyrs and Saints" by Fr Albair Abouna (Al-Mashreq Publications (40), 1<sup>st</sup> Print, Baghdad 2016).

## 2. The Blessed Virgin Mary

Our Holy mother occupies prominent status in our Chaldean Church calendar, as evident in the list of feasts dedicated to her – the Marian feasts ("The Annunciation" on the second Sunday in the season of Annunciation), the "feast of Mary Mother of the Church" occurring on the Monday following Pentecost (the dwelling of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles) which was instigated recently by Pope Francis, then there is the "Feast of Assumption of the Virgin Mary to Heaven", the "Feast of the Immaculate Conception" which is a memorial but we celebrate as a feast as it is also the feast of our "Chaldean Daughters of Mary" nuns, the feast of Congratulating the virgin on the birth of Jesus which occurs on the day following Christmas day. On the other hand there are eight Marian memorials : **Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady Protector of Crops, the Queenship of Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows (Baghdad), Our Lady of the Holy Rosary (a memorial from the Latin Rite), the visitation of the Virgin Mary to Elisabeth.** Two of these memorials originate from the Bible (Our Lady of Sorrows – the mother who was afflicted with pain for the suffering of her son, and the visitation to her cousin Elisabeth), while one originates from the tradition (Birthday of Mary), the other four pertain to the Universal Church (Our Lady of Fatima, the Queenship of Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Our Lady of the Holy Rosary) and one of the Eastern church (Our Lady Protector of Crops).

In addition to the Holy Bible, I consulted the "Month of Mary" booklet prepared by Fr Dr Putrus Haddad in 1983, with several reprints until 2017, where I derived from the "Accounts" section in his book where he recounts, from history, stories relating to each memorial.

## 3. Martyr

A martyr is someone who perished in testimony to his faith and holding on to Christ..." (Fr Subhi Hamawi S.J., "Dictionary of Christian Faith" – Al-Mashreq Publications – Beirut, Pg. 289). Our Eastern Church history is replete with many martyrs. There are 24 Martyr memorials in the calendar categorised as follows: biblical personalities martyrs (John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, Stephen, Shmouni and her sons), groupings of saints – two or more (the forty saints, Kiryakos and his seventeen companions, Takla

and her companions, the Head Patriarch (Jathaliq) St Shahdost and Head Patriarch St Bria'aShmain), and from our church 17 male martyrs and 8 female martyrs.

The martyrs have given their lives freely and in full faith, hence their blood, indeed, sowed life. Our church was and remains to be the church of martyrs. Efforts are ongoing for the beatification and canonization of our contemporary martyrs: the bishops martyred by the Ottoman genocide in 1915, Bishop Paulus Rahho (assassinated by terrorism in Mosul in 2008) and the servant of God Fr Raghid Kenni (who was killed, along with his brothers, the 3 deacons, servants of God, in Mosul, 2007).

The shrewd reader will note that a rather large group of our church martyrs lived during the fourth century AD. A period referred to as the “the forty years persecution” as it lasted for forty years (339 – 379 AD), where thousands of Christians were martyred, with particular mention of Patriarch Shamoun Bersbaai and his fellow bishops and priests who were martyred on Good Friday 341 AD. Our Chaldean Church commemorates those on the “**Friday of Martyrs and Witnesses to the Faith**” which is celebrated on the Friday following Good Friday, as Good Friday remains reserved to reflected upon the passion of Christ, alone. The details and beginnings of this persecution can be reviewed, through the narrative of the martyrdom of Patriarch Shamoun Bersbaai, on item 48 in this guide.

The “Witnesses to Faith” whom we commemorate on that Friday; the plural of “witness” is “a Christian who has witnessed to his faith in Jesus Christ, exposing his life to danger” (Dictionary of Christian Faith, Pg. 470).

In terms of the references used in recounting the biographies of the martyrs, there are authors who were quite vigilant in publishing these biographies, and this regard I would like to mention in particular the efforts by Fr Albair Abouna who published between 2015 - 2016 (Al-Mashreq Publications in Baghdad) six volumes about the “**Biographies of Saints and Martyrs**” (the first volume already printed twice). In these volumes he conveys the efforts of the Chaldean Fr Paulus Bejan the Lazarian (1838 – 1920) and Bishop Addai Sheer in retracing the accounts of martyrs and saints throughout the Middle east. I have adopted those volumes as references in addition to the “The Syriac Saints” book by Fr. Jean Maurice Fiey the Dominican (Beirut 2005) who revealed the history of our church and its saints. I also benefited from the remarks included in the “**Prayer Book through the entire Liturgical Year**” (Divine Office of daily prayer in accordance with the Chaldean Rite – Rome 2002). This is in addition to many books and articles inscribed by Fathers who held great interest in this material, and it is very worthwhile mentioning in this regard, the Scholar Fr. Dr. Yousif Habbi and Fr. Dr. Putrus Haddad.

#### **4. Saint**

Without doubt, all those whom we commemorate throughout our liturgical year who have left this world have been adorned with the fragrance of sanctity, however we have placed the saints in a special category in order to distinguish them. Apart from the biblical personalities (the 4 Evangelists, St Joseph and St Thomas), there is another saint from the tradition; she is St Anne the mother of the virgin Mary, and the two other saints from the Church of the East, Saints Addai and Mari, the apostles of the East, plus two saints from the universal church; St Rita and St Therese of the Child Jesus.

In addition to the references above that we used in categorising a “martyr” we have acquired some information from the **Internet**.

#### **5. Friar**

The “Dictionary of Christian Faith” defines a friar as “a member of society whose members have taken the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience” (Pg. 229). We have combined in this categorisation the friars as well as the Monks. The “Dictionary of Christian Faith” defines the Monk as someone who lives in solitude, under a formal rule, with obedience to their Abbots“ (Pg. 502). There is also the “hermit” who is defined as: “A person who dedicates his life to God alone outside the realms of this world which entails that, whatever his social order might be, he would live in a solitary state that allows him to contemplate upon and encounter God” (Pg. 431).

There are 21 Monks memorials in our Patriarchal calendar, some of whom are scholars in consequence of their writings that they had left for us. Some others have become Patriarchs and Bishops and assumed significant positions in leading the church, and some have been martyred as they shed their blood for their faith in Christ.

The call to consecration has so often captured the aspiration of men and women throughout history where they freely surrendered their lives and were willing to sacrifice everything and denounce the desires and life of the world in order to dedicate their beings to the one who loved us first and foremost. As such we find, in our beloved east, people who sacrificed all that they could possibly offer, for our Lord. They left us their biographies and writings so that we may live our faith through those, today.

#### **6. Scholar (Milvan, Doctor of the Church)**

The calendar mentions 12 scholars where we identified some through their biographies. They include bishops and monks who left us valuable writings that are often referenced by the church to help in understanding the faith of those who preceded us and uncovered for us the inherent contexts of this faith, and defended it against trends (deviations from the faith) and heresies (departure from the true faith) that sprouted

in their time. They expressed their love and devotion to their Master and sought to pass on this love to the future generations.

## **7. Bishop**

The “Dictionary of Christian Faith” mentions that “within the Catholic and Orthodox churches, Bishops are the successors of the Apostles who are entrusted with managing the specific church affairs, generally at the parish level” (Pg. 39). A patriarch, on the other hand, is a “title used, since the fifth century, to reference the Bishops of the major four Sees; Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. This title was later on extended to include other important Sees” (Pg. 111).

We combined the Patriarchs and Bishops, in our calendar, under the “Bishop” category as they all obtain the episcopal rank (absolute priesthood). The patriarchs are distinguished through their seniority amongst the Bishops and presiding over the councils of Bishops in the one church. We have four Patriarch memorials and eight Bishop memorials, in our calendar.

Patriarchs and Bishops assume three main tasks by merit of their ordination: Sanctification, leadership and teaching. In essence, they are all teachers, while some have chosen martyrdom as their path, others were monks and later on accepted the sacred rank.

We also include in our calendar the memorial of His Beatitude the Patriarch assuming the See of the Chaldean Eastern Church. We also mention the name of His Beatitude through our Masses and prayers. We also mention the memorial of the Holy See (the Pope) assuming the holy office.

## **8. Special**

Under this title, we have listed the “Memorial of the faithful departed” (we exclusively sourced its explanation from the Maronite Memorials guide – the Sincsar – as it details the origins of this memorial in the Catholic Church) and the “Memorial of the Sacred Heart of Jesus” (explanation sourced from the “**The month of Sacred Heart of Jesus Reflections**” Fr. Dr. Putrus Haddad)

It is also worthwhile mentioning that we do include in our liturgical calendar “**the world day for the sick**” (**our Lady of Lourdes**) which is celebrated by all parishes across the Catholic church. Additionally, the Pope, had instigated in 2017, the “**World Day for the Poor**”. There is also the “**The week of prayer for Christian Unity**” which is celebrated annually 18 – 25 January; it was adopted by Fr. Paul Couturier in 1935 and since then had spread across the entire world.



## The Church of the East Liturgical Calendar 2021

Feasts and Commemorations	No,	Classification in the directory
<b><u>January 2021 (After Nativity &amp; Epiphany Seasons):</u></b>		
<b>01: Circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ. New Year's Day. World Day of Peace.</b>	-	-
<b>06: Feast of the Epiphany of our Lord Jesus Christ.</b>	-	-
08: Commemoration of St. John the Baptist.	<b>1</b>	<b>Clerical figure and Martyr</b>
10: Commemoration of St. Stephen, Protomartyr and patron saint of deacons.	<b>2</b>	<b>Clerical figure and Martyr</b>
15: Commemoration of St. Peter and St. Paul	<b>3</b>	<b>Clerical figures and Martyr</b>
<b>18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.</b>	-	-
17: Commemoration of St. Antony the Great, (Father of all)	<b>4</b>	<b>Monk</b>
22: Commemoration of the four Evangelists.	<b>5</b>	<b>Clerical figures, Saints</b>
25-27: The fast of Ba'otha (The fast of Supplication)	-	-
<b><u>February 2021 (Epiphany and Lent Seasons):</u></b>		
05: Commemoration of the Oriental Fathers.	<b>6</b>	<b>Doctors</b>
<b>11: Our Lady of Lourdes (World Patients Day).</b>	-	-
12: Commemoration of the Oriental spiritualists: John Dalyathy, Yousif Bosnaya, Ibrahim Alnethfry, Shamon D Taybotheh .	<b>7</b>	<b>Monks and Doctors</b>
<b>15: Great Fast (The Lent).</b>	-	-
19: Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed.	<b>8</b>	<b>Specific</b>
<b><u>March 2021(Lent Season) Month of St. Joseph:</u></b>		
05: Commemoration of the Forty Martyrs.	<b>9</b>	<b>Martyrs</b>
19: Solemnity of St. Joseph's Intercession.	<b>10</b>	<b>Clerical figure and Martyr</b>
26: Lazarus Friday.	-	-
<b>28: Palm Sunday.</b>	-	-

<b><u>April 2021, (Lent and Easter Seasons):</u></b>		
<b>01: Passover Thursday (Priests Feast).</b>	-	-
<b>02: Good Friday (Great Friday).</b>	-	-
<b>03: The Saturday of Light (Holy Saturday).</b>	-	-
<b>04- 05: (Easter Sunday) The Glorious Feast of the Resurrection.</b>		
06: Commemoration of Boya the Monk (Shaqlawaw).	<b>11</b>	<b>Monk</b>
<b>09: Friday of Martyrs and confessors of the Faith.</b>	-	-
Commemoration St. Marbena (Quesanjak-Armota).	<b>12</b>	<b>Martyr</b>
<b>11: New Sunday (Sunday of Divine Mercy).</b>	-	-
19: Commemoration of Rabban Hormized. 17 Century.	<b>13</b>	<b>Monk</b>
23: Commemoration of Danial the doctor.	<b>14</b>	<b>Monk</b>
24: Commemoration of St. George.	<b>15</b>	<b>Martyr</b>
<b><u>May 2021, (Easter and Apostles Seasons)</u></b>		
<b><u>Month of Mary:</u></b>		
01: Commemoration of St. Joseph, Patron saint of worker/ International workers Day.	<b>16</b>	<b>Clerical figure, Saint.</b>
Commemoration of Abba Catholicos (540-552).	<b>17</b>	<b>Patriarch and Doctor.</b>
02: Commemoration of St. Addai The Apostle of the East.	<b>18</b>	<b>Saint.</b>
04: Commemoration of St. Shmoon and her Sons.	<b>19</b>	<b>Clerical figure, Saint.</b>
07: Commemoration of Ibrahim Alkashkary the founder of monastery life. (6 Century).	<b>20</b>	<b>Monk.</b>
<b>13: Feast of the Ascension.</b>	-	-
13: Commemoration of Fatima.	<b>21</b>	<b>Virgin Mary</b>
15: Commemoration of our Lady Guardian of Planets.	<b>22</b>	<b>Virgin Mary</b>
Commemoration of Martyr Sultan Mahadokht (319).	<b>23</b>	<b>Martyr</b>
21: Commemoration of Afrahat the wise (4 <sup>th</sup> Century).	<b>24</b>	<b>Bishop, Monk, and Doctor.</b>
22: Commemoration of Bishop Issac Nineveh.	<b>25</b>	<b>Bishop, Doctor</b>

(7 Century). Commemoration of St. Rita.	26	Saint.
<b>23: Feast of Pentecost (The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostle, 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Apostle).</b>	-	-
<b>28: Gold Friday</b> (Commemoration of first miracle performed by the Apostles).	-	-
Commemoration of the Afnimaran the founder monk. (7 <sup>th</sup> Century).	27	Monk.
<b>30: Feast of the Holy Trinity.</b>	-	-
31: Commemoration of the blessed virgin Mary, Queen of the Universe.	28	Virgin Mary
<b><u>June 2021, (Apostles Season and Month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus):</u></b>		
<b>01: Month oh the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.</b>	-	-
<b>03: The Feast of Corpus Christi (Holy Eucharist).</b>	-	-
04: Commemoration of Anaheed the Martyr (448).	29	Martyr.
11: Commemoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.	30	Specific
18: Commemoration of St. Aphram (Doctor of the Church).	31	Doctor.
25: Commemoration of Sherin the Martyr.	32	Martyr.
27: Commemoration of the blessed Virgin Mary our Lady of Perpetual help.	33	Virgin Mary
<b><u>July 2020, (The Apostles and Qayta Seasons):</u></b>		
02: Commemoration of the bishop Sahdona (7 <sup>th</sup> Century).	34	Bishop, Doctor.
03: Commemoration of St. Thomas the Apostle (Patron Saint of the Chaldean Patriarchate).	35	Clerical figure, Saint.
09: Commemoration of the Seventy-Two Disciples.	36	Clerical figures
Commemoration of Fayruz the martyr (421)	37	Martyr
<b>11: The Sunday of Nosard-Eel. (Commemoration of Twelve Apostles).</b>	38	Clerical figures.

15: Commemoration of the Martyrs of St. Cyricus and his mother.	39	Martyr.
16: Commemoration of St. Jacob of Nasibis (338).	40	Bishop and Doctor
Commemoration of martyr Isho Asyran (620)	41	Martyr
23: Commemoration of St. Mari the Apostle of the East.	42	Saint
Commemoration of Babaweh Catholicos (484).	43	Patriarch and Martyr
Commemoration of St. Ann mother of the blessed Virgin Mary	44	Saint
30: Commemoration of St. Bokhtishoa the Martyr (5 <sup>th</sup> Century).	45	Martyr
<b><u>August 2021, (Summer and Elijah Seasons).</u></b>		
<b>06: Feast of Transfiguration.</b>	-	-
Commemoration of the monk Baraetha (612).	46	Monk
13: Commemoration of Brekhisona and his friends the 17 <sup>th</sup> martyr (315).	47	Martyrs
<b>15: Feast of the Assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary.</b>	-	-
20: Commemoration of the martyr Mar Shamoon Barr Sabae, Catholicos of the church of the East (died Ad341).	48	Patriarch and Martyr
Commemoration of his sister Tarbo the martyr (341).	49	Martyrs
29: Commemoration of St. Elia (Elijah) Alhirai (Whose monastery is located near Mousl).	50	Monk
<b><u>September 2021, (Elijah Season):</u></b>		
03: Commemoration St. Quardagh the martyr.	51	Martyrs
Commemoration of Taqla and her friends the martyr (347).	52	Monk and Martyr
08: Commemoration of the birth of the blessed Virgin Mary.	53	Virgin Mary

Commemoration of Catholicos Mar Shadoust and Barr Baashaimeen.	<b>54</b>	<b>Patriarch, Martyr, Doctor</b>
Commemoratin of Zaia- Zaeya the monk (4 <sup>th</sup> Century).	<b>55</b>	<b>Monk</b>
<b>14: Feast of the Holy Cross.</b>	-	-
19: Commemoration of our Lady of Sorrows (Baghdad).	<b>56</b>	<b>Virgin Mary</b>
Commemoration of St. Babay the Great (628).	<b>57</b>	<b>Monk, Doctor</b>
25: Commemoration of St. Meskenta the Martyr (Mousl).	<b>58</b>	<b>Martyr</b>
Commemoration of the Martyr Tehmizkerd (455 Kirkuk the red church).	<b>59</b>	<b>Martyr</b>
Commemoration of Shalitta the Hermit (5 <sup>th</sup> Century)	<b>60</b>	<b>Monk</b>
<b><u>October 2021, (Cross, Moses and Church Dedication Seasons). Dedicated month to the Holy Rosary:</u></b>		
01: Commemoration of St. Thérèse of the child Jesus.	<b>61</b>	<b>Saint</b>
Commemoration of St. Atquen Patron saint of the village of Dairrashish, Zakho.	<b>62</b>	<b>Monk</b>
Commemoration of Mar Sabrishooa the beautiful Jungle.	<b>63</b>	<b>Monk</b>
Commemoration of St. Abda the martyr (4 <sup>th</sup> Century).	<b>64</b>	<b>Bishop, Martyr</b>
03: Feast of the blessed Virgin Mary, our Lady of the Holy Rosary.	<b>65</b>	<b>Virgin Mary</b>
08: Commemoration of Aqibshamma the martyr bishop (4 <sup>th</sup> Century).	<b>66</b>	<b>Bishop, Martyr</b>
15: Commemoration of Fabrounia, the martyr (4 <sup>th</sup> Century).	<b>67</b>	<b>Martyr</b>
22: Commemoration of Fanhas, the martyr (5 <sup>th</sup> Century).	<b>68</b>	<b>Monk, Martyr</b>
Commemoration of Toma Marji (5 <sup>th</sup> Century).	<b>69</b>	<b>Monk, Doctor</b>
25: Commemoration of St Pethion the Martyr.	<b>70</b>	<b>Martyr</b>

29: Commemoration of St. Gohisht Azad, the martyr. (341)	<b>71</b>	<b>Martyr</b>
<b><u>November 2021, (Church Dedication and Advent Season):</u></b>		
01: Commemoration of Mar Mikha Alnuhadri (4 <sup>th</sup> Century Alqoush).	<b>72</b>	<b>Monk</b>
05: Commemoration of Mar Awgin and his disciples (4 <sup>th</sup> Century).	<b>73</b>	<b>Monk</b>
<b>09: The World Poor Day.</b>	-	-
12: Commemoration of Bishop Milos the martyr (341).	<b>74</b>	<b>Bishop, Martyr</b>
19: Commemoration of St. Narsai (502).	<b>75</b>	<b>Monk, Doctor</b>
<b>21: Feast of Christ the King.</b>	-	-
26: Commemoration of Martyr Jacob the Mutilated.	<b>76</b>	<b>Martyr</b>
Commemoration of Yazdandokht the martyr (4 <sup>th</sup> Century).	<b>77</b>	<b>Martyr</b>
<b><u>December 2021, (Advent and after Nativity Season)</u></b>		
<b><u>Blessing of the blessed Virgin Mary:</u></b>		
04: Commemoration of St. Barbars (Patron Saint of Karemlash).	<b>78</b>	<b>Martyr</b>
	-	-
<b>05: Feast of the Annunciation.</b>	-	-
<b>08: Feast of Immaculate Conception of the blessed Virgin Mary.</b>		
10: Commemoration of the visitation of the blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth.	<b>79</b>	<b>Virgin Mary</b>
Commemoration of Marootha Bishop of Meyafraqin (5 <sup>th</sup> Century).	<b>80</b>	<b>Bishop</b>
15: Commemoration of Mar Ith-Alaha Alnuhdri (Duhok 355).	<b>81</b>	<b>Martyr</b>
<b>19: Feast of St. Joseph.</b>	-	-
<b>25: The Glorious Nativity Feast. (Christmas).</b>	-	-
<b>26: Feast of Congratulating the Virgin Mary.</b>	-	-
<b>30: Feast of the Holy Family.</b>	-	-
	-	-

