



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE SYNOD OF CHALDEAN CHURCH

Monday, 26 October 2015

[Multimedia]

*Your Beatitude,
Dear Brother Bishops,*

I welcome you with joy and I thank His Beatitude Patriarch Louis Raphaël I Sako for his kind words. I take this occasion to reach out, through you, to the faithful and all those dwelling in the beloved lands of Iraq and Syria in this particularly troubled and sensitive moment, with a message of comfort and Christian solidarity. With the approach of the Jubilee Year, may God's mercy soothe the wounds of war afflicting the heart of your communities, that no one may feel discouragement in this time when the outcry of violence seems to drown out our heartfelt prayers for peace.

Today the situation in your lands of origin is gravely compromised by the fanatical hatred sown by terrorism, which continues to cause a great hemorrhage of faithful who leave the lands of their fathers, where they grew up firmly rooted in the furrow of tradition. This state of affairs clearly undermines the vital Christian presence in that land which witnessed the beginning of the journey of the Patriarch Abraham, heard the voice of the Prophets who called Israel to hope during the Exile, and saw the foundation of the first Churches upon the blood of many martyrs. There too Christians bore witness to the fullness of the Gospel, made their specific contribution to the growth of society over centuries of peaceful coexistence with our Islamic brothers and sisters. Sadly, these are times which are instead marked by countless examples of persecution, and even martyrdom.

The Chaldean Church, which suffers from the war, is also conscious of the needs of the faithful in the diaspora, who are desirous to maintaining their solid roots while becoming part of new situations. So I confirm, today more than ever, the complete support and solidarity of the Apostolic See in favour of the common good of the entire Chaldean Church. I pray that Christians will not be

forced to abandon Iraq and the Middle East – I think especially of the sons and daughters of your Church, and their rich traditions.

I urge you to work tirelessly as builders of unity in all the provinces of Iraq, fostering dialogue and cooperation among all those engaged in public life, and contributing to healing existing divisions while preventing new ones from arising.

Your visit enables me to renew my heartfelt appeal to the international community to adopt every useful strategy aimed at bringing peace to countries terribly devastated by hatred, so that the life-giving breeze of love will once more be felt in places which have always been a crossroads for peoples, cultures and nations. May the peace for which we all hope arise on the horizon of history, so that the grievous tragedies caused by violence may yield to a climate of mutual coexistence.

The Synod which you are celebrating these days *in Urbe*, is a “journeying together”, a favorable moment of exchange amid the diversities which enrich your fraternal communion under the gaze of Christ, the Good Shepherd. As I had occasion to say in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, “Journeying together is an easy concept to put into words, but not so easy to put into practice... Let us never forget this! For the disciples of Jesus, yesterday, today and always, the only authority is the authority of service, the only power is the power of the cross. As the Master tells us: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave” (*Mt 20:25-27*). *It shall not be so among you*: in this expression we touch the heart of the mystery of the Church, and we receive the enlightenment necessary to understand our hierarchical service” (*Address for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops*, 17 October 2015).

I ask, then, to take up the Apostle Paul’s exhortation to have among you the mind of Christ (cf. *Phil 2:5*), acting with mercy, humility, patience and a mutual acceptance which gives rise to communion.

May the work of the Synod reflect a sense of responsibility, participation and service. Keep always before you the image of the Good Shepherd who is concerned for the salvation of his sheep, and is especially concerned for those who have strayed. May you imitate him: zealous in seeking the *salus animarum* of priests as well as laity, realizing full well that the exercise of communion sometimes demands a genuine *kenosis*, a self-basement and self-spoliation.

I encourage you to be a father to your priests and all consecrated men and woman, who are your primary collaborators, and, in respect for tradition and canonical norms, to be accepting of them, benevolent and understanding of their needs, discerning ways to help them be ever more aware of the demands of their ministry and service to the faithful. In doing so, you will bridge distances and discern the response to be given to the pressing needs of the Chaldean Church today, in your

native lands and in the diaspora. In this way the reflections which emerge from your discussions will be able to provide fruitful solutions to your current needs and points of convergence for resolving liturgical and more general issues.

As I urge you to carry on your pastoral responsibilities with fraternal communion and a missionary spirit, I ask all of you, their pastors, to bring my words of encouragement to the faithful of the Chaldean Church. May they echo on your lips as a caress from the Pope which warms their hearts.

Entrusting the Chaldean Church to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, I impart to you, your priests and religious, and all the faithful, my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of hope and consolation in the love of our Merciful God.