Editorial

Patriarch Fouad Twal calls for “peace in Jerusalem”

PRESS RELEASE – The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Fouad Twal, is very concerned about the outbreak of violence and the rapid deterioration of the situation in Jerusalem. He calls for an immediate return to calm and to search for effective solutions to preserve the sanctity of this Holy City “three times” holy.

Since the conflict in Gaza, Jerusalem has not regained a quiet and peaceful atmosphere. The cowardly murders of Israelis and Palestinians continue and many times the victims are innocent men, women and children. The loss of these lives is as much a response and justification to new settlement policies in East Jerusalem. These far-reaching, unlawful and dangerous actions threaten the city and its surroundings that drive many individuals to radicalization.

Jerusalem is a city “three times” holy. No other city in the world can claim to be as holy in nature. Pilgrims, Jews, Christians and Muslims are here to seek God. This city, a symbol of peace for millions of believers throughout the world, has become a dangerous place mired in flames and hatred. More than anywhere else, peace must be restored in Jerusalem to ensure the security of pilgrims and its residents.

I call on all of you who love Jerusalem to gather in prayer, that we give back to this City its vocation as a Holy City of peace and not of violence.

+ Fouad Twal, Patriarch of Jerusalem for Latins, October 31, 2014.
VATICAN CITY – On Wednesday, October 8, Latin Patriarch Fouad Twal spoke at the Synod on the Family held in Rome. He summarized the main challenges of families of the Holy Land, in order to generate the renewal of pastoral initiatives so that families can be faithful to their vocation. Following is the full text of his speech.

Holy Father and dear Brothers,

To get to the root of the dramatic situation of the family, let us remember that a radical change of culture is taking place both in the West and the East – the radical secularization, the absolutism of individual freedom, the autonomy of the person (even if God exists, he does not have to interfere in my life), which establishes a clear separation between faith and life.

Among the challenges we face in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, with jurisdiction over Cyprus, Israel, Palestine and Jordan:

1. **Political situation** – The separation wall, 730 km. long, built in 2003, is a major factor in the separation of families, parishes, clergy, and the deterioration of family atmosphere and good neighborliness. The military occupation and the culture of violence and death leaves a wound and an indelible mark in the minds of young people and thwarts their “dreams” of forming a healthy and happy family.

2. **Economic situation** – Local men often emigrate, leaving the wife, children and the elderly at home. In contrast, migrants from Asia are women who come to us in search of work, leaving husbands and children at home.

3. **Israeli law (Citizenship and Entry into Israel)** – ratified by Parliament on July 31, 2003, prevents the reunification of Palestinian families. A Palestinian from Jerusalem who marries someone outside of the city must leave the city and can no longer live with the husband (or wife) in Jerusalem. This is an obvious policy to clear the Holy City of Arabs. Despite many interventions at the highest levels, this law has not been repealed.

4. In instances of misunderstanding between spouses, one or both change religious affiliation to obtain a divorce from the Orthodox court and then remarry in the Orthodox church. Unfortunately, this situation has been happening frequently and has brought about some scandal in the Christian community. The popular comment is – it is better to become Orthodox rather than convert to Islam! We fear that our faithful and the clergy are permeated with worldly mentality and secular values, and are unable to rise above the convenience of “easy divorce” and this pattern of “conversion”.

5. In marriages between a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian, tradition has it that the woman follows the rite of the husband, yet free to be faithful to her own confession or to adopt the husband’s confession. However, the children are baptized in the Church of the husband.

6. **Court delays** – The long wait for responses in the process of handling matrimonial cases in both the local and Roman courts is tedious and triggers exasperation among the respondents. This drives them to...
change confessions and eventually marry outside the Catholic Church.

7. In a world where the **tribal system** still exists, the parents’ interference is a cause of disorientation in the lives of young couples that lead to misunderstandings and basis for separations.

**Proposition:**

1. Formation of the faithful: The directives of the Magisterium are to help pastors, clergy and consecrated persons in their mission of education and training. The faithful often ignore the law of the Gospel and the Magisterium of the Church. Today especially with social communication, programs on the themes of family should be disseminated regularly in order to educate and train the faithful. Perhaps we need a directory for the family today, with practical guidelines that the clergy, and the families can follow and adhere to in specific situations.