## Bible References for Liturgical Feasts and Events

Feasts	Book References
<b>Circumcision Feast and New Year's Day World Day of Peace</b>	Isaiah 42: 18- 15 + Galatian5: 1- 6 Luke 2: 21- 39
<b>Feast of the Epiphany</b>	Isaiah 4: 2-6 + 11: 1-5 + Titus 2: 4- 11 Matthew 3: 1- 17
<b>Supplication Fasting (Saoma DBa'ootha)</b>	<b>Monday:</b> Isaiah 63: 17-64: 12 Habakkuk 3: 1- 19 + 1Timothy 2: 1-3: 10 Matthew 18: 23- 35 <b>Tuesday:</b> 1Samuel 7: 3- 9 + Isaiah 59: 1- 18 + Romans 12: 121 + Luke 18: 2- 14 <b>Wednesday:</b> Joel 2: 15- 27 + Jonah 3: 1- 4: 11 + Romans 9: 14- 10 + Matthew 6: 1- 18
<b>Great Fast (Lent) Reading for 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent</b>	Isaiah 58: 1, 6- 9 + Ephesians 4: 17- 24 + Matthew 4: 1 – 11
<b>Lazarus Friday</b>	John 11: 1- 54
<b>Palm Sunday</b>	Zakaria 9: 9 – 12 + Romans 11: 13- 24 + Matthew 20: 29- 21: 22
<b>Passover Thursday (Priests Feast)</b>	Exodus 12: 1-20 + 1 Corinthians 5: 7- 8 + 10: 15- 17 + 11: 23- 34 + John 13: 1- 15.
<b>Good Friday (Sorrowful Friday)</b>	Isaiah 52: 13- 15; 53: 1- 12 + Gelasian 2: 17 +3: 1- 14 + The Passion Story collected from four Gospels
<b>The Saturday of Light</b>	1Corinthians 1: 18- 31 + Matthew 27: 62- 66
<b>The Glorious Feast of Resurrection (Easter Sunday)</b>	Isaiah 60: 1- 7 +1Corinthians 15: 20- 24 + John 20: 1- 18
<b>New Sunday</b>	Acts 4: 32- 5: 11 + Colossian 1: 1- 20 + John 20: 19- 31
<b>Feast of the Ascension</b>	Acts 1: 6- 12 + 1Timothy 1: 18- 2: 6 + Luke 24: 44- 53
<b>Feast of Pentecost (The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles)</b>	Acts 2: 1- 21 + 1Corinthians 12: 1- 11 + John 14: 15- 16 + 25- 26+ 15: 26- 16: 4
<b>Feast of the blessed Virgin Mary (Mother of the Church)</b>	Genesis 3: 9- 15 + Acts 1: 12- 14 + John 19: 25- 34

<b>Gold Friday (Commemoration of the 1st Miracle performed by the Apostles)</b>	Acts 3: 1- 10
<b>Feast of the Holy Trinity (Sunday of Apostles)</b>	Acts 4: 5- 22 + 1Corinthians 5: 6- 8 + Luke 7: 36- 50
<b>The Feast of Corpus Christi (Holy Eucharist)</b>	Malachi 1: 6- 11 + 1Corinthians 10: 15- 17 + 11: 23- 30 + John 6: 51- 64
<b>Feast of the Transfiguration</b>	Acts 1: 21- 26 + Hebrews 12: 18- 25 + Matthew 17: 1- 8
<b>Feast of the Assumption</b>	Acts 1: 12- 14 + Romans 16: 1- 6, 16 + Matthew 12: 46- 50
<b>Feast of the Holy Cross</b>	Isaiah 52: 13- 53: 12 + Acts 2: 14- 36 + 1Corinthians 1: 18- 31 + Luke 24: 13- 35
<b>Feast of Christ the King</b>	1Kings 6: 11- 19 + Hebrews 9: 24- 28 + Matthew 22: 41- 23: 5
<b>Feast of Annunciation</b>	Numbers 22: 20- 25 + Colossians 4: 2- 5 + Luke 1: 26- 37
<b>Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the blessed Virgin Mary</b>	Wisdom 24: 1- 14+ Hebrews 1: 1- 4 + Matthew 1: 18- 25
<b>Feast of Saint Joseph</b>	Genesis 24: 50- 60 + Ephesians 5: 5- 17 Matthew 1: 18- 25
<b>The Glorious Nativity Feast (Christmas)</b>	Isaiah 7: 10- 16 + 9: 1- 3 + 9: 6- 7 + Micha 4: 1- 3 + 5: 2- 5 + 5: 8- 9 + Galatians 3: 15- 4: 6 + Luke 2: 1- 20
<b>Feast of Congratulating the Virgin Mary</b>	Luke 1: 46- 55
<b>Feast of the Holy Family</b>	Genesis 21: 1- 8 + Galatians 4: 18- 22 + 5: 1 + Matthew 2: 1- 12



## **Memorial of the Rituals**

### **1. Memorial of St. John the Baptist (Biblical Personality, Martyr)**

I am the prophet who has been sent by God to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah. My parents, Elizabeth and Zacharias, were both in their old age when the Angel of the Lord appeared to my father Zacharias and announced that he will be blessed with a son. I was one of Jesus' relatives and I was older than him by a few months. I lived in the Jewish wilderness, until the Lord called me to become a prophet. Slowly I began to gather audiences to listen to my homily. I would speak up saying, 'Turn away from your sins and be baptized, so that God will forgive you.' Although, the Lord Jesus had no sin he still asked me to baptize him in the river Jordan, as a sign of his obedience to God and his unity with the sinners.

And after that, King Herod locked me up because of my daring nature in criticizing him. As I was in jail, I sent some of my disciples to ask Jesus if he is the Messiah. The Lord Jesus said, 'Go and tell John that I heal the sick, and I spread the good news to the poor in spirit.' He told the people about me, 'John is more than just a prophet; he is greater than any man born by women.' Not long after, Herod fell into a trap by his wife, resulting in Herod ordering that my head will be cut off.

### **2. Memorial of the two prophets St. Peter and St. Paul (Biblical Personality, Martyr)**

Peter: I am the courageous one of all the prophets and one of the establishers of the church in the first century. I was like my father and my brother Andrew, a fisherman. My name was Simon, so when the messiah called upon me to become one of his disciples he named me Peter, meaning 'the rock'. Later, the messiah asked his disciples who acknowledges him. I said to him, 'You are the Messiah, Son of the living God.' So, the messiah replied, 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my church.' I was one of the closest disciples to Jesus. I feared and denied knowing him three times. However, I deeply regret my actions. For that reason, the Lord appeared to me alone after his resurrection and at the sea of Galilee. He asked of me to be the shepherd of his flock.

On the 50<sup>th</sup> day, I proclaimed the good news of the Lord to the people of Jerusalem with all confidence. On that day, around 3,000 people believed in Jesus the Messiah. At first, I limited my preaching to just being about the Jews. However, in Jaffa, the Lord showed me a vision, that I must preach about the Messiah to others and not just the Jews. Later, King Herod arrested me and put me in jail. The believers in Christ prayed for me so the Lord released me from jail. I then wrote two letters in the New Testament.

They killed me in Rome through persecution which was commenced by the Emperor Nero, and I was executed like my Master but was crucified upside down with my head to the ground.

Paul: I am the prophet and the messenger whose letters make up a big portion of the New Testament. I was a Jewish-Roman by citizenship. I was born in Tarsus and Gamaliel, a teacher of the Jewish religion, taught me in Jerusalem. I was a Pharisee who resisted the Christians, and I was a witness to the stoning of Stephan.

I was on my way to Damascus, to arrest the Christians there. I witnessed a bright light and heard the Lord Jesus say to me, “Why are you persecuting me?”. I was blinded by the light. They took me to Damascus. God then sent Ananias to check on me and restore my vision. I was then immediately baptized and began to preach in Jesus’ name in Damascus. When the Jews planned to kill me, I proceeded to travel to Jerusalem. There, all the Christians were afraid of me, except Barnabas, who introduced me to the apostles. After a second plan to kill me, I returned to Tarsus.

A few years later, Barnabas brought me to help the Church in Antioch, in Syria. We were sent together to Cyprus, then to Asia Minor (Turkey), carrying the message of God to many nations. After our visit to Cyprus, I was identified by the name “Paul” rather than my Hebrew name “Saul”.

I began travelling to preach and wrote letters to Churches. I suffered a lot for the sake of delivering the good news of the Messiah to the world. During the aftermath of my second arrest, I was executed in Rome as an order from Nero, in the year 67AD. I introduced the Bible to Europe and left behind a legacy for the Church for ages to come; the letters of which I wrote. I managed to maintain my faith, until my martyrdom.

The Church celebrates us together because we became martyrs in the same place – in Rome. We loved the Messiah until our martyrdom. For that reason, one of us was the rock in which Jesus built his church upon and the other was the engineer which supervised it being built.

### **3. St. Antonio the Great, Father of the Monks (Monk)**

I was of Egyptian origin, and from an important group who possessed slaves. I was born in 250 and my parents were believers. I was a calm and humble thinker, very shy and modest. I did not go to school and did not learn to read and write, as I could not tolerate the rowdiness of the children and their misbehavior. My greatest wish was to be meek, obey my parents and accompany them at home; I even make sure I am in Church before them. I am never late like other boys, busy playing games. I was never

ignorant to the time of prayers; not in my young age or as an adult. Since then, I've grown and I now understand how to differentiate between good and evil and I do not go to church as a part of my routine, but rather fully conscious and knowing what is right or wrong.

My parents departed from this world and I was left alone with my younger sister. I was 18 or 20 years old at the time. I had to take responsibility of the household and care for my sister. As well as this, I was at Church every day. I began to think of the life of the blessed apostles and how they left behind everything and followed Jesus. As I was thinking of these things, a reading in Church was read and within the reading, Jesus said to the rich young man, 'If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me.' (Matthew 19:16-22). I thought I did not come across this reading by coincidence. I went home and worked on organizing my possessions at home and the large sum of money which I inherited from my father. The following Sunday, I listened to the word from the Bible and it said, 'Do not worry about tomorrow.' I accepted the order with all courage. When I exited the Church, I gave out all I had left from my money. I handed my sisters to the convent (to the nuns) which was present in that time and I was free, which meant I could enjoy living a life of prayer and isolation. I lived in a small and unique home which is located next to the town because at that time, Egypt did not have a place for monks to live in. Whoever wanted to live a life in isolation, took a home far from the urban areas.

I met an elderly man who helped me live a monk's life. My life was made up of work and prayer. The devil did not succeed in making me fall into a trap by convincing me to have physical desires; I succeeded in resisting all temptation. Years later, another idea came to me: I exited from the village to go and live in the village cemetery, which is far from the village itself. I ordered one of the people I knew to come every now and then to bring me a piece of bread. In the following phase, I lived in the wilderness. I went up a mountain and would only accept visitors twice a year.

I lived this lifestyle for almost 20 years. When the time came, many people around the world and the monks in Egypt knew of me. They appointed a great crowd of people to come to me so that they can learn from me the true way of life of a Christian and also so that I can bless them and heal some of their sick.

A short time later, persecution and anxiety took over the Church, during the time of King Maximilian the unrighteous (286-305). They began to investigate the martyrs of which migrated to the city of Alexandria. I was told this news. Immediately, I left my home, the monastery and left quickly. I went to them so that I can help them.

I was used to checking up on the brothers who were at the mountain. I would go out daily to fulfil this visit and I knew that my exit from this world was imminent. After I talked to the brothers, I said to them, 'This job (visit) which I have taken up for you

now is the end of all the jobs (visits).’ I continually ask myself; will we see one another in this world again? I then left this world after a long journey of illness, with my brothers by my side.

#### **4. Memorial of the Four Evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)**

Matthew: Also named Levite, was a tax collector (a job in the Roman Empire) and also collected tithes. Very few from the crowd, I imply the publicans, were hated by a majority of the people because its people collected more than a tenth for their personal revenue. This was not fair. I was sitting at the collection table, until the Lord Jesus called me saying, ‘Follow me.’ I stood up, followed him and became one of the 12 apostles.

Mark: I was not one of the 12 apostles. I was living in Jerusalem and after the resurrection of Jesus, the first Christians would meet in my mother Mary’s house. In Paul’s first trip in which he preached around the nations, I accompanied him, along with Barnabas (Mark’s kinsman). He called me “Paul”, an honest assistant and a loyal friend. My Gospel is considered the oldest and shortest gospel.

Luke: I was a pagan doctor. I was not one of the 12 apostles either. I wrote the gospel that is named after me and the Acts of the Apostles (the act which follows the gospels and explains how the apostles spread the good news to the world). I direct both of my books to one person whose name is Theophilus (meaning “God’s friend”) who knew very little about Christianity. I wanted him to continue to know and believe in Jesus. I was a friend of the Apostle Paul and accompanied him in some of his trips.

John: I am one of the 12 apostles. Before Jesus invited me, I was a fisherman with my brother Jacob and my father Zebedee. I was one of the closest to Jesus, so I witnessed the miracle of Jairus’ daughter and the incident of the Transfiguration and at the olive grove before the passion of Jesus. I am the apostle which Jesus loved, so I sat at Jesus’ side at the last supper. Jesus handed me his mother when he was on the cross; ‘This is your mother.’ Apart from the gospel, I wrote 3 letters and the book of Revelation (which is the last book in the New Testament; I wrote it when I was an old man).

#### **5. Memorial of St. Stephen, firstborn of the martyrs and patron saint of the deacons (a clerical figure, martyr)**

I am Hebrew and one of the Greek speakers. I was one of the first Christians to die for the sake of their faith. I am one of the seven deacons who were chosen by the apostles to organize support for the poor widows in the Church in Jerusalem. I had great faith in God instead of being interested in material matters. I preached the word and did miracles. I was arrested and brought before the High Jewish Council. After bold

defense, I was stoned to death. However, I asked God to forgive those who killed me. The time Paul was there, the Christians were still being persecuted; he was a witness to my death.

## **6. Memorial of the Eastern Teachers (Teacher)**

Our church mentions in its calendar, the Eastern teachers who enriched our church with the essence of education. We mention here, Ephrem (see point 30) and Narsay (see point 75).

## **7. Memorial of the Eastern Spiritualists: John Dalyathi, Joseph Bossnaya, Ibrahim al-Nathfari, Shimon Ditaybbutha (Monk, Teacher)**

John Dalyathi: I am a spiritual writer, also known by the name “John Saba”. I belong to a village, which falls at the furthest point in the North-West of Mosul, in Banuhadra (Dohuk). I learned about the Holy Bible in the village’s school. I then began to visit the monastery before becoming a monk. When the time came to evacuate in a silo, I went to the Mountain of Daliatha, which I was named after. In my old age, I went back to the monastery and a number of students followed me. We began to renovate an old monastery which was inhabited previously by Jacob the hermit. It was there that I died.

Joseph Bossnaya: I was born in an area which falls approximately 2km South-East of the monastery of Rabban Hormuzd in Alqosh. I became a monk at this monastery when I was in my thirties. After four years of commencing, I lived as a hermit in a monastery for 12 years. After spending 30 years at the Rabban Hormuzd monastery, I moved to Basyari monastery as an order by the monks and head of the monastery, Bishop Moses. My three brothers followed me and became monks. I spent the rest of my life in that monastery (age: 110 years) as a guide for the monks, for approximately 50 years.

Ibrahim al-Nathfari: I was born in the middle of the sixth century, in a village named Nathfra, located on the left bank of the great Zab before merging into the Tigris (currently the North-East of Iraq). My faithful parents were from the martyrs’ dynasty, who were killed by King Shapur in the hands of his brother Ardeshir. He mixed their blood with the river water which flows the house of Nethfra, which means the great Zab. An elderly woman from our family raised me. When I became a young man and understood the books, I went and lived in a cave which is two stages away from my village. I stayed in that cave for three years, until I then traveled to Egypt. On my way back, I visited Palestine. When I returned, I worked on guiding heretics, studying and reading. A long time after my death, my student Ayoub built a monastery near a place with many silos and transferred my remains there. I wrote a book about life in the monastery, another against heretics and one explaining the Holy Bible.

Shimon Ditaybbutha: I am also called by the name “Luke”. I lived in the time of Hananisho the First. I became a monk in the Shabur or Raban Esho monastery. I have a book about spiritual work and another about medicine, as I studied medicine – and a book about (...). This book must be the one that the son of Al-Abri attributes to me in monastic laws and because of it, I deserved the title of “Tibbutha”, which means ‘his grace’. Others say that I wrote a workbook of grace which gave me this title.

## **8. Memorial of the Faithful Dead (Special)**

As it is written in the Holy Bible about the dead, they await and lie in the hope of the resurrection. They are now asleep and on the day of the resurrection, they will be woken up (the Christian faith p. 229).

This memorial of the dead was established by Pope Bonifacius, as well as establishing the memorial of all saints. The faithful who are awaiting the resurrection by the Lord must face the punishment of their sins which cannot be done here on earth but must be done in purgatory, in fire like the fire of hell. This is not permanent but temporary. For that reason, the Eastern and Western Churches offer prayers and Eucharist for the sake of rest for the souls in purgatory. Therefore, it is our duty that we undertake the role of forgiveness and also knowing what is right; raise our prayers and offer the masses or listen to them and do good deeds for the sake of the dead because they are our brothers and sisters in Christ, especially those of whom are relatives or those who have done good deeds for us. From the depths of their purgatory, they cry out to us, “You are my friends! Take pity on me! The hand of God has struck me down.” (Job 19:21) and “Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them!” (Matthew 5:7). Their voices shall enter our ears and the depths of our hearts so that we may immediately act to save them. This is according to the Synaxarium, in accordance with the rite of the Roman Antiochian Church.

## **9. Memorial of the 40 Martyrs (Martyr)**

Two bishops: Mar Abda and Mar Abdishua

Priests: Abdullah, Shamoan, Ibrahim, Aaba, Ehbil, Anee, Abdishua, Abdullah, Yohanan, Abdishua, Mari, Birhathbishba, Raziqaya, Abdullah, Abdishua

Deacons: Alihab, Abdishua, Anee, Marihib, Mari, Abda, Birhathbishba, Shamoo, Mari

Monks: Fafa, Awaleesh, Abdishua, Fqeeda, Shmuel, Abdishua

Nuns: Maryam, Tita, Emma, Adrani, Mama, Maryam, Marih

Our story begins with Abdishua, the bishop of Beth Kishkir (currently known as Wasit), who was an honest and upright man. He had a nephew, whom he taught from a young age about having faith and later ordained him as a deacon. However, this boy fell into sin so the bishop prohibited him from holy service. Although he was a sinner, he wanted to continue with his service. He went to the Ahwaz region and made a complaint to the King about his uncle (the bishop) and a priest who was with him named Abdullah, implying that they were spying. He claimed that they welcome the Romans so that they can be told all the secrets of the kingdom. When the King heard of this, he ordered his brother Ardisheer, the king of Hadiab (currently known as Erbil), to bring them and torture them until they admit to what they had done. The king questioned the bishop and the priest, however they both defended themselves against all the lies, without fear of being tortured or death. The King forced them to lay prostrate to the sun, however they refused to give up their faith in the Messiah, regardless of all the pain they were experiencing. He threw them in jail. After almost dying, a woman whose home was adjacent to the jail, helped them by secretly sneaking in and giving them water and bread. The bishop and the priest considered this help from God. The woman continued to help them their stay in jail. The guards were wondering how these two men continued to survive after such a long time.

The King invited the deacon who was a traitor and asked him if there were any more Christians in the town of Kishkir. He replied to him affirmatively and said that he was ready to bring them to the king. So, the deacon went to Kishkir to arrest them. The bishop of the town (Abda) had left to visit his parish with the priests and deacons, without knowing anything about the king's orders. He reached a village where nuns and monks resided. When he was asleep he had a vision, so he woke up the priests who were in his vision and told them about it: I saw a big, black, ugly snake and a group of 40 birds. The snake attacked them one by one and eradicated the entire group. The vision was repeated and he saw Mar Shamoon Barsabaai flying over his head and told him about his martyrdom.

