

**IGLESIA CATÓLICA APOSTÓLICA SIRO-ORTODOXA DE ANTIOQUÍA**  
**ARQUIDIÓCESIS DE CENTRO AMÉRICA**  
IGLESIA CATÓLICA ECUMÉNICA RENOVADA - ICERGUA  
**MOR SANTIAGO EDUARDO AGUIRRE OESTMANN**  
**ARZOBISPO**



Guatemala, October 7<sup>th</sup> 2015.

To His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aepfrem II Karim  
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East  
Supreme Head of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch

Your Holiness:

Barekhamor!

During the last two weekends I visited first the missions in Colombia and then, the following weekend the missions in Venezuela.

Since you asked me to keep you informed of the development of such missions, I'm writing you this letter, asking always for your blessing.

In Colombia I was from September 24<sup>th</sup> to September 29<sup>th</sup>. We have now eight communities there, served by 4 priests to whom I have granted ministerial faculties. It was my first formal pastoral visit to Colombia. We consider that currently we have between 500 and 600 faithful. The communities are located six in the Province of Antioquia, three in Medellín (Itagüi, Versalles II and Robledo), one in El Peñon, one in San Jerónimo and one in Toledo); one in Bogotá and one in Ibagué. I was able to visit six of the communities: El Peñon, San Jerónimo, Versalles II, Robledo (which is in the process of being formed), Itagüi and Bogotá. I could see that the people are well identified with the faith and the worship of our Church and the priests are very committed to fulfill their ministry, sincerely and faithfully to the Church. During the visit I had also the opportunity to meet with the Minister for Religious Affairs of Colombia and her team of advisers. We are going to start the process for the legal recognition there, with the specification that it is a mission of the Archdiocese, in order to leave open the door if in the future it is established also the presence of the Syriac Church through the Patriarchal Vicariate of Argentina. I also met with the Secretary of the Roman Catholic Bishop's Conference responsible for the relationship with other churches. Finally I met with the Vicar of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for Colombia and Venezuela. All the meetings were very positive and everybody was very supportive.

In Venezuela I was from October 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup>. We have in Estado Portuguesa one priest, 5 parochial communities and many new faithful. They are now more than 4000. They are fully identified with the faith and the worship of the Church. They suffer constant persecution, but that has strengthened their faith. On the 5<sup>th</sup> I was supposed to meet with the Director of Religious affairs of the government but he had an unexpected meeting with the President of the country, then my communication was only by virtual means. We are trying also to have the Church recognized in Venezuela with the same characteristics of Colombia. At the airport I met also with the other priest that I mentioned to you in my report of June: he is in the process of formalizing the incorporation of the communities that he is serving in Tachira, by the beginning of next year. Also the situation of the missions in Venezuela is full of hope and the communities continue growing steadily and solidly.

I beg for your blessing for those missions and I hope that in the future many new Latin-Americans will continue converting to our Church. There are dialogues with some groups in Peru, but we are going slowly.

Barekhamor!



Mor Yaqub Eduardo Aguirre Oestmann.  
Archbishop of Central America