



*For Immediate Release*

### **Communiqué of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Assyrian Church of the East Youth Association Conference**

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the Youth Association of the Assyrian Church of the East in North America was held from July 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008, at Phoenix, Arizona (USA) under the auspices of the St. Peter Parish in Phoenix, Diocese of Western United States. There were over 400 youth participants in this year's conference from all over the four dioceses in North America (Diocese of Eastern USA, Western USA, Canada and Western California). The various parish youth ministries which participated from our North American parishes were as follows: 1) Mar Gewargis Parish, Chicago; 2) St. Mary's Parish, Roselle; 3) St. Andrew's Parish, Des Plaines; 4) St. Mary's Parish, Detroit; 5) Mar Mari Parish, Hamilton (Canada); 6) St. Peter Parish, Phoenix; 7) Mar Narsai Parish, San Francisco; 8) Mar Yosip Khnanisho Parish, San Jose; 9) Mar Addai Parish, Turlock; 10) Mar Zaia Parish, Modesto; 11) Mar Gewargis Parish, Ceres; 12) St. Mary's Parish, Los Angeles; 13) Rabban Hermizd Parish, San Diego. There was also one representative from the Diocese of Australia and New Zealand. The parish priests who participated in the Conference were: 1) Cor-bishop David Royel, San Jose; 2) Cor-bishop Gewargis Toma, Des Plaines; 3) Cor-bishop Fredrick Hermiz, Phoenix; 4) Rev. Auchana Kanoun, Ceres; 5) Rev. Kando Kando, Mar Yosip Parish, Chandler; 6) Rev. Gewargis Bet-Rasho, Los Angeles; 7) Rev. William Toma, Roselle; 8) Rev. Polos Benjamin, Chicago; 9) Rev. Lawrence Namato, Detroit.

The theme of this year's conference was, "My Church: the Pillar of Truth," based on I Timothy 3:15: "...the Church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth..." the youth of the Assyrian Church of the East learned about the great theological, historical and faith heritage of their spiritual mother, the Church of the East. The conference was solemnly convoked on Thursday with the celebration of the Holy Qurbana by His Grace Bishop Mar Aprim Khamis, Bishop of the Diocese of Western

USA.. Being the liturgical commemoration of Mar Thoma (St. Thomas) the Apostle, it was appropriate to begin the conference's activities with the Holy Qurbana on the feast day of one of the founding apostles of the Assyrian Church of the East. On the next three days, Friday thru Saturday, talks were given by priests, deacons and the lay faithful in order to enrich the ancient Christian faith of our youth living in North America today. The youth attending the conference were especially graced to have a breakfast on Saturday morning with His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, who had flown in from Chicago specifically to attend the conference and impart his apostolic blessings to all the youth. His Holiness spoke to the Assyrian youth regarding the importance of the growth of their faith in Jesus Christ our Savior, through the instrumentality of the Church of their forefathers, the Assyrian Church of the East. In addition to adhering to the apostolic faith of the Church, His Holiness also stressed the importance of preserving our ancient Assyrian language and culture, especially as we live in the great 'melting-pot' nations in the West. Along with the various liberties and God-given freedoms which we enjoy, there is always the peril that our future generations will forget their Assyrian language and identity as a whole. Further, His Holiness also exhorted the parents to instill the Christian faith in the hearts of their children from childhood, for it is in the home and under the tutelage of the parents that our Christian and Assyrian identity will be fostered and preserved, no matter where we might reside.

On Sunday, July 6 all the youth participants took part in the celebration of the Holy Qurbana presided by His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV. Since St. Peter Parish commemorated the late Mar Yosip Khnanisho that day, over 1,000 faithful attended and received Holy Qurbana from the blessed hands of His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV.

During the course of the conference, the youth were also presented with and discussed vital matters that pertain to the future of our existence as Assyrians in our ancient homeland, modern-day Iraq. This Assyrian Church of the East Youth Conference strongly supports the rightful demand of countless thousands of Assyrians residing in the Nineveh Plain region of Iraq to autonomous self-rule in a free, stable and democratic Iraq. Our concern is not a political matter, rather it is a God-given right to the Assyrian people to inhabit and possess homeland that is there own, since both Sacred Scripture and history will attest to the fact that the Assyrians are the indigenous people of Iraq. Therefore, this conference loudly raises its voice and supports any and all endeavors on the part of the international community and the United Nations to promote, insure and constitutionally guarantee the right of self-rule (autonomy) of the Assyrians in the region of the Nineveh Plain. Such a guarantee will not only restitute the long-lost rights of the Assyrians in Iraq as that country's indigenous people, but it will also help foster and promote peace, stability and democracy in that country.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of the Assyrian Church of the East Youth Association of the North American parishes will be hosted by the Mar Yosip Khnanisho Parish and held on the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend, 2009, in San Jose, California.

*July 9, 2008*