In the morning, the wicked arrived and arrested the bishop Abda and the 28 men who were with him, as well as 7 women who were there. They took them to the town of Karikh Lidan, in Ahwaz and began questioning them. They defended their faith with all their might.

There were two brothers, of whom were Barhathbishba, and Shmuel. They voluntarily followed those who were arrested from their own country in order to assist with their needs. They were not arrested because they went to town to get food for the people they were helping. They did not know that these people were being taken to jail at 3pm to be sentenced to death. When they were told the news, they rushed to the body of the bishop Abda and embraced him. They then took blood from the martyrs and wiped it all over themselves. The two brothers told those who killed the bishop and the martyrs

to kill them as well, however they refused to kill them at first because their name was not initially a part of the list. They continued to say that they are Christians and they swore at the king's false gods. So, he issued the order to kill them on 15<sup>th</sup> May.

The next day, the king remembered the bishop Abdishua and the priest Abdulla. He asked if they were still alive and ordered to kill them if they still believed in their opinion. So, they took them out of jail and saw that they were very lean, with no remaining image of humanity in them. They took them to the place where their friends were martyred. After questioning them and listening to their answers which were held strong in the Messiah, they ordered to kill them. In the town, there was exposure to the Romans, who stole the bodies of the martyrs and buried it with respect in hidden places. They dug up the ground which had been scattered with their blood and kept the soil for healing (treasuring it).

As for the 7 women, the king had ordered to send them to the town of Bethlafat to kill them and scare the people in town. The following Friday after the martyrs were killed, the judge took them to the Western side of town and questioned them before they were martyred. The same night, their bodies were stolen and buried by the faithful people in the town.

### **10. The commemoration of Saint Joseph's intercession (Biblical figure, Saint)**

I am the fiancé of the Virgin Mary and am guardian of Jesus. Although I was not the biological father of Christ, I am legally his father by law. Before Jesus was born, an angel told me that the child of Mary was the son of God. I took Mary and the baby to Egypt after a dream warned me that King Herod was determined to kill Jesus. After Herod's death, I returned to my family to Palestine and stayed in Nazareth, where I worked as a carpenter. When Jesus was 12 years old, Mary and I accompanied him to the temple to celebrate Easter.

### **11. The commemoration of the monk Boya (Shaqlawā) (Monk)**

I am from the area of Aqrah (currently north of Iraq). I lived in various caves in the vicinity of Shaqlawa in the province of Shahrazur. I have a number of comrades: Gerges, Brons, Jacob and others. They were staying in the caves near to me. I also had a sister, whose name was unknown, perhaps a nun whose grave is in the village groves close to a watering hole.



## **12. The commemoration of Mar Bina Qadisha (Qesanjaq and Armouta) (Martyr)**

I was a victim of Ardashir-son of Shapur (who provoked the forty-year persecution). I was one of the many men and women vowed to the Lord, and they called us “sons and daughters of the Covenant”. I am from Karkh Slukh (present-day Kirkuk). I was stoned by honourable women whom the king had forced them to do so, and I was martyred near Kirkuk.

## **13. The commemoration of Mar Korkis (Saint George) the Martyr (Martyr)**

I am one of the Palestinian East Saints whose honor has spread in many parts of the world. I used to ride a horse and lead the Roman Imperial Guard Corps. I endured many types of torments with rare courage, in defense of my Christian faith.

I was born in the year 280 A.D. in the Palestinian town of Lod, north of Jerusalem, from Christian parents who were well respected, rich and privileged. I was the only son for them who was raised in a high Christian upbringing. The king loved my father, so he summoned him to accompany him on his travels. My father left the family, leaving my upbringing to my mother, who turned all her attention to me.

But as soon as the ruler knew that my father was a Christian, he ordered to behead my father, who died as a martyr of his faith, leaving me an orphan, as my mother was at a young age.

When I was 17 years old I felt a desire to be a soldier, and my bravery and my equestrian training qualified me to do so. I have fought many battles in Palestine and Egypt and triumphed in them. I was promoted to the rank of commander, and I became commander of a division of 1,000 soldiers. The soldiers loved me and showed me respect and appreciation.

I was deprived of sympathy from my mother, who passed away when I was 20 years old. I remained alone, fulfilling my religious and military duty. I felt dissatisfaction inside me by the condition of some Christians who were satisfied with the chiefs and priests of idols and did not adhere to their faith. One day I was determined to tear up the ads that the king had hung in public squares, in which Christians were commanded to offer sacrifices and incense to the gods. My colleagues tried to stop me from this act, but I insisted on it. The soldiers quickly arrested me and took me to the city ruler to receive punishment.

I appeared before the ruler without fear and announced my readiness to repeat what I did if I had the opportunity again. It was a habit of rulers in such circumstances to resort to torture to deter criminals and compel them to take their days with what they impose on them. The guards led me to a dark prison, laid me on the ground, bound my hands,

my legs, and threw a huge stone on my chest, leaving me like this until the second day. I told them the next day: "You will get bored of torturing me before I lose hope." They practiced against me all kinds of torture and I endured all the pain. A vision appeared to me: A man accompanied by a strong light in my dark room, and wounds in his hands, who embraced me and encouraged me whispering in my ear: "Do not be afraid, Korkis (George), because I am with you", then he touched my wounds, and with his touch they were healed.

The guards felt the light emanating from the prison, and they heard me rise up against my bed as they rushed in panic and told the ruler what happened. The ruler did not believe it until after he summoned me and verified himself of the recovery of my wounds.

The ruler was confused and thought that what happened was the magic of the devil, and tried to kill me by calling a sorcerer who put poison in wine, but I drew the sign of the cross on it and drank it. They wanted to try and see if I can resurrect the dead, so I prayed, the dead rose like Lazarus in the Bible.

When people saw this, many believed in Christ and when the magical sorcerer saw this, he came at my feet and spontaneously begged and repented, declared his faith in Christ, so the ruler ordered to cut off his head. The ruler tortured me, but our Lord used to heal me every time. Finally, the ruler killed me on April 23, 313 AD.

#### **14. The commemoration of Daniel the Doctor (Monk)**

My name was Mahrastos (who later became Daniel). I am of Egyptian origin and from a pagan family. My parents wanted to educate me according to their pagan religion, so they put me in a pagan school. But I used to leave my school and go undercover to the school of Christians, where I learn the prayers, read the Psalms, and read the Holy Books.

After a while, my colleagues noticed my absence from school, so they informed my parents about the matter and told them that your son became a Christian. When my parents heard it, they beat me severely and warned me about the Christians. But I did not obey the orders of my parents and kept going to the Christians.

I would wake up at night and spend the night praying, and one day I saw a vision of Jesus appearing to me with great glory, and I saw the crowds of Christians with angels while the Gentiles were tormented by demons. I heard a voice from heaven calling me, and the Lord said to me that I will no longer be called Mahrastos but Daniel, which means, the judgment of God, because he chose me to worship him.

After a few days, I went to the priest who was teaching me the psalms and told him what I saw. The priest gave me the sacrament of baptism and called me Daniel. Despite

my father's attempts to bring me back to the religion of my family, I remained determined to my faith. When I was fifteen years of age, my parents forced me to marry so that they might take me back from Christianity in this way.

I went to the priest who asked me: "What do you want?" I replied, "I want to become a monk. What is the use of this world in order to love him? Then how did I fulfill the promise of Christ who said: Whoever does not leave his father and mother and carries my cross and follows me does not deserve to be my disciple? How can a person receive the Lord's promises, keep his commandments, and be the abode of his love, unless he leaves the world and follows Jesus? If a person does not do this, what benefit will he get?".

The priest advised me to go to another place to live my calling and encouraged me to go to the monastery where father Fakhomis lived. I lived there a holy monastic life.

There in the monastery, visions began regularly. As I got to know Eugene, the one who oversaw the other monks, we quickly became friends. From there, Eugene joined a group of monks, consisting of 70 or 72 men, as I was one of them. We all went east to Mesopotamia, to eliminate the delusion of paganism and spread the Christian faith among the people. As a result of a miracle that Eugene performed for the sons of King Shapur Al-Farsi (Persia), the king allowed us to go to all the lands under the kingdom and build monasteries and places of worship.

I stayed in the mountains, accompanied by many miracles, and the place was at that time a wasteland inhabited by no one. By means of miracles, I guided many people to Christianity, including the prince of the region and his soldiers, as he was baptized. As a result of this, I asked the prince to allow me to build a church, so I built it in ten months. Soon after, I finished my mission, I passed away from this world.

### **15. The commemoration of Master (Rabban) Hermis monk (7th century AD) (Monk)**

I am one of the most well-known founders, given the length and popularity of the monastery that I built in northern Iraq, close to the village of Alqosh. (Of course, the abbot of this monastery, Solaka, became in the year 1552 the first Chaldean Catholic patriarch.) I lived during the reign of Patriarch Ishoayab (628-647) towards the beginning of the Arab occupation.

Native Persian, born in Khuzestan in the northern Arabian Gulf (Persian Gulf). A visit took me to the outskirts of Mosul to meet other monks. From there I accompanied three monks to Al-Morj region (northeast of Iraq, near the border with Turkey), where I became a monk.

After seven years in the monastery, I was abandoned in a cell, where I lived for 32 years. For an undisclosed reason, I left the monastery with a group of brothers, and I went with them to the Resha Monastery (the summit or head), which is currently located in an inverted mountain (Jabal maqloob).

The brothers were forced to disperse, after a partial drought hit the water of the monastery. At that time, I set up a cave located in an area near Alqosh, and there I invited a few students, and after performing miracles, including a marvel that brought goodness to the Muslim ruler, in Mosul, and I built a monastery that still bears my name until today.

I died in the monastery itself after 25 years, and I was 90 years old, while the number of students of the monastery reached 100. My memory commemorates the miracle of a blind discharge, 200 years after my death.

#### **16. The commemoration of St. Joseph, patron of the workers (International Labor Day) (see point 10) (Biblical figure, Saint)**

#### **17. The commemoration of Abba Al-Jathleq (The Patriarch) (Patriarch, teacher)**

I was the one whom I sent divine providence to fix what was corrupted in the Church presidency system in the East. I was born in the village of "Haala", south of the Hamrin Mountains, on the eastern shore of the Tigris River between the Azaim and Diyala rivers.

My parents were pagans, and raised me in their pagan beliefs. I obtained a large portion of Persian sciences and literature, and I navigated in the science of the Magi until I resided as head in the "state" of my town. I was then a writer for the royal money collector in the Beth Aramaye district located between the Tigris and the Euphrates, south of present-day Baghdad and its parallel area east of the Tigris to the mountains.

My conversion is due to an unlikely accident that occurred to me with a student (or teacher) from Nusaybin School called Youssef (also known as Musa/ Moses). The summary of the story is that Musa wanted to cross the Tigris River by the same boat that carried me to the city of Haala. However, I pushed him and tried to cross without him 3 times. I did not succeed, as the storm hit me every time. Finally, I took Musa with me and was able to cross.

When I spoke to Musa, he charmed me with his kindness and humility. This meeting was a guiding start. As soon as I returned to Saliq with my master, I wanted to see the Christian religion that impressed me, and I hesitatingly went to the Church of the Al-Mada'in (The Cities) called "The Church of Plaster". When my superiors felt my

inclination towards Christianity they appealed to me in hostility, so I left Ctesiphon and returned to my town.

I started living the Christian religion until I was a teacher. Then I wanted to live in solitude to devote myself to pray and evacuation, so I went to the stage of Abdeen, but the Nusaybin School stopped me and I studied theology at the hands of Professor "Maana". When "Maana" became bishop of Arzan, I accompanied him and began to teach the Christian religion there.

After a while, I returned to Nusaybin. On the first trip of this long journey, I met a person in "Edessa" called Thomas. I learned from him Greek, and we travelled together to Palestine, and from there to the Egyptian lands. From there I sailed the company of my faithful friend to Corrinthia and Athens, where I performed some marvels and then returned to Constantinople.

In the year 540, the year in which a long-running war broke out between the Persians and the Romans, the bishops chose me, and they made me Jathleq (Patriarch) with the consent of the King of the Persians. I repaired the chaos prevailing in the Church of the East.

I died in the prison, following my return to Saliq and my appearance in front of the Persian king. My body was buried in Saliq. The Eastern Church called me the Great Father of Abba, the Great Master, the Malfan and the Master of Malafanah, among other titles.

## **18. The commemoration of martyr Shmouni and her children (Biblical figure, martyr)**

The second book of Macabane (7: 1-14) tells my story, which took place around the middle of the second century before the birth of Christ. Palestine at that time was under the Seleucids, and they are the successors of Alexander the Great who came from the Greek countries and defeated many armies on his way to the Middle East.

Among the Seleucid leaders who ruled Syria and the surrounding countries there was a king named Antiochus Epiphanus (175-164 BC) who was famous for his hatred of the Jews and hostility to their religion, and he tried to push the Jews to worship idols, offer sacrifices to them and adopt pagan customs.

The king (Antiochus Epiphanus) ordered that my seven sons and I be arrested. So he forced us to eat forbidden pork, hits us with whips and other torture tools. One of my sons said to him: "All this will not help you. We die and we will not deviate from the law of our fathers."

The king became angry and commanded that he be tortured, but I encouraged him to die saying: "The Lord God sees us and has mercy on us, as Moses says in his hymn, in

which he condemns everyone who has forsaken the Lord and says: As for the Lord, the mercy of his servants." After that, they started torturing my sons one by one. On that day, I watched my seven children die in one day and I patiently patronized it because of the intensity of my hope for the Lord. I prayed for each of my children in the language of their parents.

Antiochus thought I was making fun of him, so he saw a redoubling of effort to persuade the younger son who was still alive. He swore to him and promised him a great fortune if he left the law of his fathers, and to appoint him to the highest positions. When he did not listen to him the king called me and asked if I would persuade my son to lead his rescue, and he insisted. I promised him to do so.

Then I bowed over my son, and I said to him scorning the tyrant king: "My son, have mercy on me, I have carried you in my womb for nine months, and I have breastfed you for three years, fed you and raised you until you reached this age. Look, my son, to heaven and earth and all that is in them, and I know that God created everything from nothing, and so does the human race. Do not be afraid of this blatant king, be brave like your brothers, and welcome death to meet you with them with God's mercy".

I did not finish my words until my son said to the executioners: "What are you waiting for? The king became very angry, and this boy could not insult him, so he tortured him more than his brothers. Thus he died pure, confident of all the confidence in the Lord.

### **19. The commemoration of Ibrahim Al-Kashkari, founder of the monastery's life (sixth century) (Monk)**

I am a monk. I lived in the middle of the sixth century A.D. I preached good news to Al-Hira (located south of what is now Kufa in south-central Iraq). I made my pilgrimage to the desert of Al-Asqet and the Sinai.

After that I returned and settled in the mountain of Isla overlooking at Nusaybin. There I attracted a lot of students because of my ascetic way of life (as I only fed herbs) and to my wonders (for example: expelling a swarm of locusts).

By this, my monastery, known as the Great Monastery and the Mother Monastic Organization, was established in the field of monastic reform. They called me "the Father of all the East's monks," and I lived eighty-five years. I died after I practiced various types of asceticism, prayers and miracles.

### **20. The commemoration of Mar Addai, the Apostle of the East (Saint)**

History tells my story: When it is about to end of the three years of Jesus' life on earth, and the good news has spread among the Jews and nations as well, the news of Jesus

reached the king "Abjar" King of Edessa, a city located in the Euphrates basin in Turkey and is now called "Urfa" ". The king was afflicted with the disease "Gout" and he was in severe pain, and when he heard of the miracles that Jesus was performing, he sent a delegation to him asking him to come to him to heal him. He offered him a small city to live in with him safely from the danger of the Jews intending to kill him.

The delegates found Jesus and he was sitting in the house of one of the chief priests of the Jews, and when the message was read out to him, Jesus answered: "because I want to complete the work of the One who sent me, after my resurrection and ascension to heaven, I will send one of my disciples to you to heal your illness and bless your life and those who are with you. Your city will be blessed and the enemy will not rule over it."

The king was very happy when the answer arrived, and he was happier with what he heard from the delegates about the extraordinary things they saw Jesus do. He wished with all his heart to see Jesus, so he sent skilled photographers to draw him, but they were unable to depict Jesus in his splendor, and when the Lord saw their inability he took a handkerchief and put it on his face. The image of his holy face was printed on it. The handkerchief was brought to Abjar, so he placed it in the Church of Edessa.

After the Lord's ascension to heaven, the Apostles spread to the whole world, as the Apostle Thomas sent me, I lead, to the city of Edessa, and I was one of the seventy-two disciples and I was accompanying Thomas. I came to Edessa and landed at a man named "Topana" and began to perform miracles, and when the king reached this news, he summoned me and asked me to do miracles. When I appeared before the king, the king bowed, and those present were amazed, because they did not know that Christ had revealed his glory in me. The king asked me to heal him, so I called him to faith first, so the king recovered from his illnesses.

When the king and his greats saw these miracles that I had done, they asked me to explain Jesus to them, so I came the next day and told them the story of Jesus. The king commanded that I be given gold and silver. I refused, I who left what was left to me, and just as the Lord recommended that the disciple of Christ will carry no bags or luggage, but to carry the cross and announce the good news throughout the world.

The whole city and all the surrounding countries joined the Christian faith, until the whole area between the two rivers (Mesopotamia) was almost joined to the faith because of the miracles I used to make. I built a church in Edessa and ordained priests and deacons in and around the city.

## **21. The commemoration of the Virgin of Fatima (Mary)**

In 1917, the pure virgin appeared in a town of Portugal called "Fatima" for three children, Lucia, Francois and Jacinta. She told them, "People must reform their

behaviour, draw forgiveness for their sins, and return to God with blunt repentance, because they have persisted in insulting the Lord with their reckless behavior and lack of faith.”

Then she asked them to spread the worship of her pure heart, and to initiate compensatory treatment on the first Saturday of every month in honor of her to atone for the insults attached to God and for the stability of peace throughout the world. As the First World War was still ongoing, and warned of wars and persecutions if people did not heed the warnings. She declared that the ultimate victory would ultimately be the ally of her pure heart.

Lucia was afflicted with a terminal illness that nearly claimed her life, but the Virgin became compassionate for her and returned to her health, so she entered the monastery to devote her life to the service of the Virgin, who devoted her to the heavenly vision. Throughout her life, she continued to urge believers to make up for sins and honor Mary's pure heart.

## **22. Our Lady guardian of plants (Mary)**

This memorial belongs to the people of the East, and on this name a monastery for monks was established in northern Iraq. This name came from the crucial relationship between man, God and the earth, because most of our ancestors cultivated the land, waiting with hope and anxiety, the signs of goodness.

Their eyes and hearts turned daily to the sky. Their fate is related to mild climate, calm winds and rain. If any disturbance occurs in the course of nature, such as freezing cold, heavy rain, or the attack of pests and insects, their lands will be blown up, their yields will be lost, and the disaster will come to their homes, and droughts, hunger, and death sometimes overwhelm them. This is what we in read the history of our country.

Our ancestors took refuge in the Virgin Mary, to preserve their crops from the wrath of nature and to bless their crops. Today, even if the modern machines and methods of irrigation in the country help people and reduce the burden of nature, but we must always raise our lair to heaven with the same faith of our forefathers so that the Virgin may bless our land, our crops, our trees, our water, and all our actions, since there is no value to work without the blessing of our compassionate mother.

## **23. Memorial of St. Mahadokht the martyr (319) (martyr)**

My brothers and I were two sons of a king. He was trying to ride a horse to a fracture while riding. A fracture in his thigh that would have died if he had not found healing by Mar Abda, who baptized all of us. Then the Spirit of the Lord carried us to a nearby cave (with a well) where we lived three times.



Following the absence of the three of us , our father felt and asked for help from king Shabur II (the one who cause 40 days of persecution) to find us .

The investigation which took more than six months, led to a good result. In the meantime, Shabur had ordered to bring me and take me as a wife for him. After that, many events had followed, and the number of miracles increased. However, Shabur, had run out of patience. He ordered to kill them in their place and burn their bodies.

