



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE NEW PATRIARCH OF THE SYRIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH,
PATRIARCH IGNACE YOUSSEF III YOUNAN***

Friday, 23 January 2009

*Your Eminence,
Your Beatitudes,
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,*

I receive you with joy and extend a warm welcome to each one of you, thanking Our Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the Synod of the Church of Antioch for Syrians which has elected her new Patriarch.

I first address a very warm greeting to Patriarch Ignace Youssif Younan, who has just been elected, as I invoke an abundance of divine Blessings upon him. May the Lord grant you, Your Beatitude, "the grace of the apostolate" so that you may be able to serve the Church and glorify his Holy Name before the world.

I greet Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, to whom I entrusted the chairmanship of your Synod, and warmly thank him.

I likewise greet H.B. Cardinal Ignace Moussa Daoud, Prefect emeritus of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, and H.B. Ignace Pierre Abdel-Ahad, Patriarch emeritus, as well as all of you who have come to Rome to carry out the most important act for which the Synod is responsible. From the origins of Christianity, the Apostles Peter and Paul were closely connected with Antioch where Jesus' disciples were first given the name "Christians" (Acts 11: 26). We cannot forget your illustrious Fathers in the faith. In the first place, St Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, from whom Syrian Antiochian Patriarchs traditionally take their name at the moment when they accept the patriarchal office; and St Ephrem, commonly called "the Syrian", whose spiritual light continues to shine brightly in the universal Church. With them, other great saints, sons and Pastors of your Church,

have shown the mystery of salvation admirably and, more than once, with the sublime eloquence of martyrdom.

The new Patriarch is the first custodian of this heritage; however, each one, as a brother and member of the Synod, must likewise contribute to this responsibility in a spirit of authentic episcopal collegiality. I place in the hands of the new Patriarch and of the Syrian-Catholic Episcopate above all else the task of unity among the Pastors and in the heart of the ecclesial communities.

Your Beatitude, on this happy occasion, in conformity with the sacred Canons you have requested the *ecclesiastica communio* which I have most willingly granted to you, fulfilling an aspect of the Petrine service particularly dear to me. Communion with the Bishop of Rome, Successor of the Blessed Apostle Peter, established by the Lord himself as a visible foundation of unity in faith and in charity, guarantees the bond with Christ the Good Shepherd. It also inserts the particular Churches into the mystery of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

You were born and grew up in Syria, Your Beatitude, and are very well-acquainted with the Middle East, the cradle of the Syrian Catholic Church. However, you have carried out your episcopal service in America as the first Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Deliverance in Newark, for the Syrian faithful who live in the United States and in Canada. You also took on the office of Apostolic Visitor in Central America. The Eastern diaspora has thus contributed to offering the Syrian Church her new Patriarch. This will strengthen ties with the Mother Country which so many of the Eastern rite faithful have been forced to leave in order to seek a better life. My desire is that in the East, from which the proclamation of the Gospel came, Christian communities may continue to live and witness to their faith as they have done down the centuries. At the same time, I hope that adequate pastoral care will be provided for those who have settled elsewhere, so that they may remain fruitfully linked to their religious roots. I ask the help of the Lord for each Eastern rite community, wherever it is, so that it may be integrated into its new social and ecclesial context without losing its own identity, and may bear the mark of Eastern spirituality in such a way that by using "words of the East and of the West", the Church can speak effectively of Christ to contemporary man. In this way Christians will face the most urgent challenges of humanity and build peace and universal solidarity and witness to the "great hope" of which they are unflagging messengers.

I express my fervent and joyful good wishes to you, Your Beatitude, and to the Syrian Catholic Church.

I pray the Prince of Peace to sustain you as "*Caput et Pastor*", as well as all your brothers, sisters and your children, so that you may be sowers of peace first of all in the Holy Land, in Iraq and in Lebanon, where the Syrian Church's historical presence is much appreciated.

As I entrust you all to the Most Holy Mother of God, I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing to the new Patriarch and to each one of you, as well as to the communities you represent.

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