



## NEWSLETTER FROM ARCHBISHOP BASHAR MATTI WARDA

### CHALDEAN ARCHDIOCESE OF ERBIL 2022 KEY EVENTS IN ANKAWA

#### Ordination of 53 Subdeacons

28 January: the Archdiocese celebrated the ordination of 53 subdeacons and deaconesses along with the diaconate ordination of Hekmat Sliwa. In their consecration, they accepted Christ's mission of preaching and service on behalf of the Church.

His Excellency Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda and His Excellency Bishop Emmanuel Shalita, the local ordinary of the Chaldean Diocese of Saint Peter in California, presided over the joyous liturgy. In keeping with rich Church tradition, the ordination was celebrated on the feast of St. Stephen—one of the first ordained to this ministry.



The Chaldean Church has a particularly symbolic theology surrounding the diaconate. The first stage of subdeacons may only read from the Psalms during evening prayer. In the second stage, a subdeacon has the authority to read from the Old Testament during the Mass. Finally, only deacons may read from the New Testament. The Chaldean tripartite distinction of the diaconate symbolizes the levels of angels described in Revelation. Additionally, the practice of two deacons serving at Mass is a constant reminder that Saints Michael and Gabriel are always present before the Altar of God in Heaven. May Our Lord bless the servants of His altar so they may follow His example in generous service.

#### Youth Committee Launches Fundraiser for Sick of the Community

“Whatever you did for one of these little ones, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

24 February: The Youth Committee in the Archdiocese launched a special donation campaign for the Lenten season. In the presence of Fr. Dinkha Abdel Ahad, head of the Youth Committee, and Sr. Samar Kamel, members of the Youth Committee began to collect proceeds for the treatment of cancer patients, especially pediatric patients. As part of the campaign, the youth



received spiritual and pastoral formation and ministered in solidarity among the sick and homeless. The campaign succeeded in gathering \$12,100 for those suffering from cancer.

### **Catechism teaching**

The Archbishop established the *Catechism Central Committee* to plan and organize pastoral activities, training young people to fulfil their call to share the *Good News* with the children and youth at all the catechism activities.

The committee was established to unite the work of the 11 catechism centres in the seven parishes in the Erbil governorate. This was in order to give the catechism centres and teachers access to sufficient resources and training opportunities, plus to empower and encourage them in an effective catechism formation.



The catechetical activity of the Chaldean Catholic Archdiocese of Erbil is divided into three levels:

- Elementary age 5-11 (800)
- Intermediate age 12-14 (300)
- Secondary age 15-18 (350)
- There are 300 new communicants annually

*27-31 March: Catechism and Education in a Positive Way*”, was a 5-day programme with 70 catechists coming from the 10 catechism centres. The total course hours were 25 hours. The course is very important in the catechist’s formation in his/her biblical and pastoral education and the development of the catechist’s teaching skills. The Key Lecturer was Raymond El Khoury, a Lebanese teacher at St. Joseph University (USJ) in Beirut. He is a consultant, coach, and senior trainer certified in Innovative Leadership from Boston College and the Founder and Managing Director of the Leadership & Management Academy. He is well known to the community. (*Donor ACN*)



## A Trumpet Blast for the Lord

*31 March:* the parish of Umm Al-Ma'una Al-Dama'a (Our Lady of Perpetual Help) in Ankawa held an evening of hymns before the Easter Season.

In a packed church, His Excellency Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda and His Excellency Archbishop Habib Al-Nawfali, Archbishop of the Chaldean Diocese of Basra and the South, watched as the Chaldean Daughters of the Sacred Heart led a choir joyfully singing choral chants.



Each parish in the Archdiocese has a children's choir and an adult choir. As children make their First Holy Communion, they are invited to join the adult choir.

Sr. Samar, a sister with the daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who supervised the choir, emphasized in an opening speech that the evening was "a pause for oneself in preparation for the Feast of Resurrection, to live with the Lord Christ free from the chains that bind us."

## Palms Line the Streets to Prepare for Easter

In the Chaldean Church, special attention is paid to Palm Sunday and Easter. We are an Easter people who reflect the jubilation of our victorious Lord. Students of Ankawa prepared for months to celebrate Palm Sunday with a Sa'aneen celebration on April 9. Sa'aneen, which is an annual procession of the entire faith community commemorating Christ's arrival in Jerusalem, included hundreds in brightly dressed congregants. In addition, the procession symbolizes the faithful climbing the mountain of God as mentioned in Isaiah.