#### **24. Memorial of Bishop Isaac the Nineveh (seventh century) (bishop, teacher)**

I was born at Beth Qatary, Qatar on the western coast of the Arabian Gulf. The first of the seventh century. From a very early age, I entered the monastery and devoted myself to studying and reading books.

The patriarch Korgees called me at the beginning of his patriarchy (i.e. the year 660) and instilled me as a bishop of Nineveh, around year 663. I remained in this diocese for five or six months and left because I couldn't take any more of the chaos. I've decided to live at Mount Beth Hozay (Ahwaz) till I reached an older age. I lost my sight due to reading so many holy books. I was buried at Shabur Monastery.

#### **25. Memorial St. Rita (Saint)**

I was born in Cassia, Italy to faithful Christian parents. The name "Rita" came from the Latin word "margarita", meaning pearl. There was no school in my village except for the simple and little things which are offered by church to poor families. Such things include Christian teachings either by listening or colouring the stories of the Bible and the lives of the saints.

At the age of fifteen my desire was to go to a convent but my parents were against it because they needed my support due to their old age. I prayed to God and he inspired me to walk according to my parents' command. As for my parents, afraid of changing my idea, they immediately decided to get me married and choose for me a groom who was a military man in a country dominated by turmoil and wars. At this time I was 18 years old. My groom was irritable, cursed and beaten violently and I could bear it all. After a while the Lord answered my supplications and my husband became a man who feared God. I had two sons from him, who inherited from their father the ferocity of temperament but I raised them to keep them walking in the fear of God. One day my husband was killed and it was said that he was killed by his enemies or as a result of a mistake. I forgave the murderers but my son insisted on revenge. I begged them not to seek revenge but they didn't care. I cried out to the Lord to take them to Him and not allow them to commit this crime. A few days passed and suddenly my sons became ill

and died. They received the holy sacraments before death and were unable to seek revenge.

At that time I found myself lonely and once again my desire returned to join the monastic order and enter the convent. Near Cassia city, there was a convent for the nuns of Saint Augustine, so I went to it. They rejected my request because the monastic law prohibits the entry of married or widowed women but I repeated my request three times all without interest. I went back to my home and recited myself in prayer and meditation. One night while I was praying, three saints appeared to me who were my intercessors: John the Baptist, Augustine and Saint Nicolas Tolentino and they asked me to follow them. They took me to the monastery and by the divine plan I saw the door open and mother superior stood there. Saint Augustine introduced me to her, who immediately accepted me.

I lived all the details of the monastic life. One day I was forced by the superior sister to water a long-dead tree which is located at the entrance to the monastery. Whatever the weather was I had to water it. One day I was surprised to find that the stem was filled with clusters of fragrant grapes. All the nuns were surprised and praised the Lord. That vine still remains today and is known after my name, "St. Rita Krama".

The Mother of Christ was the center of my constant Meditation and I kneel for the majority of the day in prayer to the crucified Jesus. I asked him once to share a little from his suffering, and a fork from Jesus' wreath miraculously split in my forehead. The wound never healed, which forced me to live in isolation from the sisters and the wound remained for 15 years.

When I reached the age of seventy-two, I was still suffering from four years of painless illness with which I could not swallow any food until the Eucharist became my only food. At age seventy-six Christ was seen to me accompanied by his mother, Maryam and promised to be with him after three days.

I died peacefully on May 22, 1457.

## **26. Memorial of St. Aphrahat sage (4<sup>th</sup> century) (bishop, Monk , teacher)**

They called me "the Persian wise man". I was very educated. I lived during the era of the Patriarch Fefa.

I wrote The Book of Advice in Syriac of twenty-two letters on the alphabet.

I was born in Persia with The Magian religion. Then I became a Christian because I had contact with Christians. I came to Mesopotamia and became a monk, then I became a bishop and I chose my name to be Bishop Jacob.

## **27. Memorial of The Virgin Mary (Queen of the Universe) (Virgin Mary)**

Every day thousands of pilgrims from different parts of the world visit Lourdes. Believers, tourists and atheists, people from all walks of life. When the train arrives, young volunteers hurry to give a helping hand to the sick to take them to their specified accommodation.

There, you see people praying everywhere; some are pondering in the passion of Christ, some are going to confession, some are drinking from the miraculous fountain with deep faith in its healing powers and some kneeling with their arms lifted in prayers to our tender Mother.

Young and old, different languages, races and colours with their eyes fixed on one spot; and that is the grotto where our Lady appeared to Bernadette.

Every evening the Eucharistic blessing is offered in the midst of cries from broken hearts of people in pain and sufferings. Cries of faith and trust; O' Mary, the curer of all sickness heal us. O' Mary Queen of Peace, give us peace. O' Mary comforter of the sad, console us.

When the night falls, people of faith circulate the plaza holding candles and torches praying the rosary and singing hymns of love and honor to our Lady. The sound of thousands of people rises to the heavens repeating "Ave Maria".

This is Lourdes the city of the Virgin Mary, the city of faith and prayer where thousands and thousands of healing miracles of the body and the soul have happened. Our Lady still grants the grace and blessings to those who seek her help.

## **28. Memorial of Afnimaran the Founder monk (7<sup>th</sup> century) (Monk)**

I was known as the Great I lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Following the advice of Anba Simon the founder of Al-Sin monastery located on the river Al-Zab.

I entered the monastery of Bayth Abbay near Akra, north of Iraq where I wore the Askeem (the monks' garments).

After years of abstinence in the monastery, I decided to live in solitude for several years. I was accused of being part of a cult and was punished with a symbolic burial in the donkey racing course. As a result, I left the monastery of Bayth Abbay to another monastery where I stayed for three years.

In a third or fourth monastery later, the envy against me forced me to leave again and I stayed in the same region in northern Iraq on mount Baheer, where a monk called Kossyshou' lived. There I built a big monastery for a number of brothers who joined me. The monastery is known by the name Al-Za'faran in Arabic (the Saffron monastery).

I died at the age of 100.

## **29. Memorial of Anaheed the Martyr (488) (Martyr)**

There was a chief in Belshaffar, a country of Persia, named Edwarhormizd. He was very knowledgeable in the Magi religion. He was a very honest and righteous man. He had one daughter, me, Anaheed, who he loved very much, for I was his only offspring.

One day I was brutally tempted by the evil spirit and Satan didn't allow me to rest day or night. My father's servants told him about the blessed Baythoon. So, my father ordered that I be taken to him.

The blessed Baythoon knelt and prayed for a while and when he finished, he laid his hands on me and the evil spirit left me immediately. This is how I was healed and was able to stand on my feet again.

After staying with my father for two years, I got leprosy, an incurable disease at that time. This saddened my father and he sent me again to the blessed Baythoon to cure me. I stayed there for three months and I was cured.

The blessed Baythoon invited me to Christianity but it wasn't until I had a vision calling me to the same thing. I decided to believe in Christ despite all the threats I received. I was called to court but fellow believers provided shelter to hide me until my father was martyred.

I built a small hut beside my father's tomb which was close to the monastic cell of the blessed Baythoon. I lived there a holy life in peace.

After a short time, it was known to the people that my father left me all he had. This in addition to the good reputation and well education I had made people close to the 'Wali' (the governor) think of winning my heart and make me denounce my faith. When I refused, the Wali ordered one of his officers to take 80 soldiers with him and to find and arrest me along with three hundred other people from the villages. The officer and soldiers were to guard all routes into the villages and were threatened by death if they couldn't arrest me.

Eventually, they found me in my hut after investigations, I was kneeling and praying to God in thanksgiving for His grace to be a Christian and for enabling me to denounce all idols.

The soldiers arrested me and tortured me.

### **30. Memorial of Mar Ephrem – Doctor of the Catholic Church (Teacher)**

I was born in Nusaybin, in 306 during the early reign of Constantin The Great, the Emperor of the Byzantine Empire. My father was a Pagan but my mother was a Christian from Amed (Diyar Bakr – in Turkey). Since I was a child, Christianity attracted me and this caused many conflicts with my father but eventually, he himself was converted to Christianity towards the end of his life.

I was gifted with wisdom and knowledge and I used these gifts to study the Scriptures and the Teachings of the Church.

Jacob, the Bishop of Nusaybin started a school for new priests and I grew up under his leadership. I spent most of my time in reading and learning. The school was taking students every year. I wasn't interested in moving, and stayed focused on prayer, learning and doing my duties. I continued serving the church after the Bishop's death. Then I became a deacon and the headmaster of the school for nearly 40 years.

Due to political reasons, Nusaybin became under the influence of the Persian Empire. The Persian Emperor, Shabour the Second prosecuted Christians which caused them to flee Nusaybin and settle in Orfa (in Turkey). There I started a new school.

I lived in poverty and lived according to the Christian virtues. During the famine that struck the city I didn't hesitate to sell the most precious things I had, my manuscripts in order to help the poor.

I have written about 3 million verses of poetry in addition to spiritual liturgical songs. Only a small number of what I have written were preserved and were later translated in many languages.

I died on 373 at the age of 67 and was buried in Al-Ruha. On October 5th 1920, Pope Benedict XV proclaimed me a Doctor of the Church.

I was given many names among which; The Harp of the Holy Spirit, the Sun of the Syrians and the Profit of Syrians.

### **31. The Most Blessed Heart of Jesus (Special)**

The heart of Jesus, the symbol of divine and the human love of Jesus. It is exposed to the believers to venerate and to draw their attention to God's boundless and passionate love for mankind.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has its roots on The Holy Bible and in the writings of the Fathers of the Church and was made clear in the medieval centuries, particularly through what was revealed to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (Reference; Dictionary of Christian Faith, page 382)

The devotion to The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in our homeland goes back to the last century many groups mostly women were formed to venerate the Heart of Jesus in both the Chaldean and Syriac Churches in Mosul and the surrounding towns and villages. The fellowship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Mother of Sorrows Cathedral in Baghdad was well known for the important role it had played among women and mothers who have drawn from the Heart of Jesus the love and patience they reflected in their families.

Although the devotion to the Heart of Jesus is one of the more recent devotions it has become popular especially among women who belong to that fellowship. These women prepare for the feast by a retreat and special prayers and by receiving the Eucharist. During the celebration new members join in a ceremony where the faithful gather and the group go around the church holding banners singing hymns and praises.

Among these women some have decided to choose a consecrated life to serve God. This is how the Chaldean Nuns of “Banat Mariam” (The Daughters of Mary) were formed in the year 1922. In the northern parts of the country, in Araden, the order of “The Nuns of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus” was established in 1911 with the goal of sanctification of life, and living exemplary life caring for others.

She stayed in the diocese where she found the light of Jesus, but Jesus called her to leave to other fields after going through the difficult times of war. She moved to Mosul and then to Baghdad, where she spread the good news as the Heart of Jesus called her to do.

### **32. Shirin The Consecrated Martyr (559) (Martyr)**

I was born a pagan in the city of Karkh Bayth Sloukh (Kirkuk). At the age of eighteen and under the influence of local Christians I decided to refuse to worship with my family. When all my family efforts went in vain to bring me back to my mind they put me under curfew at home for a while. Then they put me in prison. I managed to get out twice. The first time was to attend the annual festival in the memory of the Martyrs of Yesdarjard persecution in 455, and the second time was when I was baptised by Bishop Yohana (John).

In Autumn of 855 Bishop John who was the Byzantine Delegate to the Persian King, was passing by Karkh. The Magi holding me in prison, did not want me released so they took me to the King’s Court and I was thrown in prison in Ctesiphon.

### **33. The Mother of Perpetual Help (Virgin Mary)**

This devotion originated from an Icon of Virgin Mary with the same name that was preserved in St Matthew’s Church in Rome on the Great Alter. Father Putrus Haddad

has written in his book “The Marian Month” one of the healing miracles that was performed by The Mother of Perpetual Help: in 1846, there was in Rome a cripple who has taken a place in one of the corners in front of the Church. From his spot he used to pray like a child saying: “I have waited for long, I have great hope in your kindness, I won’t leave this shrine before you restore my health and strength.

Our Lady granted the wish which came from the depth of the crippled man’s heart with trust and living faith. A miracle happened and his body was restored fully, and at once he stood up in joy, entered the church to thank The Mother of Perpetual Help who heard his prayers and cured him. The news of that miracle spread in the city and people came to see him. They were in awe and wonder. They entered the church singing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to the Virgin Mother, who never turn away those who ask for her intercession.

### **34. Saint Thomas the Apostle (Patron Saint of the Chaldean Patriarch) (Apostle, Saint)**

I am one of the Twelve Apostle of Christ. My name means “The Twin”. Jesus decided to go to Judea when he heard that Lazarus has died. I knew that the leaders of the Jews were planning to kill Him, but I expressed that I was ready to go and die with Him. On the Last Supper, when I asked Him a question He replied “I am the way and the truth and the life”.

I wasn’t with the disciples when Jesus appeared to the them on Resurrection Day. I said that I won’t believe that He is alive, unless I put my hands in His wounds.

The next Sunday, He appeared to me, took my hand and put it in His wounds, and a declared saying: “My Lord and my God”.

I went to preach in India and passed through Mesopotamia (Iraq).

### **35. Bishop Sahdona (7<sup>th</sup> century) (Bishop and Teacher)**

I was born in the village of Halmoon located in the far northern mountains of Bayth Nohadrah territory about 40 km north west Amadiah. I have written my bibliography.

My mother was a righteous woman who lived next to a woman called Shereen, who has dedicated herself to do good work of charity. My mother told me one day; “My son, I would rather die than seeing you -God forbid- a slave in love of this world like other people”. She didn’t stop at sowing the seeds of faith in my heart, but she enrolled me in Mar Eathalaha School before I was at 10 year. When I my studies, I joined Mar Yakoob, who at that time left the monastery of Ezilla Al Kabear and moved to Maraj territory, where he build a new monastery. Monks were coming to learn the virtues and

sciences. There, Yakoob accepted me and made me a Deacon and assistant to Kameshou', who was supervising the construction of the monastery. Then, I accompanied Kameshou' to Mount Himreen, where we lived in solitude for some time. Since then I dedicated my time to writing my book "Kitab Al Searah Al-Thatiyah.

Despite my teachings they were not in line with the teachings of the Eastern Church, I remained faithful to my beliefs. In 642, when Eshou'iyab II Al-Jidaly was Patriarch, a Church Council was established to hear my teachings and I was exiled to the western borders. Another Council was later formed to forbid publishing and reading my books. As a result, I moved to live in solitude in a cave close to Ruha. When Easou'iyab Al-Hidyabi was Patriarch he excommunicated me fully and banned my books and fought any supporting movement in the Eastern Church. A new bishop was appointed to take my position (Bishop Saba). For 20 years, the Church was trying to reach consensus with me, but didn't work, then I stayed in exile until I died 649.

### **36. Memorial of St Kuriakose and his mother Yulithi (Martyr)**

The blessed Yulithi (Julietta) and her saintly son trampled the devil and all his wicked means under their feet and received the crowns of martyrdom. Yulithi, a beautiful rich woman and a good Christian, a descendent of the Asian kings, was born in Iconium in Asia Minor where St. Paul and Barnabas founded the church. Yulithi spent most of her time in praying and helping the poor. Yulithi's only son Kuriakose (Cyrillus) grew up in a spiritual atmosphere whose first spoken words were "I am a Christian". When Yulithi's husband passed away all on a sudden, she had to raise her son by herself. Diocletian, 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. As the situation there was also 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. Because Yulithi confessed that she is 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 forsook Jesus Christ to which she answered that even a child, like her son, would not budge. Alexandros asked Kuriakose: "Would you agree to worship the idols". Young Kuriakose replied: "Your idols are made by stone and wood; My real God is Jesus Christ". When Yulithi heard this, she filled with courage shouted: "I am a Christian; I worship the real God Jesus Christ who made heaven and earth". Then Kuriakose also started shouting "I am a Christian; I am a Christian".

Soldiers continued beating Yulithi and the ruler tried to play with the boy to attract his attention. The tetrarch got mad at the child as he was not falling into his trap and threw him to the ground and ordered Yulithi and her son to be beheaded. Thus she was



beheaded while she was repeatedly saying: "I am a Christian; I am a Christian" on the 15th of July AD 304.

### **37. Memorial of the 72 disciple (Biblical Personality)**

Gospel of St Luke 10:1-20: After this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you; nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on that day for Sodom than for that town. "Woe to you, Chora'zin! Woe to you, Beth-sa'ida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Caper'na-um, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

### **38. Memorial of Fairooz the martyr (AD 421) (Martyr)**

I was born of a noble parentage in the city. My will started to weaken before the persecution of the sun worshipper. I went back and packed my order after being met with condemnation from my family. I was brought before the Zoroastrian high priest, Mahershahbour and king Bahram. I was sentenced to death and martyred on the on the 5th of September AD 421.

### **39. Nor sdil Sunday, (memorial of the 12 Apostles) (Biblical Personality)**

First Sunday of the Persian new-year that falls on the summer solstice, the 21st of June. Gospel of St Matthew 10:1-15: And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zeb'edee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And preach as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying, give without pay. Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the labourer deserves his food. And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it, and stay with him until you depart. As you enter the house, salute it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomor'rah than for that town.

### **40. Memorial if St James of Nisibis, spiritual father of St Ephraim (AD 338) (Bishop, scholar)**

I was born and raised at Nisibis towards the end of the third century, and received solid Christian formation including studying scriptures in the Church at the hands of priests and deacons as there were no schools in the city.

At an early age, I acquired a lot of knowledge; and devoted myself to the life of solitary and prayer. My food was what grew in nature on its own, such as fruits from wild trees and green plants that grew in the desert. My contemporary St. Eugene, a native of Egypt, came with his monks and retreated at the mountains near Nisibis at the beginning of the fourth century. He admired my asceticism and predicted me to be a bishop of Nisibis.

I became the second bishop of Nisibis upon the vacancy of that see, and was compelled by the demand of the church and the people to become their bishop. I was then forced to exchange my desert life with life in the city. Although I moved to the city, I changed neither my food, nor my asceticism, nor my simple clothing. In my new position, I worked especially to help the oppressed, those in need, orphans, widows and the poor.

I founded a small school in Nisibis to teach literacy, liturgical prayers and theology; soon the school grew fast and started receiving large number of students and taught varied branches of science.

After the death of the Byzantium king Constantine, his sons had taken over the kingdom. In AD 338 the Sassanid king Shapur II besieged Nisibis for 70 days and managed to destroy the fortresses. I refused to hand in the city to the invading king and urged the people to defend their city and rebuild its defensive walls.

As the Sassanid king was planning for a new attack, St. Jacob and St. Ephraim prayed with the people in the church each time, asking God to help them. The Persian army was afflicted by a swarm of gnats and flies summoned by the saint according to St Ephraim, Shapur II subsequently abandoned the siege. The bishops' intercession during the final siege saved the city. Soon after these events, I died in AD 338.

#### **41. Memorial of Eshoassyran, Martyr (died AD 620) (Martyr)**

My name was Mahanoosh and I was a pagan. I came from a village near mount Hidiab in modern day Arbil. I was converted at the hands of the village priest and my baptismal name was Eshoassyran. In the beginning, I practiced my faith secretly, thereafter, I openly announced my faith. Because of that, my brother filed a lawsuit against me to the adjacent village judge and I was arrested and imprisoned in the capital, Hidiab. I was about to receive a death sentence if not of the intervention of Yazdean, an Eastern Syriac and the state treasurer, who secured my release.

I left my village and family, wore beggar's cloths and frequently visited the mountain hermits, but my yearning for martyrdom grew, therefore returned to my village and started arguing with the pagans after studying scriptures. I built a new monastery and brought in 20 homeless children to the objection of some of the monks who did not want to support people of no future use. I also provided support to the poor and widows during the famine that struck the land. I served in the monastery for around 2 years. After that the Zoroastrians complained about me for the second time because of my increasing influence, taken from my monastery to a prison in Arbil. Before a judge I was cursed and ridiculed, and after an unsuccessful attempt to release me, I was crucified with my comrades.

