

Assyrians of California received first hand report of their brethren in Iraq

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**By AssyriaTimes Staff Writer ©2006**

On Friday, January 6, 2006, the Assyrian cultural center of Bet-Nahrain in Ceres, California, hosted a dinner reception for the Assyrian Church of the East Metropolitan of Iraq, His Beatitude Mar Gewargis Sliwa, and the Assyrian Church of the East Bishop of Europe and temporary Bishop of the United States' Western Diocese, Mar Odisho Oraham.

Mar Gewargis and Mar Odisho dined with the President of Bet-Nahrain Organization and the Assyrian National Congress, Dr. Sargon Dadesho. Other invited dinner guests were, Assyrian clergies of various Assyrian church denominations and many community dignitaries.

Following dinner, Mar Gewargis and Mar Odisho received a warm welcome from a large crowd of hundreds of local Assyrians who were gathered at Bet-Nahrain hall. Beautiful national and religious songs, poems, and speeches were performed in the two church leaders' honor.

In a passionate speech, His Beatitude Mar Gewargis Sliwa, kindled the crowd's emotions for their brethren's situation in Iraq. With his immaculate demeanor and strong voice, Mar Gewargis informed everyone how the Assyrians of Iraq suffer from daily insurgency in Iraq, "no more and no less than the general Iraqi people". And he emphasized, "Yet, despite daily struggles, the Assyrians of Iraq uphold their loyalty in their forefathers' Holy land. Their unshakable Christian faith gives them the power to endure the daily life challenges and continue to fight for their national and political rights as the indigenous people of Iraq. Furthermore, they carry forward building Assyrian schools. The Assyrian school of Kirkuk project is 90% completed and the building of the Assyrian school in Baghdad is well underway."

His Beatitude commented on the church bombings, "When I visited the Mar Gewargis Assyrian church of the East in Dora District shortly after it was bombed, I faced a large crowd of parishioners as well as sympathetic non-Assyrian neighbors with a heavy heart, but I assured them that we will rebuild a more glorious church." Following this report, Dr. Sargon Dadesho made \$5,000 donation on behalf of the Bet-Nahrain organization which was followed by a stream of donations from the crowd that evening toward the construction of Assyrian schools and churches in Iraq.

His Grace, Mar Odisho addressed the current situation of the Assyrian church of the East and its mission to defeat the conspiracy against this national church and its leadership, His Holiness, Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV. In his speech, Mar Odisho stated the court case to reclaim stolen churches and their properties by the former rebellious Bishop, Mar Bawai Soro is moving along. His Grace, Mar Odisho has replaced Mar Bawai Soro

temporarily, as Mar Bawai was expelled from the Assyrian Church of the East for his fraudulent activities.

On Tuesday, January 10, 2006, His Beatitude, Mar Gewargis Sliwa will hold a special presentation at Bet-Nahrain organization regarding "The Shroud of Turin." Local Assyrians are invited to attend this historical illustration which will also be aired live on AssyriaSat, the Assyrian global television network.