



To the Bishops of the Middle East and North Africa

Brussels, 8 April 2011

## PASTORAL LETTER

To our brother Bishops of the Middle East and North Africa,

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (II Corinthians 13,13). With this Pauline Trinitarian greeting, we address to you our words, we Catholic Bishops of the European Union (COMECE), gathered together at the Spring Plenary in Brussels, from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

We would like to express to all of you who are our brothers, our solidarity in Christ Jesus, you who live in the midst of your communities, in the midst of the people of God, amongst your societies that are going through difficult and crucial times in the recent history of your region. In your search for a civil, democratic and just society, we have admired the youth of your respective countries, Christians and Muslims, who together, joyfully, with conviction, enthusiasm and hope, have initiated these movements for change. We would like to express our solidarity, uniting ourselves in prayer with all the victims, including those who were wounded, together with their respective families, with all that has taken place.

Only dialogue between cultures and religions, only a peace which is rooted in charity and truth, only the dignity of the human person, respect for human rights and human freedom, the realization of justice and a democracy based on these values can resolve all kinds of tension and conflict within human society. We encourage your Churches for their positive participation, together with all their fellow citizens, in the building of a society based on these values.

We know very well that during this period of your ecclesial experience, you are living a special moment within the ambiance of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Middle East, that was convoked by His Holiness Benedict XVI last October. The Special Synod invited the Churches to deepen further the reality of communion and testimony in your own regions, starting from the ever-living experience of the first Christian communities that originated within the ambit of your own regions and where *"the whole group of believers was united, heart and soul"* (Acts 4,32). With you we feel united in prayer, in your pastoral initiatives and in many other preoccupations and hopes, strengthening the spirit of communion, of solidarity and service, helping your faithful to give living testimony of their faith in their motherland.

Dear brothers, while the Church is moving towards the dawn of Easter, we fervently ask Christ who is risen and alive in our midst, together with the intercession of His and our Mother, the Star of the Orient and the Queen of Peace, to renew our will so that together we may construct the culture of love and therefore of justice and of peace.

Yours devoutly In Christ

The bishops of COMECE