#### **42. Memorial of Saint Anne Mother of Virgin Mary (Saint)**

I am the mother of the Virgin Mary, and sometimes they call me Anna. My husband's name is Joachim. I was old and childless. One day, while I was praying under a tree near our house in Galilee, an angel appeared to me and said: "Anne, God has heard your prayer and you will be pregnant and give birth to a child, and the whole world will talk about your offspring". I answered him: "If I gave birth to a boy or a girl then

I shall offer him/her as a gift to my God and my Lord, and he/she will serve Him in righteousness all the days of his/her life”, and, I became the mother of The Virgin.

With the birth of Mary, I started living a new life. I watched every move of hers with tenderness, knowing her fate. I felt like I was being sanctified every hour in her presence. Mary was three years old when Joachim, her father, took her to the Temple in Jerusalem, and she stayed there learning. After a long life, I passed away from this world with a good memoir.

### **43. Memorial of Mar Mari, Apostle of the East (Saint)**

Before his death, Mar Addai selected one of his disciples, that’s me “Mari”, and put his hand over me (anointed me), and sent me to the Eastern countries, to Babylon, to spread God’s Word and evangelize about the Good News.

I left Al-Raha evangelizing until I reached to a city called Nisibis (in Turkey near the borders with Syria towards Kamishly) where I announced The Truth, broke the idols, built churches and monasteries, and set up teachers and schools. From there I went to other places, and performed miracles wherever I went.

When I reached Arzen, its king was in bed suffering from the disease of the kings, i.e. gout. When he heard about the miracles and healings made through me, he sent after me ... and he said: “Tell me what is your religion? I thought you are a god”. I answered the king: “Forbid it, my lord king, I am not a god but a human being and slave to the Living God. My religion is Christianity. I believe in Christ, the Son of God, who descended from Heaven in the fullness of time and brought back the world from astray to knowing the Truth. I acknowledge and confess Him, my lord king, and in His Name I perform miracles, and bring back the astray/lost to having faith in Him”. Then, the king said to me: “Can your Master, according to your words, cure me from this disease that I’ve been suffering from for a long time?” I told him: “If you believe in Him, your request will be fulfilled”. The king knelt in front of me and asked me saying: “Sir, I believe, so help me”. I put my hands on the place of pain and said: “In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified by the Jews in Jerusalem, stand on your feet”, and the king was healed immediately, and got baptised along with his household. When the citizens of the city saw their king had been cured, they approached me and I healed their sickness and baptized them and built a church and ordained priests and deacons for them.

After spending many years in the East, building churches and organizing its affairs, I recommended that the pastor of Kokhi’s church would preside over the Bishops of the Eastern Churches, as this city is the eldest in accepting the spiritual teaching. After organizing the church’s affairs, I left this world and passed away to eternal life.

#### **44. Memorial of Martyr Papoy, Head of Bishops (484 AD) (Patriarch, Martyr)**

I grew up, a pagan, in Talla, north of Al-Mada'in. I converted to Christianity after meeting a monk from Mar Abda monastery, then I joined the monastic order and was elected patriarch in 457 AD. My patriarchy's period coincided with theological debates and arguments. I was sentenced to death (martyred) and got executed hanged from one finger which had the Patriarch's ring on it.

#### **45. Memorial of Martyr Bokht'isho (5<sup>th</sup> Century) (Martyr)**

I am a deacon, and I've helped Patriarch Thomarist (363-371 AD) in rebuilding the churches destroyed during the persecution ordered by Shapur II (He is the king of Persia who ordered "The Fortieth Persecution").

#### **46. Memorial of Monk Bar'etha (612 AD) (Monk)**

The meaning of my name is 'Son of the Church'. I was born in Al-Resafa on the Euphrates. I spent 23 years in The Great Abraham's Monastery on Mount Izla where I was considered "First born disciple". Then in 562 AD, I constructed a monastery in Al-Marj area near the Khazir River, east of Mount Maqloob, in the region of the current "Omar Mendan" Bridge. The number of monks in this monastery was four hundred. As for the biography of my life which I lived until 612 AD and was spread by people because of my predictions and miracles, it was written by one of my disciples, John the Persian.

#### **47. Memorial of Brikh'isho and His 17 Martyred Companions (315 AD) (Martyrs)**

As Roman Emperor Julianus, i.e. Julian, was launching a military campaign against Persia, he wanted to prove the sincerity of his soldiers, especially his Christian soldiers, who are from the Jilan region south of the Caspian Sea. The talks about worshipping the sun, the moon and fire, and the different kinds of tortures, i.e. peeling the skin and then killing, wouldn't tell us a new thing, rather what calls attention are the names of the martyrs. Out of the eighteen, there are names of nine men along with two women who were accompanying them. Hence, three soldiers have Syriac names: Brikh'isho, Abd'isho, and Eth'Alaha, and four soldiers have Persian names: Shapur, Hazarshapur, and Hormuz. And, there is a woman having a Greek name of Phoebe. On the other hand, the other two soldiers and a woman are with local names: Mafian, Halqad and Halandor, and the latter is with her two children. This conveys the reality of Christian diversity in Jilan at the time. They were martyred in 363 AD.

#### **48. Memorial of Martyr Mar Shemon (Simeon) Barsabbae Catholicos-Patriarch of the Church of the East (341+ AD) (Patriarch, Martyr)**

In 341 AD, in the 31st year of King Shapur II's reign on the Persian Empire in the East, and after the death of Constantine the Great king of the Roman Empire in the West, King Shapur II got the opportunity to attack the sons of the Kingdom of the West, in addition he was also harbouring evil for the Christians of his country and lurking the chances to bring them down because he falsely considered them loyal to the Kingdom of the West. At that time, I was patriarch of the Church of the East.

The king had the opportunity to harass all Christians living in his kingdom, as the West declared Christianity an official religion of the kingdom, imposing a double tribute on them to begin a time of persecution on Christians that would last forty years. King Shapur II wrote a letter to the rulers, saying: "As soon as you receive our order in this decree, immediately arrest Shemon, the head of the Christians, and let him collect for us double tribute from the Christians, who live in our land, who are blessed with our bounties, but who are loyal to Ceasar's religion, our enemy, and have no loyalty to our country".

When the letter reached me, I replied: "We respect and obey the command of the king of our kings, but this is not our business, as our authority over our Christians is not within money but on faith. We pray unceasingly for our country and seek mercy and wisdom for our king, but we are poor in our condition and do not fail to serve our master".

The unrest prevailed in Al-Mada'in area, after news of my rejection of the king's order to pay the tribute spread and the king's men arrested me and demolished my church. The monks hid away, and the believers disappeared, and the church was filled with pagans. Instead of the sound of prayer, the sound of anxiety and chaos banged when the roof of the church fell. Instead of incense smoke, the dust of the wrecked walls was rising to the sky. There was great panic in all the churches.

However, the bishops and priests did not fail in the face of all this, and it did not discourage them, but strengthened their commitment to the truth of faith, and I invited all monks, priests and deacons and spoke to them encouraging them. When I finished my prayers, I left with some priests to meet the King. In those days, some bishops, priests and deacons were arrested and taken handcuffed to the king's door.

Some complained about a man named Kuchtazad, the king's chief of trustees, and told Shapur II that he was a Christian. The King sent for him, and when he knew he was a Christian, he threatened him with death. The king's influential and faithful companions surrounded Kuchtazad and persuaded him to submit to the king's will for some time and then return to his beliefs, so he acted by their advice, fell into the traps and obeyed the king.

When I arrived in the Ahwaz area and heard about Kuchtazad, I was very upset. As for Kuchtazad, as soon as he heard I was coming to the city, he came to the door of the house where I was, but I strongly refused to meet him and closed the door on his face. Kuchtazad suffered a lot and thought of repentance, and since then he began to cry bitterly at the example of Shemon Al-Safa (Simeon/Peter) when he denied his teacher Jesus. He covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes in his house and decided to profess Christ again, whom he denied in front of Shapur II himself. When the King decided to kill Kushtazad, he made a final request to announce over the wall that Kuchtazad is condemned to death not because he revealed state secrets or any other sin, but only because he was a Christian, and because the king ordered him to prostrate to the sun and he did not want to disbelieve in his God.

When the king heard Kuchtazad's request, he was very pleased thinking that many would let go when they hear the news of his murder and abandon their Christianity. Kuchtazad knew that the news of his martyrdom for Christ would restore power to the disloyal and the weak. The king ordered the announcer to call the calling according to Kuchtazad's wishes. Kuchtazad received the crown of martyrdom on Thursday of Easter Week, April 13, 341 AD.

As for me, after I got out of the king's office, I came to my fellow bishops and to the priests and deacons who had been imprisoned before I came to the king's court and were so eager to see me, I greeted them and kissed them all and encouraged them to receive the crown of martyrdom without weakening their faith. As I was speaking, a man suddenly came in and said to us, "Rejoice in the Lord you blessed, the glorious Kuchtazad has received the crown of martyrdom", so I sat on the ground and prayed for us that we too would receive this crown.

I celebrated Easter in prison; a priest came and kneeled and I held the sacrifice on his back, and we spent the whole night praying and chanting psalms and hymns without being sleepy or our thoughts scattered. The next morning, on The Friday of The Passion (Good Friday), we were taken from prison to the King's Palace, and the King sent someone who asked us to prostrate to the sun, but we firmly refused. They took us to cut off our heads, and one of the priests, Hanania, was trembling from death, and I said to him, "O Hanania, don't be afraid, close your eyes for a moment and you'll see the light of Christ".

I received the crown of martyrdom on Good Friday in 341 AD, and my cloth was dyed red, and from that day the Patriarch used to wear red. The Church reminds us today on the Friday after the Friday of The Passion, the Friday of martyrs and believers, and recall with us all those who have sacrificed their blood for Christ to this day.

#### **49. Memorial of Shemon's Sister Martyr Tarbo (341 AD) (Martyr)**

I am a nun, the sister of Patriarch Mar Shemon Barsabbae. One day, the queen, who was inclined to the Jews, became ill, and they convinced her that Shemon's sisters had invoked magic upon her in revenge for their brother's death. The Queen ordered my and my sister's arrest, and the Head of Governors and two dignitaries were sent to our trial. They had corrupt ideas in mind, and they falsely accused me of having a magic spell on the queen. I began to defend myself and my faith, and the judges heard me silently and astonished by my wisdom, and each of them thought within himself and said that he would try to save me to take me as his woman.

Then they sent us to prison, and the next day the Head of Governors sent after me to offer to save me from death in exchange for becoming his wife. I was upset and strongly rejected. The dignitaries offered me a marriage, and my answer was a decisive refusal. At that point, the three agreed and falsely testified, saying that we were witches. However, the King offered us to prostrate to the sun in exchange for saving our lives, but we held on to our faith in Christ, at which point the King authorized the Magi to kill us. They ordered our bodies to be cut off and the Queen to walk over our parts to be cured.

#### **50. Memorial of Martyr Mar Qardagh (359 AD) (Martyr)**

I come from the descendants of the Assyrian kings, my parents were pagans. I was handsome, skilled in fighting and very committed to the pagan religion. I was 25 years old when I was known throughout the whole kingdom for my braveness. When this news reached the ears of King Shapur II, he called for me and honoured me after seeing my beauty and strength. One day he ordered me to play in the field in front of all of great influence in the Kingdom and to throw arrows at a small target placed above a high pole. They gave me a bow and six arrows from the king's arms. I threw the arrows and hit the target in the same position. The king praised me and so did his influencers.

When I took over the administration of the vast state of Assyria, Christians feared me very much, as they knew my great zealous for the Magi religion, and they began to pray for me throughout all churches, may God ease my religious intolerance.

When I arrived at my home in Arbil, the city of the Assyrians, I held a great feast for the gods. A few days later, I built a fortress and a palace, and completed the construction in two years, and constructed a temple for the fire, and appointed Magi to serve the temple and the fire. As I was building the fort, I saw one night in a dream that a knight with arms riding a horse stood over me. Then he hit me with his spear and said, "O Qardagh". I replied, "Here I am". He said to me, "Know for sure that you will die in front of this fortress as a martyr for Christ". I said to him, "Who are you to foretell this about me?". The blessed man said to me, "I am Sarkis, the servant of Christ, and I



am not foretelling as you think, but I have preceded and informed you of the future as revealed to me by Christ, my Lord". When I woke up, I was very scared, and told my dream only to my mother. My mother said to me, "Beware, my son, from causing trouble for Christians, I really know that they worship the true one God. It is their God who showed you the dream", but I didn't give this dream much importance.

The Lord sent a blessed man named Abdisho (Abd Yashou') who lived in a cave in a mountain, to evangelize to me and guide me to be a messenger of Christ. One day, while I was out playing ball in the field, Abdisho met me and walked in front of me, so I got angry and told those with me, "This man is evil". I then instructed two of my soldiers to hit St. Abdisho in the face and to keep him until I look into his matter. I went back to my house, then I rode my horse again and went to the field, and St. Abdisho driven by divine force, raised his hand and drew the sign of the cross, and said, "O Lord Almighty God, show him Your Glory and reveal to him Your Strength so that he knows that you are the true God and no one else, as you have shown me in the Revelation". When we got to the field, my buddies and I were following the ball riding our horses, and all of a sudden the ball was stuck to the ground, we couldn't move it. I ordered one of my soldiers to come down and take the ball with his hand and throw it far away. He took it from the ground and threw it hard, but fell to his feet. All of his soldiers tried to throw it, but to no avail.

So I called after the blessed man and asked him about many things, and when Abdisho revealed to me the falsity of Zoroastrianism, I got angry and put him in prison. But the next day, I had the same thing with the arrow, as it also fell at my feet every time I tried to fire it far away.

Next day, I ordered the saint's bond to be untied and brought before me. When they opened the door of his prison and entered, they found the chains lying separately, and the smell of luxurious incense reeking of the house. They searched for him, but they did not find him. They were stunned and frightened. They rushed to me and told me about it. When I heard it, I was overwhelmed by fear and sadness, and I started to slap my face and cry bitterly.

I immediately entered his room and draw a cross on the eastern wall, and I kneeled on the ground and prayed in front of it. Three days later, St. Abdisho appeared to me at night joyful and happy, and said, "My son Qardagh, if you want to see me, come to the grotto and there you will find me". When I woke up, I was very pleased and went to the mountain where Abdisho lived, as he set out for me in the vision. As I walked away from my palace for days, the devil met me, angry and sad, and he wanted to stop me from my decision, but he couldn't. I reached to Sheikh Abdisho and prayed together and spent five days there, asking him to baptize me.

After I was baptized, I changed and became friendly and meek, stopped from wars and rivalries, refrained from hunting and playing in the field and many other things, and

adhered to fasting, praying and reading scriptures. I have been constantly hearing cases, freeing and redressing the oppressed in all areas under my rule.

My parents were very sad when they heard that I had become a Christian, especially when they knew that I was distributing my property to Christians in need. I fought many wars against the wicked and the Lord supported me in every step, removing the temples for fire built by my ancestors and replacing them with sacred temples for the Lord. When King Shapur II heard what I was doing, he handed me over to death and I received the crown of martyrdom in 358 AD.

### **51. Memorial of Martyrs Takla and Her Friends (347 AD) (Monk, Martyr)**

In the Kingdom, there was a hypocrite man who was a priest by name only, he was betrayed to the king and said he had a big fortune, so the governor sent his soldiers, surrounded the man's house, arrested him, looted his house and took his money. Because of him, they also arrested the nuns in his village: I was Takla with Mary, Marta and Emma. They brought us all chained in front of the King. The priest first entered before the king, who promised him to return his money if he prostrates to the sun. Hungry for richness and fortune, the priest conformed to the king's will.

When the King saw that there was no reason to kill him, he thought of telling him to kill those nuns, so that he might be ashamed and not do so, so he would take his money and not give it back to him. The King then ordered for us, the nuns, to go before him, and ordered us to prostrate to the sun and get married to get rid of the torments, but we refused to give up our faith, and the king ordered us to be whipped with 100 lashes and sentenced to death in 347 AD. The king told the priest that if he killed the nuns, he would recover all that was taken from him, and he, driven by his greed, killed them.

### **52. Memorial of The Birth of Virgin Mary (see also 42. Memorial of St. Anne Mother of Virgin Mary) (Virgin Mary)**

I am the mother of Jesus. When I was engaged to Joseph, the carpenter, an angel announced to me the joyful news that I would be the mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Before Jesus was born, I visited my relative Elizabeth. There I uttered the wonderful praise known as the Virgin's Hymn. I then went with my fiancé Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for a census that took place at the time, and there Jesus was born. When the shepherds came to tell about seeing the multitude of praising angels, I kept all this in my heart. When Jesus was brought to the Temple forty days later, Simeon the Sheikh informed me about the future, and said, "You too, a sword will pierce your soul". When Jesus was less than two years old, Joseph and I fled to Egypt because King Herod intended to kill the boy. After Herod's death, we returned to Nazareth.

When Jesus was twelve years old, his father and I took him to the Temple at the Passover Feast. We were concerned that he remained there alone to talk to the religious teachers. I was with Christ when he made the first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. At his crucifixion, I was standing at the cross, and Jesus asked one of his disciples, John, to take care of me. I was with the disciples when they came together to pray after Jesus ascended to heaven.

### **53. Memorial of Catholicos Mar Shahdost (342 AD) and Catholicos Mar Barba'shmin (346 AD) (Patriarch, Martyr, Doctor of the Church)**

**Mar Shahdost (342 AD):** I am from Beth Garmai District (Kirkuk). I lived in the reign of Mar Shemon Barsabbae, Patriarch of Al-Mada'in. After the martyrdom of Mar Shemon, they ordained me as a patriarch as his successor. I lived in hiding like all the other heads of the church, given the vicious persecution of Christians. One day, I saw an amazing vision through which I knew that I would join the blessed Barsabbae in martyrdom.

In 342 AD, while King Shapur II was in Saliq, he was informed about me. He ordered my arrest. My name means 'a friend of the king' or 'a lover and devotee of the king'. I really loved the Heavenly King with all my self and all my strength. I was arrested along with several priests, deacons, monks and nuns from the cities and nearby villages and rural areas, up to a hundred and twenty-eight. We were all chained and put in a terrible prison and suffered for five months. In this period, they have inflicted various torments on us to push us to prostrate to the sun, and despite all the threats, we have not yielded to them, but have remained committed to our faith. The saints were prepared to be killed and die, because the order of death by sword was issued for all of us. I was handcuffed and beheaded by the sword, and I gave away my life for Christ.

**Mar Barba'shmin (346 AD):** My name is a Chaldean, meaning 'the man with four names', and I am the nephew of Mar Shemon Barsabbae. I was elected secretly as a bishop in Saliq in the house of one of the believers, and I urged the clergy to change their clothes and to wear white garments as the secularists, in order to evade the persecution that Shapur II had provoked against them. After serving in hiding for seven years, my news reached king Shapur II, as someone told on me in the kingdom, and the king arrested me with sixteen priests and believers and imprisoned us for 11 months.

King Shapur II tried to convince us to embrace the religion of the Magi, but we firmly rejected all offers. He tried to seduce us with gold, and I said to him, "Why are you trying to seduce me like a little boy, and you despise yourself as a little child as you are trying to win me over with dust that goes away and with a flower that scatters to give up my God, who in His Word created all these things, and with His Command all

go away and die. If you had given me not only this, but your entire kingdom, I would not have consented to giving up my true faith". I was killed along with sixteen of my friends, including priests. After I died, the patriarch's chair remained vacant for 20 years.

#### **54. Memorial of Monk Zay'a – Zayya (4<sup>th</sup> Century) (Monk)**

In 309 AD, in the Land of Palestine, there was a very rich man named Shemon and his wife's name is Helena. They were righteous before God and had two sons who had joined the army as soldiers fighting on horseback, i.e. cavalry, and were in the service of the King. A third son came to the family, and that's me, and they called me Zay'a, as my mother said that the earth was shaken on the day I was born. On the day of my baptism, my father held a big banquet. When I was three years old, my father handed me over to a teacher named John who taught me to read and write and trained me to read scriptures.

I soon realized, despite my young age, that the world was ephemeral and that its desires were false, and that only truth and righteousness remained. Every day I read the Gospel, and I once observed that the Lord says: "Whoever does not leave his father, mother, brothers and sisters cannot be my disciple". I had the idea of going to Jerusalem to be blessed by the Tomb of the Saviour and visit the holy places of Mount of Olives. I met a man, named Shamli, who was going to Jerusalem. I said to him, "I too go with you and be your student". I was six years old when I came out of my father's house and went with that hermit to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, priests and deacons were astonished by my extraordinary knowledge and the Bishop ordained me as a priest in the Church of Jerusalem, as I received the priesthood with great joy.

