

الكنيسة المشرقية في سورية

SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE

OF ANTIOCH & ALL THE EAST

BAB TOUMA, P.O. BOX 22260

DAMASCUS - SYRIA



BY THE GRACE OF GOD

**Ignatius Zakka I Iwas**

Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church

No.E292/07



September 20, 2007

Apostolic Benediction to Their Eminences our beloved Archbishops and to our beloved spiritual children the Corepiscoposes, Priests and the Faithful.

We are very blessed by Almighty God to inform you that in the two thousand year history of our Holy Church a Medical Mission has been started under our direct supremacy.

Regarding the establishment of this Medical Mission, we had stated in our Patriarchal Bull No.E334/05 dated October 26, 2005, that it would be a good thing and that it would be of great help not only for the members our Universal Syriac Orthodox Church, but also for the human society as a whole. In the said Bull, we had approved the proposed 'Universal Syriac Orthodox Medical Mission' and the list of office-bearers.

And the list of office-bearers as approved and confirmed by us are: His Eminence Mor Clemis Eugene Kaplan (Los Angeles) – President, His Eminence Mor Athanasius Elia Bahi (Damascus) – Vice President, His Eminence Mor Philoxinos Yuhanon (Malabar) – Vice President, His Eminence Mor Gregorios Joseph (Cochin) – Vice President, Rev. Father Babu Peringol (Oklahoma City) – Secretary General, Dr. Edathara C. Abraham (Little Rock) – Chief Executive Officer and Mr. Lony Thomas (Denver) – Treasurer. The rest of the Executive Board members are: Dr. Roy P. Thomas (Chicago), Dr. Susan Jacob (Houston), Dr. Suhail Zavaro (San Diego), Dr. Sami Hamamji (Los Angeles), Dr. D. Babu Paul (Trivandrum) and Dr. Abraham Korah (Denver). His Eminence Mor Athanasius Aphrem Barsoum (Beirut) and His Eminence Mor Themotheos Thomas (Kottayam) are Co-Chairmen of the Advisory Board. Also, Dr. Elias Arouse (Massachusetts), Dr. Dany Bahdousch (Phoenix), Dr. Malko Dunia (Beirut), Dr. George P. Hanna (Houston) and Sara Chamathil (Dallas) were nominated to the Board as members.

The organization has been named Saint Ephrem Universal Syriac Orthodox Medical Mission (SEUSOMM) and registered as a charitable organization in the State of California in the USA. Its Central Office is at 417 E. Fairmount Rd, Burbank, California 91501 (Phone: 818-845-5089). His Beatitude Mor Baselios Thomas I, Catholicos of India, kindly inaugurated the Central Office on August 18 and extended full support for the Medical Mission. Its Grand Opening and blessing by us is scheduled for Saturday, July 5, 2008, at our Saint Aphrem Syriac Orthodox Seminary in Ma'arrat Seydnaya, Damascus, Syria.

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The decisions recently made by the Board regarding future projects are far reaching and warrant full support by the Church. Several projects are being put forward. To name a few: 1) Provide financial, social and medical assistance to the members of our Church who are displaced by war, famine and other calamities in different parts of the world, including immediate attention to those who are in Iraq and those who have left for neighboring countries; 2) Establish a Medical Core for immediate deployment to places of need; 3) Establish Patriarchal University including a Medical branch at least in places which are now under-served. To accomplish all these goals, the plan is to approach charitable foundations, corporations and wealthy individuals. However, it may not be fruitful in our effort unless the Church has done its part by providing financial support as a source for initial investment in the high priority projects. After some progress has been made in various projects, it will be realistic to approach other sources of funding.

Therefore, for raising funds for the Medical Mission and other charitable work, individual contributors are needed, and, for a year-to-year basis, we proclaim the First Sunday after Easter as the Medical Mission Sunday. The offerings on that Sunday should be committed to Medical Mission work. As per the direction of the Diocesan Bishops, Parish Priests and Governing Bodies should fully cooperate to implement this. The Diocesan Bishops shall be responsible for collecting the funds and disbursing the same to the Medical Mission. We pray God to bless this new Universal Syriac Orthodox Medical Mission so that it may be able to provide excellent service to all in need.

We extend our Apostolic Blessings to you. May the grace of God be with you all forever. Amen.



*Handwritten signature in Arabic script*