



Melkite – Greek Catholic Patriarchate
Of Antioch and all the East
Of Alexandria and of Jerusalem

Protocol 414/2012A

Ain Traz, 30/08/2012

To our sons and daughters in Syria and to the sons and daughters of the Church worldwide
To all persons of good will

FOR SYRIA, RECONCILIATION IS THE ONLY LIFELINE

“Come to a common word between us and you.” (*Aal ‘Imran* 3:64)

“Blessed are the peacemakers.” (*Matthew* 5: 9)

Introduction

Eyes and hearts are shedding tears today because the language of violence has overwhelmed all other sorts of language. Weapons are flooding in from all sides to every area; to every hand, hearth and home...Human victims, belonging to various groups, perish, leaving behind them distress and family, social and national tragedies. May God in his mercy receive the victims and bind up the wounded, heal the sick and console the bereaved. In the face of these challenges, there are more and more obstacles in the way of finding humanitarian assistance and delivering it to the needy and homeless.

How can we move towards resolving the crisis? Through this letter we wish once more to call everyone to dialogue; for us to go beyond our injuries, sufferings and bloodshed and be numbered among those who believe in dialogue, reconciliation, and face to face encounter.

This way is the most difficult, but the only reasonable one, as it represents a pledge for the future. In any case it is inevitable, since no group can by any means completely annihilate any other. Violence breeds violence, but dialogue strengthens and fructifies dialogue. Reconciliation, for its part, prepares hearts and minds for further dialogue and reconciliation.

The Syrian Church and reconciliation

Be reconciled to God! Be reconciled one with another! That is the “ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5: 18)

The Church in Syria is called to the ministry of reconciliation, (Musalaha) by all available means. Reconciliation is at the heart of the teaching of our Lord, Jesus Christ in the Holy Gospel. This is our welfare and humanity’s...with God.

We believe the role of the Church in Syria to be the sacred ministry of working for reconciliation. "Blessed are the peacemakers!" We believe that this ministry will be the warranty for Christians facing the gloomy future that dawns over Syria. That is how Christians will carry out the greatest mission for their country, just as in the past, they worked for its prosperity at every level.

Today their mission is to stand among and with the protagonists, everywhere, on all sides in the country calling everyone to civil and social reconciliation, because the Church's role is to be the herald and architect of reconciliation at every level. We believe that as Eastern Christians and as Arabs present and active at all stages and in all crises throughout our country's history, progress and development, in peace and war, we have been and will remain guarantors of that diversity which we disseminate and promote. Yes, we shall find our role in this historic way.

Appeal to Churches worldwide

With Saint Paul, we say, "[Christ] is our peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." (Ephesians 2: 14) That is the source of this appeal that we are making to all sister Churches worldwide – Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. We call on spiritual leaders to unite their voices to that of the Church in Syria and by all means launch a call for reconciliation in Syria. Let them speak plainly to political leaders and the various institutions in their countries, their priests, monks and nuns and lay-people...An international campaign is needed to bring about reconciliation in Syria. If only everyone called unanimously and daily for dialogue and reconciliation, then indeed everything would change.

Appeal to Syrian Christians

Amidst the river of blood that flows day after day in all regions of Syria, we tell our beloved children, "Be patient!" If you have been displaced inside Syria or to a neighbouring country, stay close to your homes and property in your country. (Thanks to all those who are sheltering displaced persons.) But if you go outside the region, your return will be more difficult and your situation will not be easy, despite facilities offered by host countries, as those facilities cannot last. That is why I am telling you not to emigrate. We shall continue to strive to help needy and displaced persons with all our power.

Appeal to all Syrians

I have every hope that we Christian and Muslim Syrians, who are all labouring under the weight of this tragic, bloody situation that has lasted for a year and a half, will together all find (imperatively!) a way other than that of violence, weapons, killings and destruction, because in the end no-one wins with violence, but everyone loses. Devastation spreads, people are killed and disasters multiply, affecting all citizens.

That is why I have headed my appeal with the venerable verse: "Come to a common word between us and you!" and with the verse from the Holy Gospel: "Blessed are the peacemakers"...That is the slogan that we are highlighting with this letter. Reconciliation is the only lifeline for Syria.

Appeal to the world

We have the certain hope that our message will meet with the wished-for echo, from Arab kings, emirs and presidents on the one hand and on the other, from national leaders throughout the world,

especially in North and South America, in Europe, Asia, Africa and Australasia; and that it will be likewise welcomed by Churches and Christian communities of East and West, by non-governmental organisations and architects of peace, especially those whose efforts have been recognized through the Nobel peace prize. At grassroots the ministry of reconciliation is active and effective. On another level, there are groups at work, formed by tribal leaders, influential persons, who have given evidence of great success in resolving problems in different areas, and who have helped avert great disasters, rebuilding peace among different religious and other factions. We ask our friends to support the work of these groups, and the Church of Syria is dedicated to this ministry of reconciliation in order to ensure its functionality.

Finally

For the ministry of reconciliation I am ready to lay down my life, making round-trips for the success of our appeal for reconciliation and dialogue.

We are bringing this message, message "of peace and reconciliation" to the sanctuaries of our Churches and monasteries, so that we can all raise our hands in supplication for the security, peace and stability that arise from dialogue, reconciliation and solidarity through co-ordination of all capabilities, with a view to a better future for Syria with all its children, denominations, parties and aspirations.

Indeed, we hope that all together we can fulfil the evangelical beatitude: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

With my love, prayer and blessing,

Gregorios III



Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
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