

**IN THE NAME OF THE SELF – EXISTANT  
SEMPITERNAL OF NECESSARY EXISTENCE THE ALMIGHTY  
IGNATIUS PATRIARCH OF THE HOLY SEE OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST  
SUPREME HEAD OF THE UNIVERSAL SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
ZAKKA 1, IWAS**



**THE ONE THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED YEARS ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE DEPARTURE OF ST. JACOB OF EDESSA (+708)  
TO THE EHAVENLY ABODES**

St. Paul the apostle said, "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follows, considering the outcome of their conduct." (Hebrews 13:7)

We offer apostolic benediction and benevolent prayers, to our brethren, His Beatitude Mor Baselius Thomas 1<sup>st</sup>, Catholicos of India, and their Eminences the Metropolitans, our spiritual children the Patriarchal Vicars, archpriests, priests, monks, deacons, and our blessed Syriac Orthodox people worldwide. May the divine providence embrace them through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and the rest of the saints and martyrs. Amen.

Dearly beloved,

We pray for your well being and ask God to keep you in good health body and soul.

On the occasion of the One Thousand Three Hundred years anniversary of the assumption of St. Jacob of Edessa to the heavenly abodes, we are pleased to declare this year "2008" the year of St. Jacob of Edessa in our Universal Syriac Orthodox church. And as we issue our decree in this regard, we ponder the lifetime achievements of this great Saint and summarize his glorious biography as follows:

St. Jacob was born in the village of Aindaba, in the province of Antioch in 633 AD. He studied at Qenneshreen monastery which was founded by St. John the son of Aphtonia (+536) on the banks of the Euphrates river across the city of Jarablos in 530 AD, an education center which our Syriac teachers and scientists paid homage to until the thirteenth century. St. Jacob became a monk and studied Greek language and literature, as well as philosophy and theology at the hands of the great philosopher St. Severius Sabokht.

Afterwards, he left to Alexandria to continue his philosophical and linguistic studies, then came back to Syria and chose the life of asceticism in Edessa and was ordained a priest. In the year 684 AD He was ordained by his friend the Antiochian Patriarch Mor Athanasius the 02<sup>nd</sup> of Balad (684-687) as the bishop of Edessa where he stayed for four years.

Due to his fervent zeal in complying with the church daily rules and his desire to bring back discipline to his Archdiocesan monasteries, he was resisted by some monks and clergy whom he stripped from their ranks.

It is known about him that he gathered the books of the church rules and regulations on the door steps of the monastery where Patriarch Julianos and some bishops were, who were lenient towards the implementation of the church laws. He burned those books while screaming: "I am burning the laws that you stepped on with your feet and which you do not implement as they became useless extras to you." So he resigned and left to live at St. Jacob monastery in kashoom (Kesum) near the city of Samosata. He later went to live in Ousebuna monastery in the suburbs of Antioch where he stayed for eleven years teaching his monks the Greek language. Afterwards, he left to Tal'ada monastery, to the north west of the city of Aleppo where he stayed for nine years during which the bishop Habib, the predecessor of St. Jacob on the seat of Edessa passed away. The people of Edessa requested that he returns to his Archdiocese, and he agreed. After four months he went to Tal'ada monastery to collect his books but he died on June 05<sup>th</sup>, 708 AD and was buried there.

Yes indeed, St. Jacob of Edessa was a theologian, historian, and linguistic translator in Syriac and Greek languages. He explained the holy bible and was known as the explainer (translator) of the books. He left us over thirty books which he authored or translated or edited and reviewed in various subjects of the holy bible which he explained verse by verse, and in church jurisprudence, history, philosophy, religious doctrines, church rites, and more. He invented the vowels in the Syriac language and was the first one to institute the Syriac language grammar as he was known by the Syriac people. He had a modern style of translation. While his predecessors translated word by word (verbatim), he translated according to the meaning of the words.

While we celebrate the One Thousand Three Hundred years memorial of his departure to the heavenly abodes, we are complying with what St. Paul commanded us by saying, "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct." (Hebrews 13:7), and we hereby order all our Syriac Archdioceses worldwide to celebrate this happy occasion accompanied by the holy Great Lent, with prayers, works of charity, and to include the biography of this great saint in their sermons in order to keep the Orthodox church doctrines and the apostolic

orders and the rules of the ecumenical Synods as St. Jacob used to teach to the clergy and people. These rules and regulations have been set in order to build the souls and to return to God in real repentance with pure hearts.

May the Lord God make this happy occasion a source of grace and blessings to you all, my beloved, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and the illustrious St. Jacob of Edessa and the rest of the saints and martyrs.

And on the occasion of the holy Great Lent, we ask the Lord to accept your fasting, prayers and charity work, and make you worthy to celebrate His victorious resurrection with joy, happiness, and sound health. Happy Easter! ܐܘܚܪܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

Issued at our Patriarchal house in Damascus – Syria  
On the eighth day of February, in the year Two  
Thousand and Eight of our Lord  
Which is the 28<sup>th</sup> year of our Patriarchal reign