

Message from Youhanna X, Patriarch of Antioch

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Message from the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
Youhanna X
to the XXII International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox Spirituality

Very Reverend Father Enzo Bianchi Prior of the Monastery of Bose,
Beloved brethren,
Peace be with you!

We joyfully greet you from the Holy Apostolic See of the Patriarchate of Antioch. The theme of your 22nd International Ecumenical Conference of Orthodox Spirituality "Blessed are the peacemakers" speaks much to us today. Our holy Apostolic See covers the Middle East, especially the countries of Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, where peace and reconciliation is being replaced by violence and vengeance. This particular land is the land of Scripture where Christ called to walk the world for peace through His life and words. Our Lord preached the Sermon of the Mount calling people to live peacefully through inner transformation, repentance and renewal. He then died on the Cross to give us abundant life and true peace.

Hence, the challenge that our Church of Antioch faces today is not just establishing peace between countries, or having economic stability and social justice. Our mission in the Middle East is to reveal the face of the Prince of Peace as the God of Scripture. We try to live and maintain this Christian testimony, through seeking forgiveness, searching for reconciliation, accepting the others, and bringing to light the Christian message of hope and healing. Needless to say that there are several social, political, cultural, and religious obstacles we struggle with, thus we ask you to continue praying for us, and especially for our beloved Metropolitan Paul Yazigi and our dear Archbishop Youhanna Ibrahim who have been kidnapped for sixteen months now. Despite these difficulties, we believe, as our Lord taught us on the Cross, that all could be overcome through Love.

Your holy Monastery is a blessed place where peace is experienced in a very deep and sensible way of knowing and living this divine love. Also, your conference gathers prominent theologians and respected leaders from many countries. Thus, we hope that the message you carry of true peace and fellowship be heard in the entire world.

Again, may the peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with you always, and bless your conference making it fruitful for the glory of God and the peace of His creation.

In Christ's love,

+ John X
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East