Led by bishops of the apostolic churches, the crowd, including 900 children and their families, started from Mart Shmoni Shrine passing through Mar Gorgis Church until reaching St. Joseph Cathedral. Before entering, the bishops knocked on the cathedral's gate with the cross marking the





start of a holy feast. Joining in praise, the students offered their voices in song to welcome the Lamb of God

### **Umm Al-Ma'una Church 10th anniversary**

23 June: Under the title “Happiness and Joy,” the church of Umm Al-Ma'una prayerfully celebrated its twelfth parish festival. The event included a series of lectures by Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda, the opening of a charitable market, and recreational competitions for catechism students. Following a Mass of thanksgiving, the community enjoyed games and discussed the future of the parish in small groups. (*Donors: Missio*)

### **New Church Consecrated to Serve Expanding Population**

25 June: In a solemn ceremony, His Beatitude Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, consecrated the altar and church of St. Thomas (Hersham, Ankawa) on June 25.

Surrounded by his fellow bishops and civil and community leaders, the Cardinal opened the Sacraments to the growing populations of Ankawa and Jama'. 400 families welcomed the church as their spiritual home and joyfully embraced the new community. In total, the Archdiocese serves 8,000 families and has opened two new churches besides St. Thomas since 2013: Umm Al-Ma'una (2012) and Saints Peter and Paul (2016). Growth has been the need to serve Internally Displaced People (IDPs) from Mosul and the Nineveh Plains displaced by ISIS.



### **First Communion Class Prayerfully Accepts Eucharist**



29 June -1 July: The community celebrated First Communion in the diocese churches; 243 young people who prepared for nine months under the supervision of the priests and sisters of the Archdiocese received the Lord Jesus for the very first time. During 60 meetings, communicants faithfully learned about the catechism and liturgy, helping them enter this holy Sacrament. As always, the occasion marked a special moment for the community and invited the children and their

families of the Archdiocese to participate in the liturgy.



## San Hikmat Kaka Joins the Ranks of Chaldean Priests

*July 2:* His Excellency Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda ordained San Hikmat Kaka to the priesthood. Fr. San earned a bachelor's degree in French Literature from Salahaddin University before discerning a call to the priesthood. His witness encourages our young people to lay down everything for the cross of Christ. The celebration began with the rank of priestly ordination, followed by the Divine Liturgy, and concluded with a word of gratitude from the ordained priest. We pray and encourage our



young people to consider a call to the priesthood and lay down all for the cross of Christ. The people's prayers remain with him and all our priests as they offer service in Christ's name for the Archdiocese.

## Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign

*July:* Recognizing the needs of the community, the Archdiocese embarked on a campaign to raise awareness for breast cancer examinations in Ankawa, which is the biggest killer of women in Iraq. The July rally offered early breast cancer examinations for free to over 800 women. The Archdiocese partnered with Maryamana Hospital to cover the examination fee to overcome cultural bias against screening. The campaign was a significant step toward more preventative care. (*Donors: Embrace the Middle East and private ones from Australia*)

## Catechism teaching

*11-30 July:* A Spiritual & Educational Catechism Summer Camp for 300 students aged 16-18.

A Spiritual & Educational Catechism summer camp for 250 Catechism students aged 13-15.

The theme for the summer camp was "Moses and the 10 Commandments". This summer activity was an important complement to their weekly lessons and an opportunity for students



to come together for 6 days per week to hear the word of God via 4 hours of catechism in the morning per day, share their experiences, attend the sacrament of confession, and participate in morning and evening prayers and masses. (*Donor: ACN*)



## Youth Included in Synod on the Synod

*14-23 July:* Under the slogan “their eyes were opened, and they recognized him and then disappeared from them” (Luke 24:31), the summer activities of the Central Christian Education Committee of the Archdiocese of Erbil and the Chaldean Church of Communion began. The first event, entitled: Synod Church for the Youth, launched in the evening at Saints Peter and Paul Parish.



Throughout the summer, events included spiritual lectures, dialogue, and discussion groups, handcrafts, games, Ramshah (Evening Prayer), and confessions. A pilgrimage to Al-Qosh, a Christian village where the bones of the prophet Nahum are buried, was an especially special time for the youth to reconnect with their Faith and Chaldean roots.

The activities concluded with a Mass of thanksgiving presided over by Father Samir Sliwa, the spiritual guide of the Education Committee and the priest of Saints Peter and Paul Parish. We pray that our youth go forward to walk together in the joy, love, and light of Jesus.

## Archdiocesan Schools Rally with Increased Enrollment

*August:* Archdiocesan schools serve 1,200 students in Mar Qardakh International School (English International Baccalaureate curriculum), and the multi faiths schools: Al- Beshara School (Arabic), Maryamana School (English), and Umm Al-Ma’una Secondary School (English).



Seven volunteers from prestigious Catholic schools in America joined the education team to help teach at Mar Qardakh International School; six teachers studied at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, joined by a graduate from Christendom College. In recent years, the Archdiocese has developed a robust relationship with Newman Guide schools in America, especially the Franciscan University of Steubenville. Additionally, Sr. Azhar was appointed as a social researcher at Umm Al-Ma’una Secondary School to accompany the students on their pastoral path to academic success.





