



August 18, 2016

Dear Sir Rateb,

It is a joy to express my sincere congratulations in recognition of HCEF's 18th International Conference. Your tireless dedication in support of the people of the Holy Land is a reminder that they are not alone, nor forgotten. HCEF's achievements embody this year's theme: "Forging a New Bond of Solidarity for Equality, Prosperity, and Peace".

As participants gather for the Conference, I think it is important to emphasize that there is still work to be done in the Holy Land. We must unite together in order to protect the Arab Christians in the Holy Land, and throughout the Middle East, as they face ever-increasing persecution. I am encouraged and hopeful for the future when I am reminded of the loving support of the community that HCEF has built.

I pray for the dear friends at HCEF as you continue to commit yourselves to *replacing despair with hope, fear with human security, and humiliation with dignity*. I also offer my heartfelt congratulations to all of the award recipients, including our dear friend His Excellency Archbishop Robert Carlson of St. Louis, and His Eminence The Most Reverend Metropolitan Joseph, Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America of the self-ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, and warm greetings to all participants. May this conference be one of fruitful new beginnings!

With best wishes for a successful 18th International Conference!

In Christ our Savior,

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Patriarch Emeritus Fouad Twal