



THE ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC ORDINARIES OF THE HOLY LAND
Latins. Melkites. Maronites. Syrians. Armenians. Chaldeans. Custody of the Holy Land

Re.: 58/2021

October 26, 2021

Dear brothers and sisters,

May the Lord grant you peace!

The Christian Presence in the Holy Land offers, to the Universal Church and to the world, a living image of the many and rich diversities of Christian Traditions that are living here side by side. In the Holy Land it is possible to experience concretely that the Gospel has been able to spread around the world, speaking many languages and evangelizing many and rich cultures in the Middle East and around the whole world. All these Traditions desire to be present in the land of the Bible and of Jesus.

As Christians living in the Holy Land, we are proud to offer the image of this richness to all the pilgrims and visitors who come to visit the Holy Places and put their steps in the footsteps of Jesus.

We also have a long experience of living together and accepting one another in our different Traditions. At the same time, we recognize humbly that our mutual relations have not always been perfect. We have sometimes experienced tensions and even conflicts. However, with the help of God's Grace, our common Christian faith and mission have always been able to overcome problems. In fact, our mutual relations and collaboration can always be improved, in order to be more able to bear a common witness to the Gospel and to serve together the human society in which the Lord called us to live.

The one Catholic Church in the Holy Land is already within herself living this rich diversity in the various Catholic Communities present: the Greek Melkite Catholic Church, the Latin Church, the Maronite Church, the Syrian Catholic Church, the Armenian Catholic Church. All these Churches bring together local Arab speaking priests, religious and faithful with priests, religious and faithful speaking Hebrew or coming from many countries and languages.

All together, we want to respond to Jesus' Prayer "that they all may be one", and put into practice his commandment of mutual love, at all levels of the life of the Churches: among the Heads of the Churches, around the Holy Places, and in the parishes. It is a calling common to all: bishops, priests, religious and faithful. If we want to work for more unity and better collaboration, we have first to promote a common vision among us, as well as a common way of relating to the other Churches and their faithful.

It is precisely with this aim in view that the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land entrusts to you the document entitled: "*Pastoral Ecumenical Guidelines for the Catholic Churches in the Holy Land*". They are the fruit of many studies and consultations. They are addressed to the entire communities of our Churches: bishops, priests, religious, faithful. Each of us has his or her role to play in receiving them and putting them into practice.

In particular, we desire that our priests and faithful adopt, as much as possible, a common way of proceeding, in order to avoid confusion or division. We know how difficult it is to find the right attitude in ecumenical relations, in particular when it comes to sharing in the liturgical life of the

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Churches. The Guidelines intend to promote such a common pastoral approach. We hope that each of you will have the opportunity to offer his or her personal contribution.

We recommend therefore to our priests to carefully study these Guidelines, whenever possible in common, in presbyterial councils and pastoral committees, and to involve actively the faithful in the various movements and associations.

The best way to go forward will be to study them together in small groups under the guidance of priests and competent persons active in the pastoral field. This endeavor can go very well together with the synodal process that Pope Francis has inaugurated for the whole Catholic Church in Rome, on Sunday the 10th of October. The Catholic Churches in the Holy land will inaugurate their own synodal “walking together” on Sunday the 30th of October.

While “walking together” as Catholics, we hold out our hands to the other Churches, pastors and faithful, living side by side with us. We will respect their faith and feelings, but at the same time we will always maintain our desire to come to a closer relationship. To reconcile this desire for unity with the respect of the others, these concrete pastoral *Guidelines* will be of great help.

As Pastors of our Churches, we do not intend to impose on you, new obligations and complicate even further your life as Christians. We know that the situation of Christians in the Middle East and in the Holy Land is at present time experiencing many difficulties and that many questions are raised about their future in this part of the world. The main intention of these *Guidelines* is to promote an even better understanding and collaboration among the members of all Churches. We need all energies and competences available in each of our Churches, if we want to work together, in confidence and hope, for a meaningful and dignified Christian presence in our respective countries.

With the present letter, in the name of all the Catholic Ordinaries, I promulgate these guidelines that will be effective on the first Sunday of Advent, the 28th of November 2021, for all the Catholic Churches of Holy Land.

May the Holy Spirit guide us all, so that we may all have in us “the same mind that was in Jesus Christ” (Philippians 2:5), to the glory of the Father.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+Pierbattista Pizzaballa

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Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem
President of A.C.O.H.L.



The secretary general

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