



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY  
TO LEBANON  
(14-16 SEPTEMBER 2012)

**ECUMENICAL MEETING**

***REPLY OF THE HOLY FATHER***  
***DURING THE ECUMENICAL MEETING***

*Hall of Honor of the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate of Charfet*  
*Sunday, 16 September 2012*

*Your Holiness, Your Beatitude,*  
*Venerable Patriarchs,*  
*Dear Brother Bishops,*  
*Dear Representatives of other Churches and Protestant Communities,*  
*Brothers and Sisters,*

It is with great joy that I meet with you, in this monastery of Our Lady of Deliverance of Charfet, a place of great importance for the Syrian Catholic Church in Lebanon and the entire Middle East. I thank His Beatitude Ignace Youssef Younan, Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Antioch, for his warm words of welcome. I fraternally greet each one of you, who represent the diversity of the Church in the East, and in particular His Beatitude Ignace IV Hazim, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and all the East and His Holiness Mar Ignatius I Zakke Iwas, Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and all the East. Your presence brings great solemnity to this meeting. I thank you with all my heart for being here with us. My thoughts also go to the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt and to the Ethiopian Orthodox who have had the recent sadness of losing their respective Patriarchs. I wish to assure them of my fraternal closeness and of my prayers.

Allow me to acknowledge here the testimony of faith shown by the Syrian Antiochene Church in

the course of its glorious history, a testimony to an ardent love for Christ, which has caused it to write some heroic pages of this history, right up to the present, by remaining committed to the faith even to the point of martyrdom. I encourage this Church to be for the peoples of the region a sign of the peace that comes from God as well as a light that keeps their hope alive. I extend this encouragement to all the Churches and ecclesial communities present in the region.

Dear brothers, our encounter this evening is an eloquent sign of our profound desire to respond to the call of Christ, “that all may be one” (*Jn 17:21*). In these unstable times, so inclined to the violence which your region knows so well, it is even more necessary that Christ’s disciples give an authentic witness to their unity, so that the world may believe in their message of love, peace and reconciliation. This is a message that all Christians, and we in particular, have been commissioned to hand on to the world, a message of inestimable value in the present context of the Middle East.

Let us work without ceasing so that the love of Christ may lead us little by little into full communion with each other. In this regard, by means of common prayer and mutual commitment, we must constantly return to our one Lord and Saviour. For, as I wrote in the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* which I have the pleasure of consigning to you, “Jesus draws into unity those who believe in and love him; he gives them the Spirit of his Father as well as Mary, his mother” (n. 15).

I entrust each one of you and all the members of your Churches and ecclesial communities to the Virgin Mary. May she intercede with her Son for us, so that we may be delivered from every evil and from all forms of violence, and so that the Middle East may at last know a time of reconciliation and peace. May the words of Jesus that I have so often cited during this journey, مُكِّي طَعْمَ أَيِّ مَالَسْ - My peace I give to you! (*Jn 14, 27*), be for all of us the common sign that we will give in the name of Christ to the peoples of this beloved region, which longs to see those words fulfilled! Thank you!