

WELCOME - S.B. Fouad TWAL (Eng)

WUCWO IFCA and Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Women Believers at the Service of LIFE, DIGNITY and the COMMON GOOD

Conference with Christian women in Middle East - Amman 24-27 October 2013

Amman, October 25, 2013

*Your Royal Highness Princess Sumayya,
Your Excellencies:
the Papal Nuncio in Jordan Archbishop Lingua;
the Patriarchal Vicar in Israel, Bishop Marcuzzo;
Dear Priests; Dear Participants and Guests;*

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are here today in our Jordan, your Jordan, a country open to all. I welcome you to this country, where Christians and Muslims are one big family under the leadership of His Majesty, King Abdullah II. Welcome all!

I am very happy to warmly greet and welcome you, the participants in this General Assembly of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations to Jordan, where for the first time, esteemed Jordanian women are taking part. I also extend this welcome on behalf of the Jordanian Government and the women of Jordan.

I would like to thank Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah for the honor of having this great event under her patronage and for deputizing Her Royal Highness Princess Sumayya to be among us.

I thank Her Royal Highness Princess Sumayya for the great privilege of her presence with us on this very special occasion. Her Royal Highness is known for her encouragement and support in the fields of education, science and technology, and culture.

As you gather in Amman in these few days, I cannot help but recall the recent international conference convoked by His Majesty, King Abdullah on September 3-4. It was a well-attended gathering of 70 patriarchs, patriarchal delegates, bishops, priests and other leaders of Christian communities in the region, in the presence of Prince Ghazi, and Cardinal Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue who represented the Holy See. The symposium focused on "The Challenges of Arab Christians." His Majesty emphasized that "the protection of the rights of Christians is a duty rather than a favour. Arab Christians have played a key role in building Arab societies and in defending the just causes of our nation." On August 29, King Abdullah met with Pope Francis in the Vatican and their discussions included the problem of stability throughout the Middle East and the option of dialogue, the Israeli-Palestinian relations, protection of the Holy Places and the status of Jerusalem, a city sacred to Christians, Muslims and Jews.

I wish you to be enriched from this experience, that you will all be energized to go out into the world, full of zeal and enthusiasm, alive and filled with the Holy Spirit to fully respond to the mission that awaits you. As God's people, we are sent as a Church, as companions in the journey toward the future through the many challenges of our time. We pray for you and I ask all of you to pray with us, for peace in this region.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us together spend these days of conference, in a spirit of "communion and witness." May the Lord bless you and I entrust all of you to the heart Mary, Our Lady of Palestine and Mother of the Church. May she accompany you and protect you.

On behalf of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land and in the Middle East, "welcome" I hope that there will be another occasion in the future, that I can once again say to all of you - "welcome to Amman"!!!