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Patriarchal Encyclical

"Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance; Shepherd them and govern them forever..." Psalm 28: 9.

Our venerable brothers in the Holy Synod, the metropolitans and bishops; the reverend presbyters and the elect deacons, and the faithful sons and daughters of the Assyrian Church of the East:

Receive Prayers and Blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord!

We address this our circular epistle to all the dioceses and parishes of the Assyrian Church of the East worldwide, in the face of the present novel coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, which has by now infected the majority of the countries across the globe. As it is a time of uncertainty and fear for many, as Christians whose hope and salvation is Our Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to be a people of deep faith and prayer in the face of many uncertainties.

During this holy season of the Great Fast, Almighty God has allowed us all to enter the trial. All of humanity is presently suffering in the face of this unknown illness. However, we are called to fidelity to that which our Faith teaches us—for, 'the Lord is near to those who call Him in truth' (Psalm 144:18). It is a special and particular Lenten season, in that we are called not only to fast in repentance of our own sins, but that of the whole of humanity. We are called to be 'salt' and 'light' to the whole world, by demonstrating our steadfast faith and obedience to Christ our Lord, and thus we can bring Christ to be known, loved and worshipped by all men, throughout the world.

We know that every illness and human sickness is a cause of our fallen and sinful human nature. Since the moment that sin entered into God's blessed creation—contrary to His holy will—humanity has suffered and continues to suffer from the effects of the Fall of our first parents. This, however, was not God's design. For, the Lord God desired that our progenitors—and their progeny—should continue to live and remain in that blessedness which they first enjoyed at the moment of their creation. By being obedient to Satan, the 'father of lies', our first parents fell from God's grace, and in their fall we too have all fallen into sin and mortality, which continue to distress the human race. St. Paul indicates when he says, "...through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, for all have sinned..." (Romans 6:12). However, it is through the incarnation of the 'Second Adam'—who is the Lord from heaven—that we have been given hope, for he took on our infirmities and our death. Christ suffered our maladies, mortality and sufferings in His human body, and by this He shows us his continued solicitude and proximity to our human race, which is ever in need of the salvation and eternal life which only Christ can give us. Though we suffer sickness and death, yet we firmly believe that Christ has conquered both by His death and resurrection, and when He comes again He shall 'wipe away every tear' from our eyes.