2. In the East, where normally there are no ‘common law unions’, or in a very limited way, where only a religious marriage is accepted, the Sacrament of Marriage requires of us to:
   * Work harder at providing better staff training to teach and instill in the couple, that marriage is not only an inevitable social rite, but is regarded as a true vocation and a call from God, therefore, a free choice of the couple.
   * Increasingly highlight the beauty of marriage and the dignity of the family – as Christian, wholesome and peaceful; with the ability to sanctify themselves not despite the marriage but through marriage and be a positive living witness of conjugal love and intimate relation.

3. Develop, increase and enhance means of traditional family ministry: courses for engaged couples, counseling centers, generate movements and associations for family, pastoral visits to families, intensify pastoral opportunities on special occasions in the family – anniversaries, birthdays, births, illnesses, funerals, etc.

4. “create” or “rediscover” new avenues for pastoral ministry especially with young couples:
   * retreats, pilgrimages to shrines related to the family, or to sites where beatified or canonized couples have lived and where vows and promises of fidelity to one another can be renewed.
   * Of significance are pilgrimages of families in the Holy Land especially to the holy city of the Holy Family. Of particular interest is the Holy Father’s desire that an International Center for the Family be built in the very near future in Nazareth.

5. Encourage participation in the Synod of the Family and launch initiatives in dioceses and parishes to publish and circulate information and messages before, during, and after the Synod, thus creating a universal awareness and understanding. Organize in each country, diocese or region conferences on the family on a regular and timely basis as appropriate.

6. That the diocesan tribunals are more concerned to find solutions or render judgments on time for couples in difficult situations. That the Roman tribunals shall have more confidence in diocesan tribunals, which are more familiar with the complex and delicate local situations. They not only focus on the legal dimension but look into the pastoral, psychological and human perspective.

7. Articulate better pastoral care for mixed marriages, that they become an opportunity, and not a problem as intermarriages promote the unity of the Church and Christian Unity helps spouses of mixed marriages.

8. Establish a center for the pastoral care of the family.

+ Fouad Twal,

*Patriarch of Jerusalem for Latins, October 31, 2014.*
Diocese: Holy Land News

A consistory to help “our brothers in hardship”

ROME – As the Family Synod has wound up, Pope Francis seized the opportunity of the presence in Rome of a large number of Cardinals to hold on Monday 20 October a consistory on the Middle East. Aside from the Cardinals, Patriarchs of Eastern Churches and Latin Dioceses of the East, were also present in order to share their concerns and to suggest platforms to overcome the crisis.

Pope Francis unrelentlessly deals with the dramatic situation of Christians in the Middle East, precisely in presence of Cardinals, the matter “touching his heart at all times”. In their presence the Holy Father sent forth a plea to the international community and also his concern to safeguard at any cost the Christian presence in the Middle East: “We have a common desire for peace and stability in the Middle East, as well as the will to work for a solution through dialogue, reconciliation and political commitment. At the same time, we would like to provide the best possible support to Christian communities to help them hold fast in their region”.

In brief, Cardinal Secretary of State Mgr. Parolin brought forward the discussions and conclusions of the Pope’s meeting with the Nuncios of Irak, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Iran which were held in early October. The Patriarchs of the Catholic Church of the East and the Latin Diocese in the same countries have one after the other spoken about the challenges and their sufferings. According to Fr. Lombardi, Director of the Press Hall of the Vatican, the Patriarchs felt “a support and a sign of closeness from the side of the Pope and the College of Cardinals”.

According to an evaluation by Vatican News.va, the Cardinals agreed on the importance for the countries of the area to reshape their future. Many conflicts override the attempts to build peace. Jerusalem should be recognized as the capital of faith by the three monotheistic religions. It is necessary to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian and Syrian conflicts, and a way to check the upsurge of fighters of the Islamic State. Another plea was set forth, namely for the freedom of religion as innate, basis right, namely in the countries marked by state religion, mostly Islam.

How to stop the flight of Christians

At the conclusion of the consistory, Cardinal Parolin reminded in the course of a press conference “we cannot yield to think of a Middle East free of Christians, who are deemed to play an essential role as makers of peace, reconciliation and development”.

The Church calls on Christians of the East to hold fast to their lands and to “find out conditions of living, of security, of work, of future in the region”, according to the Cardinal’s statement. This solution is far better than emigration, which affect these communities. It is the generous visa offers from States that is at stake; they risk emptying the Middle East out of its Christian presence.