During my stay in the wilderness, I had a friend named Tabor, the son of a king, and I was explaining to him who Christ was until I baptized him. Tabor left his throne, his kingdom, his wife and his children and became a disciple of me. Tabor had many enemies; and as they noticed Tabor's absence from his home, they attacked his city and his country, killing many people, and looting many things. In addition, these giants dared to arrest Tabor's wife and sons and took them into exile to their country, but I helped him until he freed them and brought them home. After this victory, Tabor returned with me to the hermitage/cell (the monks' residence) on that mountain and we remained there for 10 days.

An angel came to me and asked me to go with Tabor to Mosul and to invite the people there to believe. We came to Mosul and found a young girl possessed by a demon throwing stones at passers-by, and I healed her and expelled the demon from her.

In Mosul, there was an evil king, and spiritually lost, who prostrate to idols, who heard of our coming, so he called us and questioned us about many things in our faith. The

king wanted to torture us, but I asked him if he would believe if he saw a miracle in the name of Christ! When the King agreed, I knelt and prayed and asked our Lord to set up a graveyard of the dead, and the Lord responded and rose from there 200 from of the dead. So the king and the inhabitants of the city believed in Christ. This miracle was followed by many other miracles.

By the order of the angel, Tabor and I lived on the mountain for forty years, and my food was bread and honey. My disciple and I came to Komani, and the villagers were evil men who did not worship God. The village had an epidemic, harvesting about 50 people from the village every day, and no one would bury them. I went up to them and said, "If you turn away from your evil deeds, and you believe in the living God, and in His Son Jesus Christ, I will remove the plague from your village". They said to me, "We are ready to believe in your God and turn away from our evil deeds", so I knelt down and I prayed saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, my good hope, remove this plague from these people, to see and believe in You", and at that moment, my prayers rose to heaven and the angel pulled his hand away from them, and no one died that day. The people of Komani celebrated and believed in God.

I then moved to Beth Dasen, the upper part, where other miracles took place through my intercession. The believers of the city of Dasen gathered and asked me to get rid of the epidemic, and I prayed and called for "baotha" (petition of three days fasting) on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and the epidemic ended from there.

All of my days were a hundred and twenty-two (122) years. I knew that the day of my transition from this world had reached, so I sent and invited all the believers of the region to say goodbye.

### **55. Memorial of St Mary the mother of Sorrows (Baghdad) (Virgin Mary)**

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved, standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman,<sup>1</sup> here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

### **56. Memorial of St Babai the Great (+627) (Monk, Teacher)**

I was born of two honest and rich parents in a village called Beth Anyatha (Ba Enatha) located in the province of Beth Zabda (Ibin Omar Island). After completing my Persian Sciences Studies in my village, I travelled to Naseben the city of science and knowledge, and studied medicine as well as Theology which was offered at the famous Naseben School. After 15 years of studying, my educational life begun. However, the life of the monks quickly impressed me, so I got involved in the ways of the monks of

the great monastery under the direction of the great Ibrahim Al-Kashkary and his successor Dadesho'. This step led to a vision and I began to live a life of asceticism (self-discipline) and austerity (minimalism). I then established a monastery with my father's worth, and returned again to leadership.

I played an important role in the history of the eastern church. The Persian king Kisra worked against the bishop and refused to allow the other bishops to choose a predecessor following his death. So the Eastern Church remained without a bishop from the year 609 to 627. Therefore, I took the lead of the church by assignment from the Synod of Bishops. I was assigned as a general visitor of the Eastern Church and I fulfilled this task by service and writing, and I used to visit the provinces and float around the northern areas especially, and encourage the faithful to withstand the enemy's spiritual attacks. When Shiroya sat on the king's throne in the year 628, he allowed the Christians to elect a bishop for them. So the synod of bishops asked me to take on this responsibility, however I refused to answer their request, a decision I later regretted after I saw an angel following me throughout the duration of my reign. Until the new bishop was chosen, when he then left to follow the newly appointed bishop. I left this life not long after, at the age of 75 years. I ran the monastery for 25 years, and insisted on being a simple, humble monk.

### **57. Memorial of St Miskanta the martyr (Mosul, Martyr)**

I was busy baking bread in the city known now as Mosul, when I found out that on the third day of the persecution which occurred to the city, 1200 believers were martyred. I left my baking and took my sons, the youngest on my shoulder, and eldest in my hand, to speak out with my faith, in front of the persecuted governor Tahmazkard (who was later martyred-refer to #58). I was killed for my strong determination, along with my eldest son. As for my younger son, they tried to persuade him initially, but they cut his head also. He was martyred with us, along with thousands of other believers on that day. The Chaldean monastery in Mosul is named after me.

### **58. Memorial of St Tahmazkard the Martyr (445, Karkuk - the Red Church) (Martyr)**

Bishops and kings ruled the city of Karkh Slokh (current Karkuk) and the attacks and persecutions began where lots of Christians got killed during my reign as governor Tahmazkard. However after the massacre, God opened my eyes and I saw a ladder placed on the ground and leading beyond the sky, and all the people I've killed are climbing it. God was standing at the top of it and he was placing glorious wreaths on their heads. Immediately I was transformed and felt guilty, and screamed at the top of my lungs: "I'm a Christian!" and this fulfilled the prophecies that were said about me.

I began to cry and rejoice to Christ so that he may forgive me for spilling all the blood of the martyrs.

### **59. Memorial of St. Shaleeta the monk (fifth century) (Monk)**

I am from Egypt, my parents are pagans. When Costantine the Great ruled, the persecution of Christians was ongoing, but things changed with Constantine, with his forgiving nature to religious sects, and his favoring of the religion of Christianity, above other religions. At that time, my parents left paganism and joined Christianity and were baptized. I was five at that time. From a young age I learned to read and write and studied philosophical sciences among other things. When I was baptized I pledged to study the holy books. When I reached the age of 20, I left the place of my birth where I did my initial studies, and went to Alexandria. There I was disciplined on the Christian life and to fear god and follow his ways at the hands of Mar Athnasiyus the famous bishop of the city. In this city, I was reading the holy bibles and service of the psalms, day and night.

One day, I entered an Egyptian city that was adherent to the worshiping of idols, and no one followed the word of God. When its occupants saw me, they knew from my costume that I was a Christian, so they began to insult me with disgraceful words. As for me, I sat in my place remaining calm and patient. I saw a man who had lepers, so I drew the sign of the cross on him and anointed him with oil. He was immediately healed. When the people saw this miracle, all of the village gathered around me, then I healed many of the sick, so the people of the village said: “show us where your god is so we believe in him”. I prepared the holy baptism for them, and baptized 235 of the village’s occupants.

I left evangelism in the cities and villages and when to the monastery of Fakhomes and there I asked the leader of the monastery to accept me among his monks. He accepted me happily and gave me the monastic attire. I saw myself as the youngest and least important of everyone there. The monks thought that I didn’t know how to recite the psalms however, I was the one that recited all the books of the new and old testament.

One day, as I was working with the monks, God used me to create this miracle: there was a man with an unclean spirit, who used to eat the flesh of his arms and tears his clothes and hurts himself with a rock. When the brother monks saw him, they ran away from fear. I came near him and held him. The devil inside began to scream saying: “let me go, you son of the pagans and do not come near me”. I ordered him and said: “in the name of Jesus Christ that threw you in hell, shut your mouth and leave this man”. Immediately, the man fell to the ground. I drew the sign of the cross on the man’s heart, he then got up and was free from the devil’s effect. When the brothers saw what happened, they came and kneeled near my feet and asked me to pray for them.

After this miracle, I was afraid of being glorified and wrongly worshipped, so I left the monastery and isolated myself in a manger and lived in it for ten years without being seen by anyone. I was afraid of being revered by my brother monks, so I got up one night and took my bible, placed it in my bag and got away in secret without anyone finding out. On the way I saw a vision of my next destination. I left this world at the age of 95 years.

### **60. Memorial of St. Therese of Lisieux (Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus)**

I was born in the year 1873, from a Christian family and I am the ninth child. When I turned 15 I joined the Carmelite convent where three of my sisters joined before me.

At the beginning of my life, I considered the way to sainthood, however when I was at the age of 22, I learned that sainthood relied on our work ethic and the mastering of the simple daily jobs that are required by the reality of our lives.

I lived the so-called championship of “the path of spiritual simplicity”. I remained faithful to Jesus, even though spiritual, literary and health tribulations (struggles), and persevered in complying with the instructions of my sister nuns, those that are related to the church’s apostolic requirements. My motto was always what Jesus said “unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” so I lived a childlike spirituality and attested to it.

I left this life on 30 September 1897 because of pulmonary tuberculosis. I was declared a saint in 1925 by Pope Pius XI and named me the patron of missionaries in the world. On the jubilee of 100 years since my death in 1977, pope John Paul the Second declared me the “teacher of the universal church”.

### **61 Memorial of St. Mar Atqan the patron of the village of Dera Shesh-Zakho (Monk)**

I am one of many Christians that grew up in Bajrmee (Slemaniya) north of Iraq at the beginning of the seventh century ahead of the Islamic advance from the south. My life as a monk started at the great monastery located in mount Izla, then I returned to Banohadra (Duhok) in northern Iraq, where I stayed at the monastery and became the third leader on the monastery. I went north towards the current border between Iraq and Turkey. There, I established a monastery near the village of Shesh.



## **62. Memorial of St. Mar Sabar-esho' (Alghab Jameel) (Monk)**

I was born in Awana in the area of Tehran (Samara'a, Tikreet). I inclined towards monastic life after a visit to Liesho'seran (refer to point 41) in jail before his martyrdom. I wore the monastic gown at the hands of a monk named Hermizd the Aramean who used to live on the banks of the great Zab and studied under his direction for 12 years. I then became the establisher of an old monastery known as "the monastery of martyrs" around the year 630. After I declined an invitation to preside over the diocese of Hadyab (Erbil), I left this world in the year 650.

## **63. Memorial of St. Mar Abda the martyr (4<sup>th</sup> Century) (Bishop, martyr)**

At the end of the reign of the Persian king Yazdajrad, the enemies raised a strong attack on our people. The leaders of the people and the magi with power accused our people in front of the king. Therefore, a strict order was released to remove all monasteries and churches within his kingdom, and all services to stop. Also, to arrest all priests and church leaders as they are to be taken to the royal court.

When it was time to collect all Christians and bring them to the king, they first brought the chorus of saints from their cities in shackles and brought them forward to the king. When the king heard that they are all waiting at the door in restraints, he ordered they bring me to him along with everyone else. He later asked us: "why do you disobey our rules, and do not subject yourselves to the teachings that were passed down from our fathers? Instead you do as you like following the wrong path?" We replied: "we do not walk in the way of people who command that we respect multiple gods and masters while the creator of all those things gets mocked and ridiculed. We bow down to the creator of all, and we make use of the things given to us". The king said to me: "since you are their leader, why do you ignore their insult to our kingdom, and breaking of our rules and allow them to act as they wish? You are destroying and eradicating the place of our worship and the temples of fire which we have worshiped since the time of our forefathers!". I replied "the magi are accusing us in front of you falsely and insultingly, and we have done nothing wrong". The king said, "I am not saying these things wrongly and unjustly, because I learned these things from honest people". King Yazdajrad, ordered in an angry manner to kill everyone, and I was at the front of those who were martyred during that incident.

## **64. Memorial of St. the Virgin Mary of the Holy Rosary (Virgin Mary)**

It is said that the famous explorer Christopher Columbus who crossed the seas and visited faraway regions until he discovered the American continent was an intense worshiper of the virgin Mary from his childhood. He never used to take a job unless he prayed to her and asked for her help and blessing. When he prepared his fleet, he placed

them under her protection and he named his biggest ship which led his fleet 'Santa Maria' or 'Saint Mary'. During his long trip he used to recite the rosary every day and invited others to join him. He named one of the cities that he founded 'Rosario' or 'Rosary'. When he was going through tough conditions because of the raging sea and because of rebellious sailors due to their boredom with long, strenuous trips, he placed his trust in Mary 'the star of the sea'. He asks her for help so things calm among his crew and quietness comes to the sea. That's how he achieved his dream of discovering the new world with the protection of the virgin Mary.

### **65. Memorial of St. Mar Ilya Al-Hayre (his monastery is located near Mosul) (Monk)**

I am a Christian Arab from Hera, northwest of modern day Iraq. I became a monk at the great monastery located at mount Izla, after studying in Nusaybin. I became a monk and followed the monastic laws. In the days of the great Bawee, I interfered as to expel some of the brothers from the monastery whose backgrounds were questionable. After that, I took a stand against Saint Jacob, who established the monastery of Beth Abee, accusing him of being the reason for the brothers' wrong ways. He was then ordered to leave the monastery. However, I found out after some time, and after experiencing apparitions and visions, that Jacob was of similar intentions as mine. Following that, I left mount Izla with a number of my friends who later dispersed to build a number of monasteries.

Between 582 and 590 I travelled with my nephew Hananesho' in the fort of Abreya (the fort located on the other side of the Tigris, which later became Mosul). I then rid that area of all wild animals, and established a monastery which gathered many brothers. I left this life after living nearly 100 years.

### **66. Memorial of St. Aqbashma the martyred bishop (379) (Bishop, Martyr)**

In the 37<sup>th</sup> year of the 40<sup>th</sup> persecution the king issued a strict order that gives jurors the authority to torture Christians and kill them. The magi were active shepherds who did not hide away during the persecution. During that time I was arrested, I was at the time the bishop of Haneetha (near Rawandoz). I was around 80 years old, but I was still strong and retained my good ways in this world. I was merciful and looked after the poor and the estranged, helped many of the atheists find truth. I used to pray and fast and cry every day until the earth that I am kneeling on becomes wet from the tears. When I was passing by my house, shackled, one of my friends who was accompanying me said: "delegate someone to look after your house, lest it be ruined". So I pointed to my house and said: "this is not my house and this is not my money. Christ alone is my fortune and I do not have any unfinished business with him."

When they brought me to Erbil city, they brought me in front of the judge. He asked: “are you Christian?” so I answered him in a loud voice: “yes, I am Christian and I kneel to the true god”, so the judge answered: “is it true what I heard about your teachings around the country being contrary to the teachings of the king of kings?” I said “everything that has been said about me is true, just as it has been mentioned in our holy books”. The judge said: “I heard that you are wise, and you are now an old man, why do you not bow down to the sun and respect the fire. All of the east worships them?”, I said to him: “the countries of the east are full of great ignorance for they left the creator and bow down to creation instead. You have tricked them with your false teachings which call for the worship of multiple gods. This conversation between us continued for a long time until the judge ordered that I be shackled with heavy chains and placed me in a dark prison cell with others.

After they let me taste great pain. My soul couldn't bear it, they kept the blows coming onto my body until my joints dislocated and my body parts scattered with the continuous blows and painful pulls. Once they were sure I left this life, they stopped torturing me. My body fell, they took it and threw it outside the city and as guards stood to watch it. It was stolen after three days in a plan constructed by an Armenian king's daughter who was a hostage.

### **67. Memorial of St. Fabronya the martyr (4<sup>th</sup> Century) (Martyr)**

There was a judge named Antema who had a brother named Selens. He promised his brother that he would be his predecessor but only after he sent him to the east to get rid of the Christian religion. When Selens reached Mesopotamia, he began to kill the Christians and destroy them with a sword and fire after throwing their bodies to the dogs. Fear struck the Christians from Selens ferocity.

However, his nephew, the son of judge Antema, whose named Lucimax, was attracted to Christianity. Apart from the fact that his mother was a Christian and he wanted to become one however, he didn't out of fear from his father. When he saw how Christians were being treated, his heart was torn and he wanted to secretly set the Christians free. Thus, he made a plan with his cousin to go and warn the monasteries and instruct them to flee from Selens the tyrant.

One day they wanted to invade the city of Naseben that is located on the Persia border and is subject to the roman empire. There was a nunnery in the city that was the home for 50 nuns. The law stated that no nun should do any work on a Friday except kneel for prayer and reading of spiritual material all day. The leader of the nuns was specifically training two young nuns, one called Faroqla and the other Fabronya. One was 25 years old while I was 20. I was the lead nun's niece and I was very beautiful. Therefore, the leader made every effort to look after me and keep me from any trouble. I then became sick and had to stay in bed.

In those days, the news spread in the city of Naseben that Selens and Lucimax are coming to compel the Christians to give offerings to idols. So all the Christians, clergy and monks fled. The bishop of the city also hid out of fear. When the news reached the nuns, they gathered with their leader and asked if they could flee the face of persecution, but she refused and urged them to fight for the sake of those who died for us.

When the nuns heard this, they retreated in silence and calm. On the next day, one of them said that the leader doesn't allow them to leave because of Fabronya, and she decided to go and try to convince the leader to flee. I refused to leave my place and left things in God's hands. The lead nun gave her nuns a choice. By then fear had taken over them, so they left the monastery after they prayed and said their goodbyes in sadness and great tears.

Some of the atheists told Selens about the monastery. When I saw the imminent danger, I threw myself at the feet of the soldiers and screamed: "I beg you in the name of the god in the heavens to kill me first so I don't see the death of others". However, because of the intercession of one of them, we were saved from this danger. The soldiers left the monastery without leaving any guards. Once he saw my beauty, he wanted to betroth me to Lucimax, but the last one refused to hurt someone who pledged themselves to Christ but one of the soldiers went to the unjust ruler Selens and told him that Lucimax wants to marry Fabronya.

The following day, soldiers went to the monastery and kidnapped me, shackled me with chains and cuffed my neck with a heavy metal collar. They pulled me out of the monastery, as for the other two nuns, they held on to me and begged the soldier crying, to let them talk to me. Then they begged the soldiers to take them as well, so they don't leave me by myself lest I become afraid. The soldiers refused because they have not been given any orders in this regards.

When a large crowd gathered in, Selens and Lucimax came and sat on the post. He ordered for them to bring me as I stood in the middle and Selens ordered the crowd to be silent, then he said to Lucimax: "you ask her questions". Lucimax asked me: "tell me girl, what are you? A servant or a free person?" I answered: "I am a nation". He replied: "whose nation?" I answered: "the nation of Christ". He then said: "what is your name?" I answered: "I am but a poor Christian girl" he replied: "I want to know your name". I told I am a poor Cristian girl and if you want to know my name, they call me Fabronya".

They tried with me in many ways, firstly through encouraging marriage, then by tormenting me as they saw I am sticking to my faith. They cut off my body parts and the sisters came and buried me with all my cut off parts. When Lucimax saw my sacrifice, he declared his desire to join Christ. Many of the gathered crowds of non-believers also believed in Christ and got baptized.

### **68. Memorial of St. Fanhas the martyr (5<sup>th</sup> Century) (Monk, Martyr)**

I was born in Athens and studied at the hands of Mar Aojeen at mount Izla. I later went to the country of Qardo and lived as a monk for 30 years. In a nearby village there was a man named Aneeha who hates Christians. He took me to a judge who warned me to leave my faith and then handed me to Aneeha to torture me. I was martyred near the village of Ibin Omar.

### **69. Memorial of St. Thomas of Marga (Monastery of Beth Abee) 5<sup>th</sup> Century (Monk, Teacher)**

I was born in the first quarter of the ninth century in the village of “Nahshoon” in the province of Beth Sharonae (Current Shirwan-related to the province of Hidiab). I entered the famous monastery of Beth Abee, and in the year of 838, Patriarch Ibrahim of Marga the second (837-850) named me his secret keeper. Ibrahim was one of the monks of the monastery. I promised him that I would lead the monastery and when he was named patriarch in the year 837 he took me with him and I gained his trust and appreciation. After some short years he declared me a bishop for the province of Marga.

### **70. Memorial of St. Mar Pithyon the martyr (Martyr)**

I start my story with my teacher Yazden who made a place for himself in a mountain and he brought me closer to him with his guidance thus I became his disciple and walked in his path. He taught me about the holy scriptures. We both lived in the silo for 14 years until Yazden passed away. After his death I continued to live there.

