



Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarchate
Of Antioch and All the East
Of Alexandria and of Jerusalem

Protocol 413/2013 D

Damascus, 1 September 2013

Saturday, 7 September 2013

Day of fasting and prayer for peace in Syria

Just before the Angelus of 1 September, His Holiness Pope Francis announced his decision to proclaim next Saturday, 7 September, “the vigil of the birth of Mary, Queen of Peace, a day of fasting and prayer for peace in Syria, the Middle East, and throughout the world.” The Holy Father invited “each person, including our fellow Christians, followers of other religions and all men of good will, to participate, in whatever way they can, in this initiative.” He also condemned the use of chemical weapons, calling on us all to get involved in working for peace.

As President of the Assembly of Catholic Hierarchs in Syria (ACHS), and Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, of Alexandria and of Jerusalem, we call upon all our faithful sons and daughters to join in this day of fasting and prayer. We ask for services to be held in all parishes – according to the situation and conditions specific to each. Let these services and celebrations be held in union with the Holy Father, who from 7 p.m. until midnight will be in St Peter’s Square “in prayer and in a spirit of penance, invoking God’s great gift of peace upon the beloved nation of Syria and upon each situation of conflict and violence around the world.”

We call upon all our priests to open their churches during that period to pray with any parishioners who manage to come. This vigil will be marked by the celebration of Vespers and Matins with a time of prayer and meditation. The prayer uttered by Blessed John Paul II at Quneitra on 1 May 2001 should also be recited. We also suggest reading Pope Francis' remarks of 25 August and 1 September as well as our own statements and appeals for peace.

The collections taken during this prayer vigil and the next day, Sunday, will be entirely for the benefit of Syria's crisis victims in need and distress.

With the Holy Father, we ask "Mary to help us to respond to violence, to conflict and to war, with the power of dialogue, reconciliation and love. She is our mother: may she help us to find peace; all of us are her children! Help us, Mary, to overcome this most difficult moment and to dedicate ourselves each day to building in every situation an authentic culture of encounter and peace. Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us!"

Gregorios III
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
Of Alexandria and of Jerusalem
President of the Assembly of Catholic Hierarchs in Syria