In order to encourage Christians in their steadfastness, the same solutions are heard: carry on the inter-religious dialogue to deepen mutual respect, to encourage peaceful coexistence. It is indeed a delicate mission especially in those countries of the region where each day men, women, children fall victims because of their faith.

The Church calls on pilgrims from all over the world to go on pilgrimage to the Land of the Bible, of Jesus, and of the early Christians to show their support and closeness. Cardinal Parolin further called on Caritas Movement not to stop its mission, of basic importance to help all those, Christians or not, whose freedom is abused.

Vandalism in Akraba:
“Such acts do not encourage peace-making”

The mosque of the small village of Akraba in Palestine was vandalized on Tuesday, October 14, by a small extremist Jewish group “Price Tag”. Bishop William Shomali visited the site to express his support and condemn this act of violence. He was accompanied by a delegation from Jerusalem and Birzeit.

Father Hanna Jallouf has been released

Father Hanna Jallouf, OFM, the Franciscan parish priest kidnapped between Sunday, October 5 and Monday, October 6 by a group of armed militants of the jihadist faction Jabhat al-Nusra has been released this morning. A statement issued by the Custody of the Holy Land states that the pastor has been placed under “house arrest” at the Convent of St. Joseph, in the village of Knayeh.

Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land and the Diaspora

At the heart of today’s burning issues in the region, Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land (Israel and Palestine), feel threatened, directly or indirectly, in many ways. How many of these Christians are there? Why did they emigrate in the past? And why are they still emigrating today?

Pierre Loup de Raucourt
Pastoral and Liturgical Life

DEIR RAFAT – Many Catholics from all over the diocese went to Deir Rafat on Sunday 26 October 2014 on the occasion of the feast day of Our Lady of Palestine. Under the sun, in a peaceful Sunday atmosphere, in the midst of vineyards, mass was an occasion to pray to the Holy Virgin and also to gather the diocese round the Patriarch, on his return from the Family Synod.

Each year, the community of the Sisters of Bethlehem welcome in the silent sanctuary, throughout the year, Catholics from the Holy Land, coming mostly from Jerusalem and its neighbourhoods, and also from Galilee. They all rush in to worship the Holy Virgin, Queen of Palestine, praying for the sake of the situation in a region, which since a considerable time does not know peace. It is the vocation of this sanctuary, established in 1927, to ask the Holy Virgin for special protection to her native soil.

They came as families or parish groups in large number – almost 2000 – to attend Mass held by the Seminarians of Beit Jala. Under the sun, in the midst of vineyards, they all expressed their joy at meeting other Christians coming from other areas.

Mgr Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, who did not hide his joy to see his flock back, again, chaired the celebration. He had been away for few weeks for the Family Synod on the Family; he expressed his joy to meet his diocese, greeting and meeting them, carrying testimony of his Synod experience, setting platforms of reflection and conversion for the present families.

A week after the beatification of Paul VI, the Patriarch has also reminded the faithful of all his acts in the Holy Land and his initiative to set up the Maison d'Abraham and the Epheta Institute for deaf and dumb, with all the welfare services both institutions are performing in the Holy Land.

It was an ideal feast day coinciding with the Patriarch’s comeback into his diocese, bringing back from Rome recordings of the Synod meetings, in order to remind families who pray Our Lady of Palestine that there is nevertheless a hope for peace in the region, especially if the family holds on to unity.

Pierre Loup de Raucourt

Kehilla Day during Sukkot 2014
On Saturday, October 11, 2014, representatives of all the kehillot (Hebrew speaking Catholic communities) in Israel gathered at the Sanctuary of Our Lady Ark of the Covenant in Kiryat Yearim for a day of fellowship.

Feast of St. Francis of Assisi celebrated for three days in Jerusalem
From October 3-5, the feast of St. Francis was celebrated in an unusual way in Jerusalem. This year, the feast of Saint Francis on October 4 coincided with the Jewish celebration of Yom Kippur, the Muslim Eid al-Adha, and the celebration of the solemn profession Brother David Grenier of the Custody of the Holy Land.

World Mission Sunday celebrated in Jerusalem
On October 19, St. Saviour’s Parish in Jerusalem celebrated World Mission Sunday Day with great joy. The celebration was led by Bishop Shomali in the presence of many young people, was marked by the witness of an Iraqi Sister who spoke about the mission among refugees in Irbil.
INTERVIEW – The decision of the British House of Commons to recognize the State of Palestine is an example to be followed by “other nations”, said the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Fouad Twal to Radio Vatican on October 14, 2014, on the sidelines of the presentation of his book-length interview “Jerusalem, Capital of Humanity.”