During that time there was a leader in the Persian city of Baharshaboor and his name was Adwarharmazd. He was full of knowledge as he was a righteous and upright man. He had only one daughter named Anaheed, who he dearly loved. One day an evil spirit tried her harshly, and did not leave her to rest neither at night nor in the morning. Many Jewish, Manion and Magi magicians came from different places and were not able to help her in any way. However, her suffering was increasing, because of this those who served for the Magi told him about me, and said that if saint Pithyon came and laid his hands on her she will immediately be healed. They told him about the many people that were healed because of me and my prayers. Her father instructed that she be brought to me. When they neared my silo, the unclean demon began to scream. I kneeled and began to pray, when I finished I placed my hand on the possessed and immediately the devil left her. One day Anaheed saw a vision asking her to become a Christian, so she came to me and told me of her vision so I baptized her.

When her father heard that she became a Christian he became my bitter enemy. He saw a scary vision in the night so he invited me over and asked me to explain to him about

the Christian faith until I gave him the sacrament of Baptism. His fate was martyrdom along with his daughter Anaheed because he left the religion of his kingdom and became a Christian.

The kingdom decided to punish me so they invited me over and began to question me and the ordeal ended with me in prison. One day, as I was walking among the other prisoners, a voice was heard and all their shackles were unlocked along with the doors of my prison. The prisoners were bewildered and they believed in my God. The Magi accused me of being the leader of magicians and the creator of all evil, so he subjected me to many experiments and I survived them by miracles known to have happened in the name of Jesus.

On my way to martyrdom, the king's entourage tried to get me to deny my faith and said to me: "say only one word: I am not a Christian, and you can go anywhere you like." So I answered them bravely: "you are talking like ignorant people...do not waste time with void words, complete that job that you were sent to do!" So they began to cut my limbs one after another.

When one of the leaders came to cut my head, I asked him to give me a little bit of time. So I prayed: "oh God, the ruler of all things and the one who is capable of all things, the creator of all things and caretaker of all creations, the listener to the voice of the wrong doers and the accepter of the requests of those who repent. You o lord, accept my prayer in these last moments (and here I prayed for all those who resort to me, and I asked god to remove all evil, and sickness and any pandemics and to bless them with his grace. I said in my prayer: you o lord with your grace protect your flock and keep the fierce wolves away which threaten their lives. Give your church your peace and harmony now and for all times and forever. Amen", and all the people surrounding me said: Amen!

### **71. Saint Kohisht Azad (Feast Day 341) (Martyr)**

I was an old man. I was a Christian but I deserted my faith out of weakness. When Bishop Birsba'ee was taken a prisoner to the king's court and I saw how he held fast to his faith in Christ despite all the horrors and torture he was put through, I repented and declared my faith to all. I was executed on Easter Thursday in the year 341AD on the eve of Bishop Birsba'ee martyrdom. (You can read my full story along with his story under "Item 48"

### **72. Saint Micha El-Nohedri (Fourth Century – Elquosh) (Monk)**

I was born to a well-known family in the country of "Beth Nohedra". My father was one of the prominent Magis and advisors in the Persian King's court. Both my parents

became Christians and got baptized by St. Eugene. I studied theology for 20 years and then went to St Eugene “Item 48” and received the chaste monk’s order and started working with my brethren according to the teachings of God. I became like a son to St. Eugene and obeyed everything he told me. When that renegade Eulianis stirred the prosecution against the church most of the brothers had to escape, but I remained in the monastery with Father Eugene and ten other monks. I stayed with them for ten years and then left to live in my own hermitage. God worked a lot of healing miracles at my hands. I left this mortal world and passed to my Lord at the age of 120 years.

### **73. St. Eugene and his monastic comrades (Fourth Century) (Monk)**

I am from Egypt. I was born towards the end of the Third Century. Since an early age, I learnt to dive in the sea looking for pearls. That’s what I did for a living but I would donate what I earned to churches and monasteries to distribute them to the poor, orphans and widows.

One day while I was preparing to dive as usual, I saw a vision. I saw a bright comet, like the sun moving ahead of me towards the sea. It was a sign that God is walking with me so I doubled up on my efforts especially distributing my profits to the needy.

After spending 25 years in this work, God blessed me with the gift of being able to push back the giant waves from sailing ships. I was blessed with the gift of being able to walk on water as if I’m walking on land. I became well known in the neighbouring areas and islands. Sailors started invoking my name when they’re facing rough seas or when their lives are in danger.

When I saw this, I wanted to go somewhere else where nobody knew me and where I won’t get much attention. I went to Fakhomise Convent and lived there as a humble monk. Soon again, my gifts and ability to work miracles were discovered. I tried to escape and hide but the monks found me amongst the trees and grape vines and returned me to the convent. They showed me a lot of respect and honour.

One night again I left the convent and went to a different area in Egypt but again I was discovered by some of the monks who asked me to stay with them. We talked a lot and I told them about the true faith. I also told them about my desire to leave and go somewhere that God will choose for me.

I was escorted by 70 monks or 72 to be exact. This blessed company headed towards Mesopotamia (The Land of the Two Rivers) where monasteries and their functions were not known yet.

The group came first to a place called Nasibeen and lived there for a while and no one knew about them. One day I saw a man who has been possessed by an evil spirit for 33 years, I healed him and exorcised the evil spirit. When his people found out, they came

to the place the healed man showed them and made a big stir and insisted the monks come to their city.

On the next day, I climbed with the monks up a mountain to the East of that city called Izla. We lived in the caves of that mountain for thirty years. News of our healing ministry soon spread and people came to us for blessings and healing. Our number increased to 350 monks. After a while I had another revelation that told me to get down from the mountain to evangelise which I did and I was blessed to do a lot of miracles. When the pagans heard about me, they asked me to baptise them.

At that time, Patriarch Fafa passed away and was succeeded by Simon Birsebaee, a strong man and a brave martyr. At the same time, the Persian king Shapoor Second (309-379)AD was preparing to invade the Roman territories. He crossed the Tigris River coming to Nasibeen.

The heads of the city sent for me and my monks to take shelter in the city away from Shapoor's invasion. I said to the them (prophetically) that Shapoor will fail to invade the city by human efforts but that they will give it to him willingly and peacefully afterwards. Some of the Persian army wanted to invade Izla Monastery and steal its riches, but God made them fail in answer to my prayers.

Things happened exactly as I prophesied and news of me reached King Shapoor, so he asked to see me and was awed by my gifts. I also healed his son who was possessed by an evil spirit. As a result, King Shapoor somewhat stopped persecuting Christians and allowed me to build monasteries wherever I go with my monks.

After many years of hard work, I felt that my end was near, so I gathered my monk brothers and we held mass and holy communion. We spent a long time together then each of them went to his cell. They were soon called by the bother who serves the mass telling them that my hour has come, so they all came to me and I blessed them.

#### **74. Martyred Bishop Miles (Bishop, Martyr)**

I was born in Al Ray City (near Tehran). I was of the Magi Religion then I became a Christian. I was ordained Bishop of Sous. I was disappointed that I failed to convert the city to Christianity so I shook the dust from my shoes as the Bible teaches, foreseeing the destruction that awaited it after a while due to the rebellion they did against King Shapoor Second.

After a series of visits to the Holy Land, Egypt and Nasibeen, I came back to Bahrseer in the Sasanies Land where I stood up against Patriarch Fafa's tyranny.

At last I came back to my birth place where I was jailed for a year, then I was beaten to death by the governor of the city.



## **75. Saint Narsai (502) Doctor of the Church (Monk, Teacher)**

I was born in Ein Delbi (Edlib) next to the present day Duhok, North of Iraq. I studied in the village school when I was seven years old. My teacher took us his students to the Northern mountains to escape the Persian persecution.

When I came back to my village, I found that my parents had passed away. I had to go to a monastery to my uncle Emmanuel who was president of the Monastery. After I spent the winter season with him, he sent me after that to Alraha where I studied the sciences for ten years, then came back to the monastery area to work as a teacher. I missed my days at Alraha and its sophisticated and cultured environment and I wanted to study more so I went back and stayed there till I was called back to attend my uncle's sick bed.

After my uncle passed away, I was appointed as his successor but soon after went back again to Alraha leaving the monastery and my role as president in the year 435.

In 437, when the headmaster of the school in Alraha passed away, I was elected to take his role which I did for the next twenty years.

After that and as a result of some theological arguments, I had to escape Alraha heading to Nasibeen where I met my friend Barsoma who was the Bishop of that city. He asked me to establish a school similar to the one in Alraha which I did and I ran the school for almost 40 years. After that a dispute between me and my friend Barsoma led me to leave the school and joined the monastery where I remained for five years. I was named "Tongue of the East", and the "Gate to Christianity". Others called me "The Lyre of the Holy Spirit".

## **76. Saint Jacob the Martyr (The Chopped) (Martyr)**

I was born in the second half of the Fourth Century. I was born to a noble family. I got married. I was close to God due to my parents and wife's Christian faith. I was also a respected leader in the Sasaan Court. King Yazdajird the First showered me with gifts.

Being so respected and close to King Yazdajird made me drift away from my Christian faith.

News of deserting my faith reached my wife and my mother. They were both devastated and they wrote me a letter. When I received that letter, I came back to my senses and repented from the bottom of my heart. When the King learnt of my renewed faith, he ordered me to be questioned and tortured.

When the order was issued, the whole city gathered to witness my torture. The King's army marched behind him to the place of my execution. A lot of my Christian brothers when they heard of the order, knelt and prayed for me.

When I was brought to the place of execution, I asked my killers to give me some time to thank God whom I accept torture for His Name.

I turned towards the East and knelt on the floor and looked up to the Heavenly Father.

Soon they grabbed me and laid me down and held my hands and feet. They said to me: “Think of what you’re doing, there is no time to waste. We are going to chop each part of your body. We will cut your hands and feet, your arms and knees. After that we will chop your head. Think carefully and decide what you want to do. With one word, you will live, but if you persist in your faith, you will die this terrible death”.

Some of the leaders were crying for me and they all said to me “Do not waste away your life. Do as the king says and live and then you can go back to your faith”. I said to them: “Do not cry for me... cry for yourselves because for a little comfort in this life, you will inherit eternal condemnation along with all the evil spirits and idols that you worship. I, on the other hand will inherit eternal life. For the way I will be tortured, I will be amply rewarded by God, because every man is rewarded according to his deeds. For God is a just God.

The King then ordered my death. He said to the killers: “What are you waiting for?” so they started chopping my fingers and then all my body was chopped till I was martyred.

### **77. Saint Yazdandokht the Martyred (Fourth Century) (Martyr)**

I am a woman from Erbil. In the year of 345AD in Almadayin, over a period of six months, I cared for 120 people from Hidiab, they were 111 of priests and deacons and nine virgins. They were all jailed. I cared for them and buried them after they were martyred. God blessed me again to do the same service in 379AD in the city of Erbil itself.

### **78. Saint Barbra the Martyred – (Karamlaise) (Martyr)**

In a village called Dylason further away from Antioch, there was a great man named Diuscorus. The man was very rich but he was a pagan. He had only one daughter. She was a great beauty. That girl was me. My dad loved me dearly. He built me a great tower and kept me there so that no one can see me. When people came to ask for my hand in marriage, my father did not want to force me into anything.

My father was interested in building me a bathroom and he gave the job to skilled workers and he gave them their fees in full and went away on a trip.

I came down from my tower to supervise the work and I saw that the engineers had put only two windows in the room, so I asked them to put a third one. The workers were afraid that my father will be angry but I assured them that I will convince him.

When I arrived at the place where the hot water grunge was, I turned towards the East and drew a Cross on the marble with just my finger and my footprints were stamped on the flooring.

One day, I was on my way to my room when I saw the idols that my father used to worship, I was filled with the Holy Spirit and I spat on those idols and I said: “Same as you will be those who depend on you”. I then went up to my room and prayed.

When my dad came back from his trip, he saw three windows in the room and when he learnt that I ordered this, he called me and asked me to explain. I said to him: “Look dad, this is The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit”. When my father heard this, he got blazingly angry and almost killed me. I prayed and ran away by a mountain. I found there two shepherds tending their flock. When my father came looking for me and asked them about me. One of them swore that he never saw me while the other pointed with his finger towards me. When my father found me, he beat me and locked me away and put guards on my door.

After that I was handed over to the Governor. My dad had sworn him idols to torture me as hard as possible. The Governor took pity on me and offered me a way to save myself by making an offering to the gods. I refused to bow to anyone but God, Creator of heaven and earth.

The Governor ordered that I be tortured, stripped and burned. Then I was put in jail.

In the middle of the night, I saw in a vision, Our Lord, who gave me courage and healed the wounds in my body. There was also a faithful woman named “Youlina” who saw this and saw how my wounds healed instantly, so she gave herself to the Lord and was tortured.

The Governor tried to convince me that it was his idols who healed me. As for me, I confessed my faith in my Lord Jesus Christ, my Saviour who healed me. The Governor got even more angry and put me through even worse torture. When he saw “Youlina” crying hard for me, he ordered her to be tortured as well.

While we were both being tortured, I raised my eyes to the heavens and prayed: “Dear Lord, do not take Your sight away from us, do not take away Your Holy Spirit from your two servants, but prepare us a place at Your side, let Your Holy Spirit support us in Your Glory”.

The Governor finally ordered Youlina to be sent to jail while I was ordered to be stripped naked and walked through the whole country. I prayed to God and He covered

me with a white cloak. I was then led before judge Markianus who ordered me and Youlina to death by the sword.

## **79. The Virgin Mary's visit to Elizabeth (Virgin Mary)**

### ***Luke 1:39-56***

39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country to a city of Judah, 40 and she entered the house of Zechari'ah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be[a] a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." 46 And Mary said,

### **Mary's Song of Praise**

"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
48 for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;  
49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
50 And his mercy is on those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
51 He has shown strength with his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,  
52 he has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
and exalted those of low degree;  
53 he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent empty away.  
54 He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
55 as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his posterity for ever."[b]

56 And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.

## **80. Saint Marootha, Bishop of Myaferqeen (Fifth Century) (Bishop)**

My father was the governor of Sofeeta province (Next to Amed – Dyar Bakr), his name was Liota. He had three sons. The first two sons joined in service to Thaodosios the Great 379 – 395). The third son (myself) stayed with my father and studied the sciences. When Liota passed away, I took his place in running the province during the reign of Thaodosios and his successor. I was then living in Amed and I loved to build churches and monasteries. Amed was situated next to the Persian borders and was a prey to their many raids so I decided to move my office to another place further away from the borders around 50 Kilometer North of Amed, to save myself and my money from the Persians.

I excelled in Greek and Aramaic sciences and also in medicine with great faith in God and had great wisdom and diplomacy.

I was ordained archbishop of Mifraqt or Miafirqeen which lies at the head of the River Tigris. The city was later named “City of Martyrs”.

Due to my vast knowledge of medicine, the king of Persia, Yazdajird asked the Roman emperor to send me to him to heal his daughter who had an incurable disease. I went and healed her. The Persian King asked me to name my reward. I said: “I want peace and reconciliation”, and so it was that a peace treaty was signed between the Kind of Persia and the Roman Emperor which lasted all through their lifetime.

Before I left the Persian country, the King asked me to name another reward so I said: “I wish that you will grant me to take the bones and relics of all the monks and Christian faithful’s who have perished at the hands of your soldiers”. The King granted me my wish and I took these treasures to the city of Miafirqeen, then I hurried to the Roman Emperor to tell him about the treaty.

After I returned from Persia, I dedicated my time to build my city. I build it into a strong fortress with the help and grant of the Roman Emperor to withstand the usual Persian raids.

## **81. Saint Eith Alaha Elnohedri (Duhok – 355AD) (Martyr)**

I started to study Christianity after I was miraculously healed. I then had to migrate because of the persecution I received at the hands of the people of my previous religion. I migrated South to Mahozi Dran (Drion) which lies at the “Little Zap” and I was baptised there.

On my return to Erbil I was again persecuted and I wanted to leave again but some hidden force prevented me so I stayed.

I was captured on the orders of the Governor and I was brought to witness the torture of Barhathbsha but he passed away before I arrived. I started to honor his body effusively on the hope of following him but the executioners only cut my right ear with the help of some man who had denied his Christian faith whom God had punished.

I was then thrown into jail to be later led with the other faithfuls before the King of Khozistan where we all were martyred.

## Praying with the Biblical Character ..... with Saint .....

**Leader:** In the name of The Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

**Beginning Prayer:** Our Holy Father / You've revealed Yourself for us / in the Holy Bible / and we knew You through people / whom You loved and they loved You / so they passed Your Love to us / we who believed in You / everyone in his/her own way and according to his/her call / so our faith was enriched through them. / We ask You today through the intercession of (mention the name of the Biblical Character or the Saint) / to take him/her as a role model / to have courage / to put ourselves in his/her place / to listen to Your Word / live it and pass it to others / You are The Living God / the incarnated in Jesus Christ / with the Holy Spirit / forever. Amen

**Psalm 119:9-16 (the necessity of keeping God's Word) (It's sang alternating between two groups)**

- How can a young man keep his way spotless? / By keeping your words.
- With all my heart I seek you / do not let me stray from your commandments.
- In my heart I treasure your promises / to avoid sinning against you.
- Blessed are you, Yahweh / teach me your will!
- With my lips I have repeated / all the judgements you have given.
- In the way of your instructions lies my joy / a joy beyond all wealth.
- I will ponder your precepts / and fix my gaze on your paths.
- I find my delight in your will / I do not forget your words.
- Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit / from the beginning and for ever. Amen.
- **Period of Silence (Meditate/Reflect on the words of the psalm)**
- **A reading about the Biblical Character or the Saint (from The Guide)**
- **Period of Silence (Meditate/Reflect on the life of the Character)**
- **A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians (3:5-17)**

For what is Apollos and what is Paul? The servants through whom you came to believe, and each has only what the Lord has given him. I did the planting, Apollos did the watering, but God gave growth. In this, neither the planter nor the waterer counts for anything; only God, who gives growth. It is all one who does the planting and who does the watering, and each will have the proper pay for the work that he has done. After all, we do share in God's work; you are God's farm, God's building. By the grace of God which was given to me, I laid the foundations like a trained master-builder, and someone else is building on them. Now each one must be careful how he

does the building. For nobody can lay down any other foundation than the one which is there already, namely Jesus Christ. On this foundation, different people may build in gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay or straw but each person's handiwork will be shown for what it is. The Day which dawns in fire will make it clear and the fire itself will test the quality of each person's work. The one whose work stands up to it will be given his wages; the one whose work is burnt down will suffer the loss of it, though he himself will be saved; he will be saved as someone might expect to be saved from a fire. Do you not realise that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy that person, because God's temple is holy; and you are that temple.

– **Reflect on the reading (The Leader may explain it and add other few points, and open a dialog with the group about it, ending with a short period of silence):**

- Saint Paul gives the messenger (God's Ambassador) his/her right place: He is a servant. This service necessarily makes him/her humble: He/she continues the work of his/her predecessors and gives the space for those who come after him/her to complete his/her work.
- The work of the message depends on God's Grace, and not on our own power and strength. Accordingly we need to discover the grace that is gifted to us in order to serve through it.
- The foundation of the message is Jesus Christ; we can't put another foundation. Our duty is to build over the foundation, not to put a foundation.
- We shall be judged according to the work we shall do: If the work has God's Spirit then it will stay but if it didn't have the Spirit then it will be burn.
- There is no greater dignity than this: We are the temple of God and the Spirit of God is in us. How much we have to keep this Spirit within us!!

- **Hymn: "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky" (You can follow the hymn through YouTube)**

1. I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard My people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin, My hand will save.  
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear My light to them? Whom shall I send?

### **Chorus**

- Here I am Lord, Is it I, Lord? I have heard You calling in the night.  
I will go Lord, if You lead me. I will hold Your people in my heart.
2. I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.  
I have wept for love of them, they turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone; give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak My word to them, Whom shall I send?



3. I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.  
I will set a feast for them, My hand will save.  
Finest bread I will provide, till their hearts be satisfied.  
I will give My life to them, Whom shall I send?

**- A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew (5:17-19)**

'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved. Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven.'

**- Free Prayers (The Leader can give ideas to help the group organize their prayers:)**

- To live the characteristics of the Biblical Character or the Saint.
- To keep God's Word alive in our lives, especially in our attitudes and decisions.
- To remain faithful to our message and seek only the service of others.
- Not to look for negative and hurtful competition, but positive, so we race within the service.
- To learn humbleness of accepting learning from our predecessors.

