

His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church

Patriarch, Theologian, and Successor to the Apostles—Your Holiness is a true shepherd of the flock of Jesus Christ. Through tireless, sacrificial and courageous service to those whom God has entrusted to your care, Your Holiness is walking in the footsteps of the Apostles in the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As a theologian, Your Holiness began studies as a very young man, leaving home to study at St. Ephrem’s Theological Seminary in Atchaneh - Lebanon, then later studying at the Coptic Theological Seminary in Cairo, Egypt and after writing on “The Symbolism of the Cross in early Syriac Christianity,” receiving a Doctor of Divinity from St. Patrick’s College in Maynooth, Ireland.

As a servant of Christ, Your Holiness received monastic tonsure in 1985; was ordained and served as priest in Egypt; then as Secretary to Patriarch Mor Ignatius Zakka I of blessed memory; and as Vicar of the Syriac Orthodox Church in London. Consecrated Archbishop in 1996, Your Holiness served as Patriarchal Vicar of the Archdiocese of the Syriac Orthodox Church for the Eastern U.S.A.; and on March 31 2014 elected by the Holy Synod of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch as Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church.

As Patriarch, Your Holiness travels tirelessly, visiting the faithful across the globe, taking particular care in visiting the sick, the infirm and the dying—especially those among the ranks of the clergy—in order to bring courage, strength and eternal life in Jesus Christ. Bearing the Cross of Christ, Your Holiness has repeatedly traveled into harm’s way in the midst of war and conflict, to visit, encourage and minister to those threatened by violence and displaced by war—celebrating the Holy Liturgy in the refugee camps of Kurdistan or in Sadad following its liberation from terrorism, or amidst the ruins in Deir El Zor, Syria—and fulfilling God’s command to care for the widow, the orphan and the sojourner.

As Successor to the Apostles, and as friend of the youth, who are, in your words, “both the future *and* the present of the Church,” Your Holiness established the Department of Youth Affairs and the Syriac Youth Global Gathering, steadfastly supporting Christian education. Your Holiness preaches from the heart, emulating your Heavenly Patron, St. Ephrem the Syrian, the Harp of the Holy Spirit, in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen Messiah.

Therefore, it is the distinct honor and privilege of the board of trustees and the faculty of St Vladimir’s Seminary, by unanimous decision and by the power vested in them by the Board of Regents of the State of New York, to bestow upon Your Holiness, Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, the degree of Doctor of Divinity (D.D.), *honoris causa*.