



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

MEDIA RELEASE

27 November 2014

Day of Solidarity with Christians of the Middle East - Sunday 7 December 2014

Sunday 7 December 2014 has been designated a Day of Solidarity with the Christians of the Middle East by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

The Australian Bishops received a letter of request from the Conference of Bishops and Representatives of the Middle Eastern Apostolic Churches in Australia and New Zealand seeking the support of the Australian Catholics.

The Conference unanimously supported the request that 7 December 2014 be a Day of Solidarity, involving prayer and a financial offering to help alleviate the suffering of Christians, especially the many Iraqi refugees.

The request comes as we approach the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas. We are aware that the situation for Christians and other minorities in the Middle East is deteriorating by the day, especially as the northern winter will set in soon.

Communities that have been present in the region since apostolic times are being driven out in the midst of unspeakable atrocities. The present tragedy in the Middle East not only impacts upon the communities of the area, but has far-reaching implications for the peace and security of the world.

Considering the widespread significance of the crisis, we are inviting all Catholic communities to join with us on 7 December 2014 as we ask for the mercy of God for our persecuted brothers and sisters in the Middle East.

President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Archbishop Denis Hart said, "We hear the plea of our brother bishops from the Eastern Churches and we join them in expressing our grave concerns about the suffering of the Christian communities, that trace their roots back to apostolic times, and the danger of their gradual disappearance from their ancient homelands".

On 14 December 2014, a delegation of Australian Catholic Bishops will visit refugees in Kurdistan, Iraq and Lebanon to offer spiritual support and humanitarian aid. The delegation will comprise Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn Christopher Prowse, the Archbishop of Hobart Julian Porteous, the Melkite Archbishop Robert Rabbat, the Chaldean Archbishop Jibrael Kassab and the Maronite Archbishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay.



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Archbishop Kassab said, “All the Christians of Iraq desperately need our prayers and support. These, our wounded brothers and sisters, were brutally forced to leave their hometowns and all their belongings in order to remain faithful to Jesus Christ”.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference urges Australian Catholics to join their Christian brothers and sisters of the Middle East in showing the world that while “some trust in chariots and horses, we trust in the Lord, our God” (Psalm 20:7).

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