**- Ending with The Lord's Prayer: Our Father who are in Heaven ...**

## Praying with Virgin Mary

**Leader:** In the name of The Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

**Beginning Prayer:** O Virgin Mary / the mother of Divine Love / to you we entrust our lives / hoping that you will be a mother and teacher for us. / Give us the love of life, its guard and its service / intercede for us to live in the presence of Jesus / and let our spiritual and physical life / be a true reflection of yours. / And help, O Mother / who chose to live a spiritual life / to understand that it is a silence of body / and listening in the heart / and complete openness to the work of the Holy Spirit. / O Virgin, teach us that love of giving is life / and sacrifice in service is joyful / and pain for the sake of others is birth / and motherhood is a grace beyond all graces. / Amen.

- **Period of Silence (Meditate/Reflect on a picture or an icon of Virgin Mary)**

- **A Hymn: “Hail, Queen of Heaven” - Verse 1**

Hail, Queen of heav'n, the ocean star.  
Guide the wand'rer here below!  
Thrown on life's surge we claim thy care.  
Save us from peril and from woe.  
Mother of Christ, Star of the sea,  
Pray for the wanderer. Pray for me.

- **A reading about the occasion concerning Virgin Mary (from The Guide)**

- **Period of Silence (Meditate/Reflect on the occasion)**

- **A Hymn: “Hail, Queen of Heaven” - Verse 2**

O gentle, chaste, and spotless Maid,  
We sinners make our prayers thro' thee.  
Remind thy Son that He has paid  
The price of our iniquity.  
Virgin most pure, Star of the sea,  
Pray for the sinner. Oh, pray for me.

- **A Reading from the Book of Revelation (12:1-6):**

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, robed with the sun, standing on the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant, and in labour, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth. Then a second sign appeared in the sky: there was a huge red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and each of the seven heads crowned with a coronet. Its tail swept a third of the stars from the sky and hurled them to the ground, and the dragon stopped in front of the woman as she was at the point of giving birth, so that it could eat the child as soon as it was born. The woman was delivered of a boy, the son who was to rule all the nations with an iron sceptre, and the child was taken straight up to God and to his throne, while the woman escaped into the desert,

where God had prepared a place for her to be looked after for twelve hundred and sixty days.

**- A Hymn: “In Him is Life and Light”**

In Him is life and light Alleluiah, Alleluiah (x2)

Jesus King of Kings                      Glory, Alleluiah

Jesus Lord of Lords                      Glory, Alleluiah

Prince of Peace                      Glory, Alleluiah (x2)

Jesus, Lord of Salvation                      Glory, Alleluiah

Jesus, Spring of life                      Glory, Alleluiah

Prince of Peace                      Glory, Alleluiah (x2)

**- A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew (12:46-50)**

He was still speaking to the crowds when suddenly his mother and his brothers were standing outside and were anxious to have a word with him. Someone said to him: Your mother and brothers are standing outside and want to speak to you. But to the man who told him this Jesus replied, 'Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?' And stretching out his hand towards his disciples he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'

**- Self-review (through group dialogue, and the leader can add other questions) followed by moments of silence:**

- What is my relationship with Jesus our God? And how do I describe it?
- What is my relationship with our mother Virgin Mary? How do I live my faith with her help?
- How do I feel that I've done God's Will in my life? How I discover God's Will first?

**- Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary:**

Lord, have mercy on us ..... Christ, have mercy on us.

Christ,	hear us
Christ,	graciously hear us
God the Father of Heaven,	have mercy on us
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,	have mercy on us
God the Holy Ghost,	have mercy on us
Holy Trinity, one God,	have mercy on us

Holy Mary ... Holy Mother of God ... Holy Virgin of virgins	pray for us
Mother of Christ ... Mother of divine grace ... Mother most pure	pray for us
Mother most chaste ... Mother inviolate ... Mother undefiled	pray for us
Mother most amiable ... Mother most admirable ...	
Mother of good counsel	pray for us
Mother of our Creator ... Mother of our Saviour ...	
Virgin most prudent	pray for us
Virgin most venerable ... Virgin most renowned ...	
Virgin most powerful	pray for us
Virgin most merciful ... Virgin most faithful ... Mirror of justice	pray for us
Seat of wisdom ... Cause of our joy ... Spiritual vessel	pray for us
Vessel of honor ... Singular vessel of devotion ... Mystical rose	pray for us
Tower of David ... Tower of ivory ... House of gold	pray for us
Ark of the Covenant ... Gate of Heaven ... Morning star	pray for us
Health of the sick ... Refuge of sinners ... Comforter of the afflicted	pray for us
Help of Christians ... Queen of angels ... Queen of patriarchs	pray for us
Queen of prophets ... Queen of apostles ... Queen of martyrs	pray for us
Queen of confessors ... Queen of virgins ... Queen of all saints	pray for us
Queen conceived without Original Sin ... Queen assumed into Heaven ...	
Queen of the most holy Rosary	pray for us
Queen of Heaven and earth ... Queen of peace ... Queen of Family	pray for us
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Spare us, O Lord	
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Graciously hear us, O Lord	
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us	
Lord, have mercy on us ..... Christ, have mercy on us.	

- **Prayer:** We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God. Do not despise our pleas in our needs, and deliver us always from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin, Amen.

- **Pray for us O Holy Mother of God**

- **That we may be worthy of the promises of Christ.**

## Praying with Martyr ..... Martyrs .....

**Leader:** In the name of The Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

**Beginning Prayer:** Jesus our God / You sacrificed yourself on the cross / and Your pure blood was exhausted / to make us understand that salvation / requires self-denial. / We come to You today / accompanied by martyr ... (or two martyrs .... Or martyrs) / to declare our faith in You / and confess that the blood of the martyrs / became the seeds for new Christians. / Plant a new life in our hearts / that comes out of this sacrifice / and teach us to sacrifice / for the life of others. / Amen.

**- A reading about the life of martyr ... the two martyrs .... Martyrs .... (from The Guide)**

**- Period of Silence (Meditate/Reflect on the life of the Martyr)**

**- Psalm 15 (Characteristics of a holy person in front of God) (It's sang alternating between two groups)**

- Yahweh, who can find a home in your tent / who can dwell on your holy mountain?
- Whoever lives blamelessly, who acts uprightly / who speaks the truth from the heart,
- Who keeps the tongue under control / who does not wrong a comrade / who casts no discredit on a neighbour.
- Who looks with scorn on the vile / but honours those who fear Yahweh / who stands by an oath at any cost,
- Who asks no interest on loans / who takes no bribe to harm the innocent. / No one who so acts can ever be shaken.
- Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit / from the beginning and for ever. Amen.

**- A reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy (2:1-13)**

As for you, my dear son, take strength from the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Pass on to reliable people what you have heard from me through many witnesses so that they in turn will be able to teach others. Bear with your share of difficulties, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one on active service involves himself in the affairs of civilian life, because he must win the approval of the man who enlisted him; or again someone who enters an athletic contest wins only by competing in the sports -- a prize can be won only by competing according to the rules; and again, it is the farmer who works hard that has the first claim on any crop that is harvested. Think over what I have said, and the Lord will give you full understanding. Remember the gospel that I carry, 'Jesus Christ risen from the dead, sprung from the race of David'; it is on account of

this that I have to put up with suffering, even to being chained like a criminal. But God's message cannot be chained up. So I persevere for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they, too, may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Here is a saying that you can rely on: "If we have died with him, then we shall live with him. If we persevere, then we shall reign with him. If we disown him, then he will disown us. If we are faithless, he is faithful still, for he cannot disown his own self".

**- Review of oneself according to what was read (the leader can add other points and end with a short silence):**

- What does it mean to be faithful to Christ? How do I live this faithfulness at home, school and community?
- When I am faithful to my faith's concepts, have I once felt an insult from others because of that? What did I do at that time? Did I accept that they would change their values because of my adhering to the Bible's concepts?
- What does patience mean to me? Why do I have to be patient? What do I usually be patient about?
- How do I live the sacrifice in my life? What are the situations where I felt that I have sacrificed for others?
- How do I look at the martyrs in the church? A revered look, a look of respect, a normal look ... etc.

**- A Hymn: "For All the Saints" (You can follow the hymn through YouTube)**

1. For all the saints, who from their labours rest;  
who to the world by faith their Lord confessed,  
Your name, O Jesus, be for ever blessed:  
Alleluia, alleluia!
2. You were their rock, their fortress, and their might;  
You, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight,  
and in the darkness their unfailing light.  
Alleluia, alleluia!
3. O may your soldiers, faithful, true and bold,  
fight as the saints who nobly fought of old  
and win with them the victor's crown of gold.  
Alleluia, alleluia!
4. One holy people, fellowship divine!  
we feebly struggle, they in glory shine  
in earth and heaven the saints in praise combine:  
Alleluia, alleluia!
5. And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long,  
faintly we hear the distant triumph-song;  
and hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.  
Alleluia, alleluia!
6. The golden evening brightens in the west:  
soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest,

the peaceful calm of paradise the blessed.

Alleluia, alleluia!

7. But look! there breaks a yet more glorious day;  
saints all-triumphant rise in bright array  
the king of glory passes on his way!

Alleluia, alleluia!

8. From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest shore  
through gates of pearl, ascending, they adore  
the Father, Son and Spirit evermore:

Alleluia, alleluia!

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- Who looks with scorn on the vile / but honours those who fear Yahweh / who stands by an oath at any cost,
- Who asks no interest on loans / who takes no bribe to harm the innocent. / No one who so acts can ever be shaken.
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this that I have to put up with suffering, even to being chained like a criminal. But God's message cannot be chained up. So I persevere for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they, too, may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Here is a saying that you can rely on: "If we have died with him, then we shall live with him. If we persevere, then we shall reign with him. If we disown him, then he will disown us. If we are faithless, he is faithful still, for he cannot disown his own self".

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- How do I look at the martyrs in the church? A revered look, a look of respect, a normal look ... etc.

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9. For all the saints, who from their labours rest;  
who to the world by faith their Lord confessed,  
Your name, O Jesus, be for ever blessed:  
Alleluia, alleluia!
10. You were their rock, their fortress, and their might;  
You, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight,  
and in the darkness their unfailing light.  
Alleluia, alleluia!
11. O may your soldiers, faithful, true and bold,  
fight as the saints who nobly fought of old  
and win with them the victor's crown of gold.  
Alleluia, alleluia!
12. One holy people, fellowship divine!  
we feebly struggle, they in glory shine  
in earth and heaven the saints in praise combine:  
Alleluia, alleluia!
13. And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long,  
faintly we hear the distant triumph-song;  
and hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.  
Alleluia, alleluia!
14. The golden evening brightens in the west:  
soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest,

the peaceful calm of paradise the blessed.

Alleluia, alleluia!

15. But look! there breaks a yet more glorious day;  
saints all-triumphant rise in bright array  
the king of glory passes on his way!

Alleluia, alleluia!

16. From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest shore  
through gates of pearl, ascending, they adore  
the Father, Son and Spirit evermore:

Alleluia, alleluia!

## **Praying with Monk... (Monks...) Teacher... Archbishop ...**

- **Leader:** In the name of The Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.
- **Beginning Prayer:** O Lord Jesus, the teacher/ You've dedicated Your life to Your mission / You spread the Kingdom of Heaven in our land / and the disciples followed You / leaving everything behind / going after the eternal goodness. / We pray to You today / with **Monk... (Monks..., Teacher..., Archbishop... , Patriarch... )** / asking You to make us walk in the same way / so that we will learn from You and be Your disciple / and live our lives according to Your teachings / You are the eternal priest / and Christ the Saviour / Amen.
- **Hymn "Leave Everything and Follow Me"**
  - Refrain: Leave everything and follow Me ... and I shall be your destiny**
  - 1. Leave everything and you'll be given everything ... Carry the cross, Come  
You'll find comfort and peace ... You won't be disappointed, Come
  - 2. Wherever you stay I shall stay ... My face will not turn away, Come  
I have chosen you as my assistant ... The One on High is calling you, Come
  - 3. I looked into your eyes and loved you ... I knew what's in your heart, Come  
Your thirsty land for love and peace ... is screaming at you, Come
- **A reading about the life of the monk, monks, teacher, archbishop from The Guide, followed by a Period of Silence.**
- **Hymn "The Light" by Mar Ephrem the Syrian, the Teacher, i.e. Doctor of the Church (It's sang alternating between two groups)**
  - The light shined on the righteous / and joy on the righteous hearts
  - Christ Jesus our Lord / Begotten of the Father, He manifested himself to us
  - He came to rescue us from darkness / and enlightened us with the radiance of His Light
  - Day is dawning upon us / the power of darkness is fading away
  - From His Light there arose for us the light / which illumined our darkened eyes
  - His glory shined upon the world / enlightened the very depths of the abyss

- Death was conquered, night had vanished / and the gates of Shell were broken
- Creatures lying in darkness from ancient times / are all clothed in light
- The dead arose from the dust / and praised because they have a Saviour
- He brought salvation and granted us life / He ascended to His Father on High
- He will return in great glory / enlightening the eyes awaiting Him
- Our King is coming in majestic glory / Let us light our lamps and go forth to meet Him
- Let us find our joy in Him for He has found joy in us / He will indeed gladden us with His stunning bright Light
- Let us glorify the majesty of the Son / and give thanks to the Almighty Father
- Who, in an outpouring of love, sent Him to us / to fill us with hope and salvation
- His day comes out suddenly/ and the saints come out to him
- The saints awaiting Him in weariness, struggle and prepared / will go forth to meet Him with lighted lamps
- Then the angels and guardians of heaven will rejoice / in the glory of the just and upright people
- Together crowned with victory / they will sing hymns and praises
- O brothers, stand up then and be ready / Give thanks to our King and Saviour
- He will come in great glory / to gladden us with His stunning bright light in His kingdom

– **A reading from the Gospel of Matthew (19:27-30)**

Then Peter said in reply, “Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?”

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first”.

- **Prayer (From the book of evening and morning prayers for weekdays, adapted from the Chaldean Rite) read by one of the participants in the group, and the rest responds with the chorus:**

- Let us rise well with reverence and diligence, and ask, "O Lord, have mercy on us".

**Chorus: O Lord, have mercy on us.**

- O Father of Mercifulness and the God of all condolences, we ask you.
- O Saviour, who takes care of us and the director of all, we ask you.
- For the security and agreement of the entire world and all churches, we ask you.
- For the sake of our countries and all countries, and for the sake of the convention of the whole world, we ask you.
- For peace and stability, and fertile year, and the yields of fruit, we ask you.
- For the sake of our saints fathers (mention here the name of the Pope, patriarch and archbishop) and for the community they serve, we ask you.
- O merciful God, whom in His Mercy takes care of all, we ask you.
- Save us, Jesus Christ, our Lord with your grace, and increase your security and peace with us and have mercy on us.

- **A dialogue session between the Leader and the group on one of the following topics (the leader may add other topics) followed by a period of silence:**

- What is my view of priestly and monastic call? Do I feel invited?
- What does "consecration" means to me? Why are there dedicated people?
- What is the importance of Christian education in my life? How do I live it?

- **Hymn "My Heart Doesn't Love"**

(1)

My heart doesn't love but my beloved Saviour ... In his Name, I got my salvation,  
because he redeemed me with the cross

I don't like anything except The Glorious Name... I'm only satisfied with Him, He is  
my only friend

(2)

Everything within the heart is only "longing towards His generous person" ... I want  
nothing in my life but His great glory

My strength and my life belongs to my Lord and no one else ... He bought me with  
His own blood, saving the most sinner

(3)

All my self to Jesus, all my money in life ... All my love, peace and hope in prayer

All my heart is to Jesus, my treasure and my love ... my pride and reliance, the  
name of my Lord is my desire

## Conclusion

### Thoughts and suggestions to teachers

Dear teachers,

At the conclusion of this guidebook, I appeal to you dear teachers as you have taken the responsibility to educate the young generation to realise the importance and priority of their faith in their lives. To make them refer back to the roots of their fathers and forefathers for their Christian faith. This is a very difficult task, made even harder because of the challenges we face today especially in dealing with ancient history.

Here are some thoughts and suggestions so that together we can convey the mystical interpretation of our spiritual rites to our dear students:

- ❖ You all comprehend the psychological and sociological aspects of the teenage groups (13 – 18 years old), we are not about to discuss them here. We just want to reaffirm that we are dealing with the adolescent stage in our students lives with all that it carries of fluctuations in their characters in order to prepare them to be adults able to make their choices and decisions. Do we have characters in our rites and tradition to provide as an example to this generation? Certainly, we do. We are keen to present these figures to our students without undue exaggeration or embellishment, and to concentrate on the spiritual characteristic of their stories.
- ❖ When we recount our stories, we must emphasise to students the fact that they are not fairy tales like the ones they have been told when young children, that these stories depict true people who have lived amongst us. It is true that sometimes there would be some exaggerations here and there as we mentioned, but that does not mean that the characters in the stories are mythical! Therefore, it is not enough to “tell” a story. Christian Education is not built on just words; there are other ways to make the stories more meaningful, we need to use modern ways of teaching to be compatible with the young mentalities of our students especially of the intermediate and secondary school age groups. We must not depend passively on thinking that God will convey His Word to the students; God in His humbleness uses our human methods to make His Word reach the fertile soil that is ready to receive it and hereby lays our responsibility.
- ❖ In telling stories that are centuries old, we need to learn how to use “stimulating” methods to convey it to the contemporary young minds of our students. This generation gets easily bored and is being trained by social media to ignore anything that is not immediately fascinating!
- ❖ It is also beneficial to turn some stories into charades to be acted in class. The scene will be more imprinted in the students’ minds especially if they participate

in the acting. We can choose the somewhat long texts that will have more dialogues to turn them into scenes. We can add additional imaginary dialogues (in the same spirit of the text) to enhance the effectiveness of the scene without taking from the spirituality of the text

- ❖ It is unfortunate that we do not have pictures of the many Biblical and ceremonial figures that are mentioned in our Tradition. It would have helped a great deal in committing the images in the student's mind. Therefore, our own style of telling the story or acting it with scenes will imprint it in the student's mind but we need to be careful not to exaggerate the true meaning of sainthood, for example to hear some tales of our saints, you could be forgiven to think that they were superhuman legendary heroes who had exceptional powers that no one else can have! This is a distortion of the true meaning of sainthood. A saint is a human being like us but who had lived life according to Christian faith and if there were miracles, they were made by the Power of God that was working through them, the same Power that can also work through us in present time if we submit to it. Anyone hearing the stories of the martyrs might wonder at their stubborn determination to die for Christ. This is not a heroic characteristic; it is simply that they loved Christ so much they sacrificed their lives for him!

- ❖ We can draw comparisons between the tales of the saints and other contemporary stories so that the students can feel closer to the life of that saint or martyr. Social media tells such stories every day; it depends on the skill of the teacher to compare the two stories in a way that will enhance the true meaning of holiness in our present time. This will require the student to delve deeper into the saint's life but on the other hand live their own lives deeply as well.

As for bringing students closer to the lives of saints, as we mentioned before, our Christian characters speak for themselves which makes them easy to talk to and also make it easier to examine our conscience based on the way they lived their lives. After all, this is our ultimate goal from visiting lives of saints: We do not tell stories so that the students can memories them by heart, but we tell about spiritual experiences that will make people ready to create their own contemporary experiences.

- ❖ We can dedicate the second session of Christian School or establish social media group meetings to pray to each of our Saints and martyrs according to their ritual days. If the meeting is face to face, it is preferable that everyone head to the front of the church before the Altar, to be in a spiritual bond with the saint we are praying for. But if the meeting is virtual (computer-based), we can use an appropriate image to help meditate. The teacher can also broadcast their own image with the person helping them with the prayers with an appropriate background to help students to pray and meditate.



- ❖ We can use simple references or the internet to learn more about the geographic and historical details of the saints and identify them. It would also be beneficial for the teacher to ask the students to research a particular detail online, so they can interest them more in the history of our Eastern Church. You can have an open discussion afterwards regarding specific details in the saint's character and how it relates to our situation today.

There are numerous other suggestions and I would be grateful if you send me some of them based on your experience, or any other suggestions that will enrich this endeavour. Also if you have reviews that you wish to communicate when you read this guidebook, please send to my email address:

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