In the second week of February 2006, His Holiness Moran Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of Antioch for the Syriac Orthodox Church in the world, was in Brussels-Belgium for the consecration of the first Syriac bishop for Belgium and France.

Indeed on Sunday morning, February 12th 2006, His Holiness has ordained the monk Hazail Soumi as bishop - Mor Severus - for the Syriac community of Belgium and France. The ceremony occurred in the big and famous Basilique of Koekelberg in Brussels. Many representatives were present. The embassy of Syria in Belgium, the representative of the Catholic Church in Belgium and the representative of the Greek Orthodox Church in Belgium, among others were attending the consecration. The Basiliqu was full of Syriac Orthodox members from Belgium and France of course but also from other European countries.

It is most probable that the consecration of the monk Hazail Soumi as bishop Mor Severus will help the recognition of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Belgium.

We wish a lot of success to the bishop Mor Severus Hazail Soumi and we are convinced that he will contribute to the promotion and the recognition of the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Syriac community in Belgium and France.

His Holiness the bishop Mor Severus has studied in Syria before coming in Belgium in the 70ies to study in the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL) in Belgium where he obtained many diplomas. Finally he did also study at the Sorbonne in France.

The Syriac community count about 15000 members in Belgium and France altogether. In Belgium the first Syriacs came in the end of the 70ies. Now they are about 12000 Syriacs. Almost all of them have the Belgian nationality and have very well integrated the Belgian society. The same is applicable for the Syriacs in France where they are fewer in number. About 10000 Syriacs are living in Brussels; the rest is living mainly in Lille.
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