

AVONA PRESENTATION

In the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, where the desert meets the sea and modernizing cities rise against the backdrop of ancient traditions, stands the **Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia (AVONA)**:

Latin: Vicariatus Apostolicus Arabiae Septentrionalis

Arabic: النيابة الرسولية في شمال الجزيرة العربية.



- The Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia comprises of Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia
- The Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia comprises of United Arab Emirates (U.A.E), Oman and Yemen

An apostolic vicariate of the Catholic Church, it has territorial jurisdiction over Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia and serves as a spiritual refuge for an estimated 2.2 million Catholics, the vast majority of whom are migrant workers from around the world. Each member of this diverse community carries a personal story of faith, migration, and hope.

The present-day Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia emerged from a reorganization of the Catholic jurisdictions in the Arabian Peninsula in 2011. This restructuring divided the region into two distinct vicariates: the northern territories formed a separate Vicariate with its seat in Bahrain, while the southern territories were placed under the Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia, based in Abu Dhabi. This shift was more than just an administrative change; it was a response to the growing pastoral needs of a vibrant and expanding Catholic population seeking spiritual nourishment far from their homelands.

Unlike most dioceses worldwide, AVONA is home to an extraordinary blend of cultures, rites, and traditions. While canonically organized as a Latin-rite jurisdiction, the Vicariate embraces the significant presence of the Eastern Catholic Churches, each contributing its own liturgical heritage and spiritual depth. The faithful gather in churches and chapels to celebrate Mass in the Latin, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, Maronite, Melkite, Chaldean, Coptic Catholic and Armenian Catholic traditions, among others. The ancient chants and prayers of the Eastern rites echo alongside Latin hymns, creating a unique symphony of faith that reflects the universality of the Church.

A cornerstone of AVONA's mission is its commitment to peaceful coexistence with Islam and other religions. In a region where diverse faiths have long intersected, the Apostolic Vicariate actively engages in interfaith dialogue and community outreach. This mutual respect and collaboration not only enrich the spiritual life of the Catholic community but also contribute to social harmony across the Arabian Peninsula. By fostering understanding and shared values, AVONA helps build bridges among communities, demonstrating that faith can unite rather than divide.

According to can. 368, 371§1 and 381§2 of the Latin Code of Canon Law, an Apostolic Vicariate is a Portion of the People of God not yet established as a diocese and is led by a Vicar Apostolic—a prelate with episcopal character (a bishop) who is equivalent in law to diocesan bishops. As the Universal Pastor, it is the Supreme Pontiff who is its proper pastor but shepherds it through his Vicar. Thus, the Apostolic Vicariate falls under the direct jurisdiction of the Holy See, reinforcing the special pastoral care the Universal Church extends to Catholics in mission territories.

Today, under the pastoral leadership of Bishop Aldo Berardi, O.S.S.T., the Vicariate continues its mission of service and evangelization. Priests, religious, and lay people work tirelessly to provide sacraments, catechesis, Catholic education, youth ministry, pilgrimages, and social outreach to an ever-growing Catholic population. Masses are celebrated in multiple rites and languages, ensuring that all the faithful can participate in the Eucharistic life of the Church. Beyond the church walls, pastoral care reaches labor camps, hospitals, and homes, where many Catholics find solace and strength in their faith.

The Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia is more than an ecclesiastical jurisdiction; it is a living Church, a testament to a faith that flourishes even in the most unexpected places. Through prayer, service, and the unwavering dedication of its people, the Vicariate stands as a light in the desert (cf. Mt. 5:14), a home for the faithful, and a powerful sign that Christ's Church knows no borders.