



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS
TO THE NEW SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCH
OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST,
HIS HOLINESS MOR IGNATIUS APHREM II**

*To His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II
Patriarch of Antioch and all the East
and Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church*

I received with joy the news of the election of Your Holiness as Patriarch of Antioch and all the East and Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church. I gladly extend to you and to the clergy and faithful of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate my good wishes and prayerful solidarity, asking the Holy Spirit to bestow his abundant blessings upon your lofty ministry.

It is my prayer that Your Holiness may be a spiritual father for your people and an untiring builder of peace and justice, serving the common good and the good of the entire Middle East in today's difficult circumstances. It is important for all Christians to bear witness to the love and fellowship that binds us together, mindful of the prayer offered by our Lord at the Last Supper: that all may be one, so that the world may believe (cf. Jn 17:21). I thank the Almighty for the bonds of fraternity between the Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church and I hope and pray that our continuing friendship and dialogue may be further developed and deepened.

May our heavenly Father fill Your Holiness with peace and strength for the noble task that awaits you.

From the Vatican, 2 April 2014

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