

Date : Bkerki, April 21st 2021

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APPEAL

1. In several recent speeches, His Holiness Pope Francis called upon the international community to support Lebanon, the "message nation", which is going through a deep crisis and is at risk of losing its identity as a country of plurality, liberty and fraternity. His Holiness reinforced the importance of protecting the Christians, who must not be reduced to the status of a minority under protection, pointing out to the fact that Lebanon cannot face alone the presence of a massive number of Syrian displaced and Palestinian refugees, for which a firm support of the international community is requested.

2. We, members of the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops of Lebanon (APECL), hereby reiterate the crucial importance of His Holiness' words, particularly as regards Lebanon's identity as a final homeland for all its citizens, in equality and mutual understanding.

3. Lebanon's identity is hence forged by the encounter between all its communities, based on the values of liberty, human dignity, pluralism, as well as of peace, respect and love of neighbor, making this country the natural place for dialogue between the diversity of religious and cultural communities. Those fundamental values of citizenship and liberty are the backbone to build a Lebanon that wants "to continue being, for our time and our world, a message of freedom and a witness to harmonious coexistence".

4. However that very identity, "which is to bring to the whole world the sweet fragrance of mutual respect, coexistence and pluralism; the identity of a people who does not abandon its homes and its heritage, who refuses to renounce the dream of those who believed in the future of a beautiful and prosperous country" faces today the challenge represented by the political, economic, social, demographic and security crisis that has struck the country and constitutes a real threat.

5. The Church's mission, through its educational, healthcare and social institutions, is a vital element of that identity. Those institutions accompany all generations, of diverse affiliations, in the culture of peace and dialogue, thus upholding the principle of solidarity and reinforcing the cohesion of the social fabric, which are at the heart of the Lebanese identity.

6. We therefore call for the international community to help the Lebanese people,

By ensuring the maintenance of their individual, collective and national rights, in full force and effect, without any restriction or alteration whatsoever;

By contributing, for that purpose, to the fight against the economic crisis, to the protection of the social fabric and to the preservation of Lebanon's identity and specificity;

By supporting the Christian presence through the Church's institutions, which are and will always remain at the service of all citizens without distinction or discrimination, and will keep on working tirelessly for the common good.

Father Claude NADRA, O.L.M.

General Secretary
APECL

Mgr Youssef SOUEIF

Maronite Archbishop of Tripoli
President of the Ad Hoc Commission

Béchara Boutros Cardinal RAI



Maronite Patriarch of Antioch

and all over the East

President of APECL