

**CONFERRAL OF EPISCOPAL ORDINATION ON
MSGR. ALDO BERARDI, O.SS.T.
APOSTOLIC VICAR - ELECT OF NORTHERN ARABIA**

**BY HIS EMINENCE CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT, MCCJ
Prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue**

18th March 2023, Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia, Awali (Bahrain)

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Authorities,

Dear Monsignor Aldo,

Dear Priests and Religious,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is a special joy to me to preside over the Episcopal Ordination of Monsignor Aldo Berardi, O.SS.T., whom His Holiness Pope Francis has appointed as Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia. I am grateful for the presence of the Co-consecrators, His Excellency Archbishop Eugene Martin Nugent, Apostolic Nuncio, and His Excellency Bishop Paul Hinder, Apostolic Administrator.

It is a time of great joy for all of us who have come together here in this cathedral today, but for you, dear Monsignor Aldo, it is a time of gratitude for all the blessing which God has granted you over the years. Today you are surrounded by your family, your friends and your brothers, the priests of this local Church in Bahrain.

You have served this Church as Parish Priest and Episcopal Vicar; here you have spent your priestly ministry. You also bring to the joy of this day your years of studying in Rome and your considerable experience as Director of the Centre Sainte Bakhita in Cairo (Egypt), which shelters Sudanese refugees, as well as your service as Vicar General of the Order of the Holy Trinity for the Redemption of Captives, best known as Trinitarian Fathers. This is a precious store of knowledge and experience, from which you can draw as you strive to carry out your work with wisdom, competence, and prudence.

You are now called to return all of this to God and serve Him in a new way and with greater responsibility. Today you will be consecrated to be a successor of the Apostles, a herald of

the Gospel and a shepherd of Christ's flock, with the special duty of representing the vicar of Christ in his concern for the Church in the entire world, yes, in his care for the entire human family.

The rich symbolism of the rite of ordination eloquently speaks of the continuity of the Church's faith and life throughout the centuries. Through the imposition of hands and the invoking of the Holy Spirit, you will be welcomed to the College of Bishops. This college perpetuates for all ages the service of the Apostles, to whom the Lord Jesus entrusted the care of His flock. So you, Monsignor Aldo, will become a link in a living chain which goes back uninterrupted to Jesus Himself, and will continue to the end of time, according to His promise. It will be your duty to preach the Gospel of salvation integrally, to take care of strengthening the Church community in faith and, by the celebration of the sacraments, to work for the flourishing of the Kingdom of Christ in truth and life, holiness and mercy, love, and peace.

I would like to remind all of us of some words of Pope Francis on occasion of His Apostolic Journey here in Bahrain. During a Prayer Meeting with this local Church, he said: “Allow me, then, to focus briefly on *three great gifts* that the Holy Spirit grants us and asks us to receive and to reflect in our lives: *joy, unity and prophecy*” (*Sacred Heart Church in Manama Sunday, 6 November 2022*).

I think that today these *three great gifts* of the Holy Spirit are directed in a special way to you, Dear Monsignor Aldo, who are called to shepherd the flock of Our Lord with apostolic authority. It is meaningful that the new bishop receives the ring during the rite of ordination, the symbol of His unconditional love for the Lord and His Church, before receiving the crosier, the symbol of his pastoral authority. Pope Francis reminded us that it is the shepherd’s task to go before the flock as its guide, but also to walk with the flock as a disciple, to listen to its voice and sense where the Holy Spirit, the source of every gift and mission, wants to lead it. “For you I am a shepherd,” Saint Augustine said, “but with you I am a Christian” (Serm. 340:1).

In unity with the countries of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, you will be called to proclaim, in word and example, a Gospel of reconciliation, forgiveness and mercy. In a special way you will also be called to support the Christian community, a small flock which nonetheless is very dear to God. Confirm them in their faith and in their loyalty to the great commandment of loving God and the neighbour. In this way you will perform your mission which you receive today.

During my Episcopal Ordination, exactly seven years ago, I received from Pope Francis a great suggestion that I desire to share with you. He called on Bishops to really look at the faithful, not obliquely, but in the eye, so that we can see them with the heart. Seeing others with the heart is a sign of strength of spirit and fosters a capacity for concern, for compassion, for genuine openness to them and love of our brothers and sisters belonging to other religions.

Dear Monsignor Aldo, I'm confident that following in the footsteps of Saint Juan De Mata, the founder of your Order of the Trinitarian Fathers, you will be particularly dedicated to bringing God's love, peace and mercy to all.

The Lenten season urges us to lift our gaze to the crucified Christ, in whom we readily see reflected the faces and stories of so many of our brothers and sisters who are victims of violence. Once more, with the insistence of children, inspired by our faith in Jesus Christ, let us implore the gift of peace, and renew our resolve to be credible witnesses of hope in the God who raised his Son from the dead.

Now that you are preparing for your ordination and your new responsibilities, know that you can rely on the mercy that this sacrament holds on the confidence and prayers of the Holy Father and on our own prayer, friendship and support.

For all of us gathered here in this cathedral today, and particularly for you, dear Monsignor Aldo, this celebration is an opportunity for blessing and thanking God for the late Bishop Camillo Ballin, also a friend of mine as a member of the Comboni Missionaries. He always said that it is important for Christians to witness to the love of God wherever they are: “I want to continue what I am doing to serve God and my congregation until I retire after another bishop is appointed.

Even then, I will continue to be a missionary of God all my life.”

We are also very grateful to Bishop Paul Hinder, Bishop emeritus of the Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia, who has been till now Apostolic Administrator of the Vicariate of Northern Arabia and wish him every blessing in the future. I would like to extend my greetings to His Excellency Bishop Paolo Martinelli OFM Cap., appointed as the Apostolic Vicar of Southern Arabia. I am sure that the two Vicariates will grow further in collaboration and fraternity.

Dear Monsignor Aldo, we commend you and your ministry to the protection of Saint Joseph. Dear brothers and sisters, whenever we feel saddened or dismayed, let us think of the faith of Joseph; if anxiety threatens our serenity, let us think of the hope of Joseph; if uncertainty grips our heart, let us think of the love of Joseph. By imitating his docility, may we bear good fruit in sincere fidelity, patient honesty, quiet industriousness, and generosity in serving others.

May Our Lady of Arabia and Saints Juan De Mata and Joseph,
bless you and always support you so that you may bear rich
fruits from the ministry that is about to be entrusted to you.

Amen.