– This about a people like any other, who has the right to live in peace, to have a homeland, a capital, a passport, its own stamps and currency… I am not asking for any privilege.

Q – Do you think this vote by the British House of Commons could give a new impetus to the negotiations?
– Yes you are right. This can be a good example for other countries that are still reluctant. We must have the courage to say things as they are, without complex, without fear, and all will be well.

Q – What about the funds pledged for the reconstruction of Gaza at the Conference in Cairo?
– It is the madness of the world. Instead of destroying an entire country, killing, humiliating and then rebuild with $5 billion, we could have saved $5 billion by not going to war and live in peace.

Q – War victims were mostly children …
– There are many wounds in the heart of man. I do not think money can change that. It is to us over time, through education, patience, love and prayer to rebuild man and to make him a man of peace, brotherhood and cooperation rather than a man of war and violence.

Q- In Jerusalem as well, difficulties experienced by families are numerous …
– Many of your young people are unable to get married, nor to start a family, because they have no home, no money, no work and no job opportunities. In our Palestinian villages many of our youth are unable to have this joy and this blessing.

The book “Jerusalem, Capital of Humanity,” presented to the Senate is a dialogue between Patriarch Twal and journalist Nicola Scopelliti. It tells the story of a young Jordanian from a Bedouin family who became a priest, then a diplomat accredited to the Holy See, the first Arab Bishop of Tunis and now the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, a unique city in the world, says Patriarch Twal in this book, is a city full of contradictions, which unites all believers, and at the same time divides them. The book is a narrative of many little stories while focusing on the lives of Christians in the Holy Land, where culture, dialogue and tolerance, according to the Patriarch, are the pillars of peace in the Middle East.

Interview: Elvira Ragosta in Italian for Radio Vatican
Projects of the Latin Patriarchate

The Vicariate of Amman: renovation of the sisters’ residence

AMMAN – the Latin Patriarchate undertook the restoration of the residence belonging to the Sisters of the Vicariate of Amman. There were necessary works for the maintenance of the building, but not only that. The residence indeed required a comprehensive refurbishing for the comfort, and also for the security, of the Sisters.

The Sisters residence had not undergone repairs for the past ten years. Lack of maintenance led to a generalized dereliction: the infrastructure became risky, showing many security deficiencies for the security of the Rosary Sisters who live in the place, devoted to serving the Vicariate. The mechanical installations of the building had to be changed and renewed. This year the Latin Patriarchate undertook the general restoration of the building, thanks to the generous assistance from donors, mainly the Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem.

As of now, four bathrooms got a new shape. No more leakage, no functional hitches, which was so frequent before. The external fissures of the building, as well as those of the ceilings, were covered up by joints; bricks were raised between the two nearby buildings to avoid leakage problems.

The residence altogether was repainted and reequipped; the kitchen will run thanks to a new gaz/electrical range. The sister-cooks will give henceforth give satisfaction to everybody at the Vicariate.

Jordanian Parish Rectors Renovated

JORDAN – In 2014, the Latin Patriarchate, supported by the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, undertook the restoration of two parish rectories in the heart Jordan, in Fuheis and in the large Christian community of Naur.

Fuheis is a small town about twenty miles northwest of Amman, a city of 20,000 people most of whom are Christians. The Fuheis rectory had not renovated for 15 years, making the residence of the priest a security risk. The electrical and mechanical installations on the exterior of the rectory were damaged. The project undertaken by the Patriarchate through the generous support of the Order of the Holy Sepulcher has facilitated the complete rehabilitation of the rectory’s insulation and soundproofing, the relocation of electrical and mechanical equipment, structural work and carpentry as well as surface repairs, plastering and painting, and the renovation of the kitchen, dining room and bathrooms.

In the city of Naur also, the rectory had been maintained over 20 years ago, which in turn led to a general deterioration, especially of insulation and soundproofing. Work on sealing the roof and some exterior work has been completed. The convent of Sisters of Naur has also undergone a renovation, its outdoor spaces being renovated. Naur, located west of Amman, is home to 50,000 inhabitants, of which many are Palestinians Christians who fled their country in 1948 and 1967.

