



14 December 2017

Dear Friends,

Greetings from this most holy city Jerusalem! It has been a mere three months since I assumed my new calling at the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem serving as the first lay Chief Executive Officer. This is certainly a great honor for me personally, but also a great challenge that presents unlimited opportunities to do good for our local communities through the Church and its various monastic and service institutions, mostly in education, health, and social services. The past three months have been one of the most revealing in my professional career characterized by discoveries of the works of this great institution I am so privileged and honored to serve.

It is clear to me today, that every day brings new discoveries about the works of institutions and that one should never pre-judge based on limited information. In its quest to faithfully, quietly and confidentially serve those who are weak, poor and marginalized, not only spiritually, but also materially, the works of the Patriarchate are worthy of greater appreciation and consideration. In my few months here, I have become aware of the inspiring work being done in the four countries of Palestine, Jordan, Israel, and Cyprus that make up the Catholic Diocese of the Holy Land. This includes serving over 187,000 Catholic faithful both indigenous and international through 88 priests spread over 55 parishes and a network of 41 schools and 33 kindergartens covering a total of 19,000 students and employing over 1,580 teachers and staff. In addition, there are centers of excellence spread over various locations serving the elderly, the youth, as well as marginalized children. This is in addition to the housing support provided in recent years providing over 300 housing units in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Beit Jala and Nazareth to help young Christian families find a dignified place to live and raise their young families. Finally, we rate highly the support services provided to some 32 men's and 73 women's Catholic religious congregations serving with distinction in various sectors in the Holy Land.



Over the past three months as I traveled to various parishes in Jordan, Palestine and Israel, I was touched by the tremendous work conducted by our parishes that have become the center of community service and activities that include churches, schools, and other facilities that have become the center of the spiritual, educational, social and cultural life of those communities. Traveling from Anjara, Ajloun, and Wahadneh in the north of Jordan to Zerqa in the south as well as from Nazareth in the north of Israel to Gaza in the south of Palestine, and seeing all the great services provided, one becomes doubly proud of the work of the Latin Patriarchate. It is heartwarming to see more churches being built in Jbeiha, Jordan to serve the

faithful as well as new kindergartens in Hashimi and Naour in Jordan as well as Jaffa Nazareth in Israel in addition to tens of other projects including Palestine. Having said that, one will certainly not neglect or ignore some of the difficult financial and administrative issues we must deal with internally. We must deal with the shortfalls of the past as lessons learned and plan for a future of stability both on the financial and administrative levels to enable this great institution to sustainably continue to be of service well into the future.

As we approach the end of the year, one is reminded of the true meaning of the birth of our Savior. As one reflects on the challenging political situation which may explode in the near future, we at the Latin Patriarchate must continue to focus on expanding our humanitarian and pastoral support to our communities and continue to improve the infrastructure of our institutions as well as build the human capacities so that our institutions will continue to be centers of excellence with quality services delivered with a Christian value set that we will all continue to be proud of. In this regard, we must extend our gratitude and appreciation to our generous donors around the world, but in a very specific way to the Grand Magisterium and the Order of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem for their generous moral and financial support without which our work would not be possible. May I take this opportunity extend to you and your families and friends a Merry Christmas with our best wishes for the New Year. May 2018 bring peace and justice to our troubled land. Keep us in your prayers.

Sincerely,



Sami El-Yousef
Chief Executive Officer
