



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE SYRO-ANTIOCHIAN COMMUNITY

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 12 December 2014*

[Multimedia]

*Your Beatitude,
Your Excellencies,
Reverend Fathers,
Dear Brothers and Sisters!*

I cordially greet you and I thank you for your visit. Through you, I can make my greeting reach your communities throughout the world, and express my encouragement particularly to those from Iraq and Syria, who are experiencing times of great suffering and fear in the face of violence. I accompany these sentiments of solidarity and compassion with remembrance in prayer.

On this occasion of your gathering in Rome, you have asked me for the opportunity to celebrate a Synod outside the patriarchal territory. I was pleased to agree to facilitate your meeting, designed to recognize the compelling needs of your Church and to respond to the spiritual expectations of the faithful. In particular, you are undertaking a journey of reform for the Divine Liturgy, in service to the Word of God, that He should allow a renewed impetus of devotion. This work has required an intense and in-depth examination of Tradition and much discernment, knowing how sensitive the assembly of faithful is to the great gifts of the Word and of the Eucharist.

The difficult situation in the Middle East has provoked and continues to provoke in our Church displacement of the faithful toward the Eparchies of the diaspora, and this places new pastoral exigencies before you. The challenges, on the one hand, to remain faithful to one's origins; on the other, to integrate into new cultural contexts, working in service to the *salus animarum* and to the common good.

This movement of the faithful toward countries considered safer impoverishes the Christian

presence in the Middle East, the land of the prophets, of the first preachers of the Gospel, of martyrs and of so many saints, cradle of the hermits and of monasticism. All this requires you to reflect on the situation of your Eparchies which are in need of zealous Pastors, as well as of courageous faithful, capable of witnessing to the Gospel in discussion at times difficult, with people of different ethnicities and religions.

So many have fled to take shelter from an inhumanity which is throwing entire populations into the streets, leaving them without means of subsistence. You are trying to coordinate your efforts with other Churches, to respond to the humanitarian needs both of those who remain in their homeland and of those who have sought refuge in other countries.

Now, returning to your sees, you are reinvigorated by this experience of communion felt at the Tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul; a communion which today finds a special expression here, in raising to the Lord together with Peter's Successor a prayer of gratitude and supplication.

I exhort you, dear Brothers, to persevere in your pastoral commitment and in the ministry of hope in service to the venerable Syro-Catholic Church. With affection, I greet the faithful who are accompanying you, in whom I see the different communities through their representatives. I invite you to take to all the expression of my closeness and of my prayer to the Lord.

While I entrust each one of your communities to the protection of the Mother of God, of St Ignatius of Antioch and of St Ephrem, I wholeheartedly impart to you, to your priests, to your men and women religious, and to all the faithful the Apostolic Blessing, the pledge of peace and consolation from our all Merciful, One and Triune God.