

Canonization of the Clergy is a Serious and Noble Concept – Let’s Leave Emotions and Personal Loyalties Out of it

To this day, few Assyrians continue to post tributes on social media to the late patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, Mar Dinkha IV. On the 6th anniversary of his passing (Mar 26, 2021) the tributes flooded social media.

For a long time in Iran, Mar Dinkha might have been a good priest and bishop. It is normal then that many Assyrians from Iran, some from his own tribe, and others had special connection with him. That is expected and normal as people show their respect to the memory of a loved one. Few from within these groups have worked very hard throughout the years to maintain a positive and rosy image of the patriarch among the faithful.

But, we ask, what makes a bishop or a patriarch unique, special and worthy to be respected and admired? Is it the mutual tribal connection? Is it the blind emotions? Surely, both these two categories are not the case. A bishop or patriarch must have an exquisite record related to his spirituality, and his relationship with, and connection to, his congregation, and his handling of everything that affects his church. To name a few, a bishop or patriarch must honor the church laws, be a good leader who controls his church, encourages reforms, acts to bond with all the faithful without exception, practices honesty, sows love and harmony within the congregation, remains humble and transparent, ensures collaboration with all his congregation, shows Christian virtues, stays out of political matters, and stands behind all his people indiscriminately and defends them at all cost. I do not think that any reasonable person would object to these characteristics.

Those who look beyond the tribal connection and blind emotions are in a better position to judge their leaders and evaluate their impact on church in particular and society at large.

Let us consider some of the attributes or characteristics of a good bishop or patriarch that we listed earlier and apply them to Mar Dinkha who was consecrated patriarch in 1976 after the assassination of Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun on Nov. 6, 1975.¹

1. Mar Dinkha did not honor his church laws. In fact, he broke the church laws (Sounhados) when he was a bishop of Iran on couple of occasions in 1973. One example can be seen in the meeting of the 6 bishops below on September 6 to 13, 1973 in Beirut’s Roman Catholic monastery of Christ the King:

- a) Mar Dinkha, bishop of Iran
- b) Mar Narsai de Baz, bishop of Lebanon
- c) Mar Aprim Khamis, bishop of Basrah (now bishop of Arizona)
- d) Mar Youkhana Philipos Aziz, bishop of Arbil
- f) Mar Youkhana Oraham, bishop of Syria
- h) Mar Daniel Yaqu, bishop of Kirkuk

Three faithful bishops did not attend.

- a) Mar Sargis, bishop of Baghdad
- b) Mar Timatheus, bishop of India
- c) Mar Yousip Khnaneesho, Archbishop

¹ <http://www.atour.com/history/1900/20000717b.html>

The Assyrian Church of the East Laws (Sounhados) prohibits meetings of bishops without an explicit agreement from the patriarch.²

2. As a patriarch, Mar Dinkha was not a good leader, because he lost control over his own bishops on several occasions, as many of his bishops did what they wished. Ask yourself: How did Mar Aprim Khamis end up as the bishop of Arizona? Patriarch Mar Dinkha could not seriously discipline Mar Aprim after the Chicago fiasco³ because of fear; therefore, he rewarded him with a transfer. Both Mar Dinkha and Mar Aprim were the last two remaining bishops (Mar Daniel was retired) who participated in the illegal bishops meeting in Beirut in 1973 where they conspired against Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun. Therefore, they could not touch one other, because, and as many argue, the two bishops knew all the ugly details of that infamous meeting.

3. Mar Dinkha failed on many occasions to bring all the faithful together, and sat on the sidelines as bishops were spewing hatred, inciting boycotts, and promoting divisions.⁴

4. Mar Dinkha was not transparent, he did not treat all his congregation equally and reflected clear bias in dealing with certain members of his church. He refused, for example, to visit any of the Assyrian schools in northern Iraq that were established by the ADM or Assyrian Aid Society, even at times when he was only a few minutes away while visiting northern Iraq. What was the fault or guilt of the Assyrian children studying in those 35 schools? As many argue, there was a conflict of interest between the patriarch's loyalty to his congregation (people) and his close relationship with the Masoud Barzani

5. Mar Dinkha was not humble. Participating personally in a musical parade for the occasion of naming a section of Ashland Blvd after him in Chicago is one example. The multiple life-size pictures of himself throughout the churches is not a sign of humbleness.⁵ The other example is, according to the Assyrian Church of the East magazine "Voice of the East", May-June 2016, Mar Dinkha contributed \$100,000 from his own patriarchal account to be part of a larger sum (\$200,000) towards building his final resting place (shrine).⁶ Other examples are the lavish parties on the occasions of his birthdays and anniversaries that he attended personally and regularly.

6. Mar Dinkha meddled in politics and took sides. He supported the Kurdish puppet Sarkis Aghajan politically and bestowed two medals upon him in preparations for Iraqi national and regional elections. He also supported all the Assyrian politicians who belonged to his own tribe such as Romeo Hakari and members of the Hariri family who are very close to the Kurdish leaders. Mar Dinkha was never shy of praising the Kurdish leader Barzani despite the harm that the Barzani regime had inflicted upon the Assyrians. All of this, he did to undermine the only truly elected Assyrian political group: the ADM. The actions and wrong policies of Mar Dinkha, and other patriarchs, continue to hurt the Assyrians in northern Iraq to this very day.

Considering all this, we have been hearing recently, and more openly, certain individuals calling Mar Dinkha a saint. These individuals are planting the seeds for his canonization (naming him a saint). The calls have been slowly spreading on social media since the 5th year anniversary of Mar Dinkha's death.⁷

2 <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2015/MarDinkhaLegacy.pdf>

3 <http://www.zindamagazine.com/html/archives/2001/7.23.01/index.php>

4 Refer to the speeches of Mar Narsi and Mar Melis during the Mar Bawai confrontation.

5 The Assyrian Patriarchs: Morality, Leadership, Humbleness, and the Fate of a Nation.

<https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2018/20180818-Patriarchs.pdf>

6 [https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2019/Lost%20Dignity%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2019/Lost%20Dignity%20(1).pdf)

7 It is required that the process start after 5 years of the passing of the candidate.

Ignorance is a disease, as these individuals do not understand what they are saying or how this process works. It is a well known tradition, and most importantly, a requirement that canonization and naming one a saint MUST be considered ONLY for those who have worked miracles. Period. What miracle did Mar Dinkha perform? There is none. This issue should have never been brought up on social media. But these naively confused individuals have tunnel vision and their devotion to their own tribal leaders blinds them. This particular canonization lacks the principle requirement, and we are positive that the Assyrian Church of the East will not be involved in such an endeavor – sainthood is not a joke.

History will tell how Mar Dinkha and the Chaldean Catholic Church patriarchs, first Mar Delly and later Mar Sako, jeopardized, undermined, and were detrimental to the future of Assyrians in Iraq with their acts of division, ego, and treason, specifically after the 2003 US invasion of Iraq.

Search for the truth and remember these verses: 1 John 3:18, “My children, let us not love one another in words and in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” and also John 8:32, “And you will know the truth, and that very truth will make you free.”⁸ The Assyrian people must embrace the truth, refute the misconceptions and lies and be courageous enough to face and confront the ugly parts of our history.