

A Brief Biography of blessed memory
+Mar Yousip Khnanisho Metropolitan
of Iraq, the Church of the East,
and of The Assyrian Community

Many years past it had become a general practice, through the vicissitude of time and of the general proposal of the blessed Prelates of the Holy Church and with the acceptance of the various chieftains within the Assyrian community, the Prelates were selected and ordained to service The Church from among certain chosen families who were known for their faith, piety, holiness and significant sacrifices made in behalf of The Church and of the Assyrian Christian Community of believers.

The custom had been organized and developed to pass on from uncle to the first born nephew the Sacred Episcopal Office. We, thus, recognize that before +Mar Yousip was born, according to the custom of the Nazarites, observed by the Prelates of The Church of the East, his mother would abstain from the consumption of animal flesh (meats) till his birth and weaning. His remarkable birth in 1893, it is declared that he was born as a Nazarene under the Nazarite vow, being reared in solitude till his rest falling asleep into the hand of our Lord in the year 1977

+Mar Yousip of blessed memory if descended from the well known household or family of AMar Khnanisho Metropolitan of Rustaqa. @ He lived in the Village of Mar Ishoo in the region of Shamisdan in modern day Turkey, near the monastery of Mar Ishoo, which had been built at the entrance of the 5th century. This particular family had risen to prominence for there were 12 Metropolitan Archbishops who had come forth from this family, one following the other. They were well regarded and well know for their Christian piety, faith, leadership skills and faithful labor among the Christian believers of The Holy Church. There are five (5) tombs in the monastery of Mar Ishoo, with the remains of these earlier Metropolitans; the other three (3) tombs are not known, because of the changes which had occurred on the grounds of the monastery.

The ninth Metropolitan rested in peace in the region of Bataan, following his returning journey from the visit to Jerusalem where he visited the holy places. Subsequently his earthly remain were interred in the Church of Bnai Shumi in the Village of Char-roo-khia.

The tenth (10th) Metropolitan rested in the Village of Bahloolan during his Apostolic Sojourn to the region of Targarwar, his earthly remains were interred in The Church of Mar Toma Shilkha in the Village of Bahloolan, at the request of the faithful of The Church of that region. Till this present day his tomb remains in peace among us.

The eleventh (11th) +Mar Iskhaq Khnanishoo, at the time of the exodus of Assyrian Christians from the mountainous region of

Hakkari; fell asleep enroute to the City of Karmanshah, in Persia, his tomb remains to this present day; it is a shrine where the faithful of the region visit frequently.

The twelfth (12th) Metropolitan is +Mar Yousip Khnanishoo of blessed memory, he rested in peace in Baghdad, Iraq, Sunday 3rd July 1977. He is interred in The Church of St Mary the Virgin in Na'ereah and Gayarah in New Baghdad.

It is this See of Rustaqa Shamisdan which is known by the whole Church as the successor of the See of Elam; it was this particular Metropolitan who had the sole authority to consecrate a Patriarch for the Holy Church upon the widowed See of Seleucia/Ctesiphon.

+Mar Yousip of blessed memory, while a young lad, knew fully the Office to which he was being groomed. While a young son of the Holy Church, he knew all the services of the Diaconal calling, together with that of the Priestly Office from the depths of his heart, he was tutored by the late Qashisha +Rehanna, of blessed memory) the uncle of his father. Qashisha +Rehanna was known for his depth of knowledge in the Aramaic language and the Holy Theological truths of the Holy Church, also knowing the languages of the Turks and of the Russians. Under the tutoring of Qashisha +Rehanna, many students were studying and preparing for the Holy Priesthood in the Monastery of Mar Ishoo. It was from this monastery that priests and bishops were prepared, formed, for the whole of the metropolitanate. It is for this reason that +Mar Yousip had been set aside and ordained to the Office of Deacon at the age of 12. In the year of 1912 he was ordained to the Sacred Office of Priest; following his profound knowledge of Holy Doctrine, the Theological Truths in The Church; and that of the language of The Church; Aramaic. In 1914, at the beginning of World War I, +Mar Yousip was sent as a representative of Mar +Iskhaq Khnanisho to the Patriarchal Cell in Qochanis, to attend the Patriarchal Council which was preparing for the change which might occur in the event of the WWI influence or disturbances in The Church of the East and among the Assyrian Christian believers.