## Radio Maryam Extends its Reach to the Catholic Faithful

*15 August:* On the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and the fourth anniversary of the founding of Radio Maryam, Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda dedicated the chapel of Radio Maryam Erbil. In his speech, the archbishop stressed the role of church media in society as a guiding light for believers. Broadcasting throughout the region, Radio Maryam offers spiritual, pastoral, and educational support for Catholics in Arabic and Sureth. Clergy regularly appears on air to answer questions related to family life and faith while volunteers from around the city give their time praying the Rosary on air.



Later that day, His Excellency Bishop Azad Shaba, Bishop of Dohuk, established the third branch of Radio Maryam in the Dohuk Governorate of the Kurdistan Region. In an encouraging word, Bishop Azad thanked the Radio Maryam family for opening a private studio in Dohuk, stressing his full support for the project's development.

## The Catholic University in Erbil (The CUE) starts the New Academic Year

*14 August:* The 2022-2023 academic year began for non-first-year students. There are four new departments (pharmacy, nursing, business studies, and digital media); the CUE now has eleven disciplines taught in English, including accounting; architecture; civil engineering; computer sciences; English language; international relations, and medical laboratory sciences. Despite the challenges of growth due to many parents not being able to afford education for their children due to high unemployment, the CUE continues to serve its student body with the highest-level education and professional mentoring, greatly assisted by international Christian agencies.



More than 400 students have applied to join the university; the first-year students start in late November. This year the university has been able to offer 150 new scholarships provided by the Aid to the Church in Need (100) and the Italian Bishops Conference (50). The funds will mainly go to students from poorer Christian villages outside of Erbil and to Yazidis and Muslims.



## Ankawa Youth Meeting

*1-3 September:* The Central Youth Committee of the Archdiocese organized the Ankawa Youth Meeting (AYM). The event brought together over 1500 Christian youth spread across 4 archdioceses that account for more than 60 parishes. It provided a great opportunity for the youth to travel and to meet in one place (The Catholic University in Erbil) for three days of faith, friendship, inspiration, and personal spiritual gain.



On September 3, His Excellency Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda, accompanied by His Excellency Apostolic Nuncio Mitja Lyskovar concluded the convocation with Mass.

During the celebrations, a message was read from the Secretary of State of the Vatican, His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, conveying the feelings of His Holiness and his congratulations on the AYM. He called on young people not to lose hope in their future, saying, *“Remember that Jesus is by your side and do not give up and lose hope. God is with you, and the Church is close to you and prays with you.”* The event called on the youth to be builders of the kingdom and take responsibility for our common home—the Church. (*Donor: ACN*)

## All Saints Day Comes Early

*28 October:* the Catechism Center celebrated All Saints Day through a special activity focusing on the importance of this holiday in our Catholic Church, reminding students how the saints are our intercessors and companions. Fr. Samir Sliwa, the director of the Central Committee for Christian Education in the Archdiocese, and religious sisters and lay teachers supervised this special and beautiful celebration for the students. Catechism lessons in the Archdiocese now include over 800 students weekly and rely on the help of sixty-two volunteer catechists.





*1 November:* Mar Qardakh International Baccalaureate School also celebrated All Saints Day by dressing up as various saints. The recently beatified Bl. Carlo Acutis was especially popular among the boys, and the girls flocked to St. Philomena. Some students presented their saint to the entire school, sharing or her heroic life. The following day the school again convened to remember the faithful departed in an assembly about All Souls Day. Students placed pictures of their deceased relatives on a Mexican style “ofrenda” for remembrance and prayer.

### **Spiritual Seminar for the Fraternity of the Pastoral Team**

*1-3 November:* the youth fraternity at Mar Joseph Cathedral held a convocation to elect a new secretariat for their pastoral team. Elections occur every four years for this group of young people who serve the Archdiocese through volunteer efforts, formation, spirituality, and social events. At the convocation, Fr. Albair Hisham reflected on the young man of Mark’s Gospel, discussing the constant presence of youth at the critical moments of Christ’s life. The event concluded with a spiritual retreat at Mar Antonius Chaldean Monastery in Ankawa and the celebration of Mass.



In the Archdiocese, each parish has a youth fraternity, which meets weekly to support Catholic youth. In their work and prayer, the local church becomes stronger and more equipped to face the challenges they face.

### **New Pastoral Team Elected**

The St. Joseph Cathedral youth fraternity held its pastoral team election on November 5. Each member present had five votes to cast for fourteen candidates interested in serving in the group’s leadership, led by Miss. Vena Yousef, appointed by His Excellency to lead the new general secretariat, was elected by the 114 members.



The pastoral team helps advise and organize monthly faith-filled activities and coordinates finances. Before the election, Mr. Nawar Oganna, past general secretary, was lauded by His Excellency Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda for his faithful service. A smooth transition of power followed with a dinner enjoyed by all.

