

INAUGURAL MESSAGE

*To all the inhabitants of the
Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia*



BISHOP ALDO BERARDI O.S.S.T.
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia



H.E. BISHOP ALDO BERARDI O.SS.T.
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia

*To all inhabitants of the
Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia,
to religious and civil leaders,
to our Christian brothers
and to the Catholic faithful.*

May God grant you peace and joy.

It is with gratitude that I address you on this day of my episcopal ordination as I commence my mission amongst “The People of God” in the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia. I thank God for sending me among you to witness His love and compassion, His mercy and blessings. We come from different backgrounds but are part of the same human family in search of peace and harmony, justice and truth. May the Almighty God grant us the grace to live as brothers and sisters, in mutual respect and tolerance.

I extend my fraternal greetings to the Heads of State, Members of the Royal Families, members of the Legislative assemblies, civic and religious authorities and various leaders who are entrusted to take care of the citizens and residents alike. I assure you of our sincere friendship.

My profound thanks and gratitude to His Holiness Pope Francis for entrusting me with the Catholic Church in

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Northern Arabia. There is a long history of encounters and exchanges. Archaeology stands in testimony of this, and recent history of interreligious dialogue encourages us to consolidate our roots and make further progress. Together, we shall leave a legacy of widening of dialogue and collaboration.

I express my respect for the people of this part of the world, for their traditions, particular laws, the religions that peacefully coexist here and for their social norms. The Catholic Church supports and encourages such convivial endeavors and shall willingly participate in its quest for harmony and spiritual deepening.

I greet the sister Churches and ecclesial communities that share the same faith in Jesus Christ, the only Master of our lives who reveals to us the Father in the Holy Spirit. May this common faith encourage us to engage in dialogue and strive to deepen our unity.

I want to express my admiration for the Catholic communities of the four countries that make up the Vicariate, for the clergy who dedicate their lives to the edification of the Church, for the consecrated men and women who bear witness to the presence of the Kingdom of God, for the leaders of movements, groups, and communities who give their time for their brothers, and for the lay ministers who participate in the pastoral

mission. Together, we form the People of God, each according to his vocation, talent and inherent faculties.

Challenges await us, but we face them with courage and perseverance

Testimonial Challenge: We live in a predominantly Islamic region. This should encourage us to deepen our faith and to know Islam better. With respect for differences, we seek the depth of the Christian faith and we follow Jesus Christ who revealed to us the Father in the Holy Spirit. Interreligious dialogue is necessary to open the doors of mutual knowledge and the exchange of spiritual experiences. We will be true witnesses of Christ if we live faith and charity consistently.

Challenge of Unity: We are from different Catholic traditions. Our cultural and ritual differences are a chance to live our catholicity in truth. If the word "Catholic" means "universal," it does not mean uniformity. It means unity in diversity. We enrich ourselves with others, their history, their spirituality, their rituals and religious sensitivities. We grow together, in communion and in love. I will take care of this very special aspect of diverse yet united local Church in accordance with Jn: 17:21.

Vocation Challenge: We have been called to follow

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Christ according to a particular vocation. Among us are lay people, consecrated persons in religious life and anointed members of the clergy. Each one was called according to his charism and vocation. Let us remember that everyone has his or her niche and that inclusivity is our avowed objective. Everyone must live his vocation according to his calling. The vocation of the laity is wonderful: it takes root in the world to fertilize and transform it according to the Gospel. The vocation of consecrated persons is wonderful: it reminds us that the Kingdom of God is among us and that our gaze turns to Heaven at every moment. Religious vows are a source of liberation for the service of the Church. It will be good to know well the different religious communities in the Vicariate and to rejoice in the richness of the charisms. The vocation to the priesthood is wonderful: it manifests the presence of Christ, who is Head of the Christian community. Priests must live according to the loving Heart of the Father, in the love of the Holy Spirit. May they remember their calling and live according to the Will of the Father. I will ensure the coherence of vocations and will constantly recall the grace we have received. Likewise, I shall care about special vocations in our Vicariate and for our Vicariate.

Challenge of solidarity: We are a Church in the East, made up of people of many origins, languages, and

social circumstances. This diversity of ethnic and social origins does not frighten us. We are Catholics, that is, in solidarity with one another in mutual and universal love. For God there is no difference. We are loved the same and God looks at our hearts and not our appearance. By welcoming one another, we will show the true face of the Christian faith that is reflected in the Face of Christ. I will ensure that all are treated as equal and that solidarity in charity is lived concretely.

Challenge of the sacraments and worship: We live by the Risen Christ, present in the sacraments. Christ is present. He is among us. This is manifested by his Word that we meditate, by the sacraments that we celebrate and by the authority bestowed by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures and the sacraments are the precious treasures of the Church. They plunge us into mystery, into Trinitarian love. The Eucharist is our most precious treasure. It comes from Christ and was transmitted to us by the Apostles. May it therefore be celebrated according to Apostolic Tradition and lived in depth. I will see to it that the Word of God is proclaimed, and the sacraments are carefully administered with due formation, received with coherence, and lived with joy in the Holy Spirit.

Challenge of a new ecclesial organization: As People of God, we must organize ourselves. Ecclesial and social realities have changed. We must adapt to the

new reality that is ours. With the participation of all, we can move forward and revitalize ourselves as Church. Services will be opened to serve the Church and people will be appointed to execute these responsibilities. We also need space, and a more functional bishop's house will have to be built. I count on your prayers, and I ask for your cooperation and participation. The synodal spirit must animate us.

Memories

I carry in my heart and my prayers my predecessors, the Bishops of the Vicariate of Kuwait, Vicariate of Arabia, and the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia. Our history is written by the holiness of these pioneers and their sacrifices. Their memory remains forever engraved in stone and in our hearts. I mention specially Bishop Camillo Ballin, M.C.C.J., who worked so hard for the region and who built this magnificent cathedral with the support of the faithful, laity and clergy. May God reward him for his faithful service and may he grant us his blessing from Heaven.

I sincerely thank Bishop Paul Hinder, OFM Cap who kindly administered this Vicariate during the sede vacante. He was keen to prepare the ground for me. His paternal affection is an example and source of inspiration to me.

I thank my religious Trinitarian family who formed me and

nourished me in my religious and priestly vocation. Now, I dedicate myself to this local Church with all my strength and with the fraternal support of my brothers.

May Our Lady of Arabia intercede for us. She is Queen of Peace; may she obtain for us inner peace and serenity; may she preserve peace in this region and throughout the world.

"For you I am a bishop but with you I am a Christian" (St. Augustine). Together, we walk towards holiness which is the Heart of the Holy Trinity. I need your prayers too!

I conclude with this blessing from the book of Numbers that we like to pray on special occasions:

"May the Lord bless you and keep you! May the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you! May the Lord turn his face to you and give you peace!"
(Numbers 6: 24.27)

+ Aldo Berardi O.SS.T.
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia

Awali, Kingdom of Bahrain, March 18th, 2023.



APOSTOLIC VICARIATE
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(Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia)

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