It was at this time, (June 10th 1914) while on this embassy to Qochanis, he was elevated to the Sacred Office of the Episcopacy by +Mar Benjamin Shimun of blessed memory. His Excellency remained in Qochanis till 1916 as an assistant to the Catholicos Patriarch. When the Assyrian Christian abandoned their homeland, owing to the difficulties of war, seeking a safe haven elsewhere, Metropolitan Yousip took a great number of believers of The Holy Church back toward the City of Baqooba. It was to the rank of Metropolitan the young bishop +Mar Yousip was elevated, in the City of Baghdad by Mar +Polos Shimun Catholicos Patriarch of blessed memory on 2nd December 1918.

In 1933 at the time when Mar +Eshai Shimun was ordered by governmental authorities to leave the Kingdom of Iraq and was subsequently exiled to Cyprus; it was Mar +Yousip Khnaninisho who led the whole Church in Iraq and all of the Middle East.

His Excellency Mar +Yousip Khnaninisho entered into the joys of eternal life leaving behind the suffering of this temporal life on 3rd July 1977, the Commemoration of St Thomas the Apostle, a 1:10 P.M. The Service of Commemoration of His Excellency was celebrated on Wednesday 6th July 1977; in the Parish Church of Mar Gewargis Sahda, in Dura, Baghdad, Iraq by His Excellency Mar Narsai of Lebanon, and Bishop Mar Daniel of Kirkuk, and a great number of priests and deacons and a great number of believers who attended from throughout the various cities of Iraq, as 12,000 Christian souls participated in this celebrated Christian life of blessed memory Mar +Yousip.

His earthly remains were escorted to the place of his final rest, in St Mary the Virgin, Baghdad. All those who had loved and respected Mar +Yousip Khnanishoo from the various Christian communities attended the memorial service offered before God in his behalf. Many of the Moslem community and leaders who respected and honored him, together with the representative of His Holiness Paul VI of Rome, the Chaldean Patriarch Paul Chikko, Mar Sankhero Zakkai of the Syrian Orthodox Church, and Mar Andrious Senna, the head of the Syrian Language Council of Baghdad, the Iraqi governmental officials, the representative of the President Iraq Ahmed Hassan al-Bakker.

The memorial service was celebrated with profound depths of grief expressed in sighs, tears, and out bursts of weeping of those, etc. by all who had gathered in the Church of Mar Gewargis.

At 10:00 A.M. the casket which held the body of Mar +Yousip Khnanishoo carried upon the shoulders of priests and deacons and together with the singing of the happy sad songs of hope ringing forth from the voices of the faithful of The Church, till reaching the hearse which would transport the remains to its final resting place in Mart Maryam Church in Na'eriah. The youths of The Church were carrying flowers, enshrining the pictures of His Excellency. The faithful were present awaiting the arrival of the remains of His Excellency.

Following the concluding of Rite of the Christian Burial, according to the Liturgy of the Church of the East, all who had gathered there paid their final respects and farewell to this great shepherd who leaves behind his faithful flock; leaving to The Church his legacy of Christian service. The relics of this sainted man brings among us heavenly aids; especially to all those who approach with faith and trust.

Mar +Yousip Khnanisho of blessed memory, as a copiest, hand wrote many, many prayer-books, and spiritual works, such as: Kashkul, the hymnal of the Church, the Turgama, the Taqsa Siameeda, and the Taqsa d'Raza. Mar +Yousip had written many hymns for the feast days, and some of which have been subsequently incorporated into our prayer-books. In a hymn for the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord, he had written an anagram from his name, identifying his humility, his faith in Jesus Christ, and the deep love for his people and The Church.

At the conclusion of the celebration of the saintly life, Mr. Rowel, the younger brother of Mar +Yousip delivered a thanksgiving speech, in which he offered thanks to the prelates, clergy, the faithful, and the officials of government and those responsible for the motorcade.

A sister of Mar +Yousip of blessed memory was called by the name Anseemos, known as Sempto, was known as a Nazarite, too, choosing a solitary life as a nun, together with her brother Mar +Yousip. Looking unto our worshipful God we beseech Him to grant rest unto His faithful servant in His Heavenly kingdom together with all the righteous ones; and that his commemoration be to us for blessed memory.

These words were written by his younger brother, Rowel bet Matran. And subsequently translated into English by: Reverend Dr. George Toma. Saint Andrew Parish, Glenview, IL. USA