Faithful to its mission, the Latin Patriarchate watches over the Christian community in the Holy Land, trying to make more appropriate responses to its needs, from the spiritual to the more concrete. A mission made possible by all the friends and lovers of the Holy Land who support the local Church, especially through the Grand Magisterium of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, all Lieutenancies, the Lieutenants, knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre around the world, whose prayers, moral support and financial aid are more valuable every day in the heart of the Middle East if disturbed.

Myriam Ambroselli

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• “The violence needs to stop!” (October 8, 2014)
• What happened to Sukkot in the Christian tradition? (October 8, 2014)
• Ecology, a ground of common understanding among the three monotheistic religions (October 23, 2014)
Statement of the Conference of Latin Bishops of the Arab Regions (CELRA)

RAS EL KHAIMEH (EAU) – from September 30 to October 4, 2014, Bishops from the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Cyprus, Djibouti and Somalia had their annual meeting. Below is the communiqué they released at the end of the meeting.

Our annual meeting was held in Ras El Khaimeh (UAE) from September 30 to October 4, 2014, with the participation of Bishops from the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Cyprus, Djibouti and Somalia. After an enriching exchange on the pastoral situation in our respective countries, we studied and discussed the three themes proposed in our program: Peace and Reconciliation, Migration, and Family.

1. We, the Bishops, share in the sufferings of our people in Gaza, Syria and Iraq who endured massive and extensive destruction, deaths and injuries in large numbers; and of those in Yemen and Somalia, where great political instability continues to prevail. The information about the situation in these areas of conflict is horrible. Nine million Syrians are displaced or homeless. More than half of defenseless Syrian and Iraqi Christians have fled their countries. For the first time in seventeen centuries, a large city like Mosul is without its Christian community. The sufferings of other minorities such as the Yezidis and Kurds, and of many Shiites and Sunnis do not make us apathetic. To put an end to the absurdity of these conflicts, it is necessary to heal and resolve what causes the injustice as in Palestine, both religious and ethnic intolerance as in Syria and Iraq, without excluding the political and economic interests of the countries that support the war and sell weapons.

Therefore, we reiterate that:

– There is no peace without justice and no justice without respect for the human rights, social and religious, and the dignity every person. Finally, there is no peace without forgiveness and reconciliation. The Church prays and works that reconciliation may become a reality in the Middle East. Without true reconciliation based on justice and mutual forgiveness, there will be no peace, because the same factors that bring about the conflict will continue to generate more hatred and more wars.

– Violence in the name of religion cannot be used against anyone because every human person has a right to be respected regardless of religious affiliation, ethnic or minority status. At this point, we wish to acknowledge the role of Churches and its agencies in the distribution of humanitarian aid no matter what religion the people belong to, as well as the heroism of many Muslims in condemning religious radicalism and defending persecuted minorities at the risk of their own life.

– The right of the oppressed to self-defense must be protected and to support the international community in the use of proportionate force to stop aggression and injustice against ethnic and religious minorities.

2. We acknowledge the millions of foreign workers seeking employment and opportunities for a life with dignity, who are welcomed in many countries in the Middle East. We thank the governments who are making positive steps forward in the recognition of the freedom of worship for migrant workers. These migrants, with their skills and enthusiasm care for the well-being of the inhabitants of countries and cooperate in building mutually beneficial relations in exchange for a just compensation. At the same time, the Bishops ask them to respect the culture and traditions of the countries that receive them.

We met many communities in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Fujeireh, Um Quwein, Sharjah and Ras El Khaimeh, belonging to 34 nationalities. We admired their faith, as they live in the midst of difficulties and sacrifices, but with great joy. Majority of the workers give a testimony of peace and tolerance and expect reciprocity and respect for their human dignity and their social rights, more particularly the women.

3. In view of the forthcoming Synod on the Family during this month of October in Rome, we exchanged ideas on the beauty, centrality and importance of the Christian family, willed by God on the model of the covenant between Christ and His Church. We discussed the various challenges of the family in general, but especially the experience of refugees and migrants. We thought of the spouses who are separated or are in crisis and we posed the question of how to find the balance between the indissolubility of marriage on the one hand and the needs of divorced and remarried to a sacramental life. We also emphasized the need for ongoing formation of basic families, especially in accompanying young couples and their inclusion in ecclesial movements that minister to families.

We look forward to many fruits from the upcoming Synod and we invite our faithful to pray for Pope Francis and the Synod Fathers, that the Lord may enlighten them to give responses appropriate to the challenges and risks that confront the institution of the family.

The Bishops of CELRA

Ras El Khaimah October 4, 2014, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi

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