



Feast of the Annunciation, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am very happy to announce to you that the annual Day of Prayer for Eastern Christians will take place on the Sixth Sunday of Easter (Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2021), with the participation of Christians from all over Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, the Horn of Africa and India.

This Day of Prayer – promoted by the French charitable organization, *L'Oeuvre d'Orient* and its UK counterpart, *Fellowship and Aid to the Christians of the East* (FACE) in partnership with the Congregation for Oriental Churches – will offer Eastern and Western Christians an opportunity to be united in prayer during the time of Easter.

It will offer us in the West an opportunity to think of the Eastern Churches and to give thanks to God for all that we owe them: the first preaching of the Gospel, the origins of the monastic tradition, the early Church Fathers, and above all the witness of the Eastern Christians down the centuries, which has been, and still is, an inspiration to our faith. This Day could also be an occasion to give thanks for the recent pilgrimage of Pope Francis to Iraq and to draw inspiration from its message of solidarity, fraternity and hope.

Today, the Eastern Christians, many of whom are suffering from the effects of war and from discrimination, now face the added crisis of the Covid epidemic, with its threat to their livelihood, health and well-being. This is a crisis within an already existing crisis! They deserve our prayerful support.

In commending this Day of Prayer to you, may I suggest that you bring it to the attention of your family and friends, perhaps sharing with them the following prayer:

*Heavenly Father, we pray today for peace in the world, especially in the Middle East. By your heavenly grace, strengthen the faith and hope of Eastern Christians. May they be blessed with peace and prosperity in their countries. May we be inspired by their devotion and witness to the Gospel, by their love and compassion for all in their communities, and by their courage, their endurance and self-sacrifice. Through their charity, tolerance and friendship, bring peace and reconciliation to those troubled lands, where Christianity was born and first spread. This we ask of you through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

I trust that this Day of Prayer, despite the restrictions caused by the current pandemic, will bring comfort and assurance to Eastern Christians. In our solidarity and communion, may we all be renewed by the hope we place in the Risen Christ.

With the assurance of my prayers and with my warmest wishes for a joyful celebration of Easter,

Yours in Christ

Michael Cardinal Fitzgerald M.Afr.

**Fellowship and Aid to the Christians of the East (FACE)**

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