

# HIS BEATITUDE AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

On Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa participated in the General Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches which is taking place in Paphos, Cyprus. In his address His Beatitude thanked the Church of Cyprus for their hospitality and mentioned the political developments in the Middle East, calling on all Christians in the area to be united and to continue to live and witness to the Gospel of Love, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. His address was as follows:

“The Middle East Council of Church has been called to its General Assembly amid a volley of social and political developments which are tossing and rolling the area. It is convening amid unsettled and unstable situations which call on the member-Churches of the Council to reflect their specific role, which is not limited only to the ecclesiastical field. It calls on them to reflect on their responsibilities and to act accordingly for their suffering flock.

Christians are suffering in the Middle East too, often finding themselves between a rock and a hard place and for centuries now have endured the minute distance which separated life from death. This experience of history strengthens them for the new challenges and difficulties and keeps the flame of optimism and hope undying within them.

However, the accumulated experience of the past is not enough as a compass in the uncharted waters of the troubled “Arab Spring”. Our assistance is demanded for the preservation of the Christian presence in the ancient cradle of religions, so that we can consolidate the conviction of those who are suffering.

We are not politicians, neither do we seek a political role. It is also definitely not the time for us to measure responsibilities for the weakness of principles and rights in the suffering Middle East, as the outcome of the events in the political palimpsest in the area is still vague.

Yet it is an opportunity, in this oasis of stability in the Republic of Cyprus, and its Autocephalous Church which is hosting us, to speculate, to exchange views, and over and above rhetorical formats, to propose solutions for the progress of social peace. Ways to make our moral values into actions of solidarity, which will contribute to the consolidation of social justice. Channels of comfort of pain and healing of the open wounds which perpetuate social division.

However vigilant effort we must not forget two basic admissions. Firstly the outlet from the existing stalemates is not found in the radicalization of societies through religious politicization, nor in the tight embrace of political and religious ideologies. Whenever and wherever this sort of thing was sought after in the Middle East Christians found themselves in the category of subordinates.

Secondly, our intentions, as sincere as they might be, will not become actions, if we ourselves do not surpass in this issue whatever divisions divide us. If we do not give the first example of unity through our differences, as a prototype of the necessity of peaceful coexistence of the faithful of the various faiths, which through the ages live in this sensitive geographical area.

Finally, I would like to end my brief address by wishing from my heart that the “Arab Spring” will bring glorious fruit and open the road to a free and

just society in the area. And this, because the happy outcome of this historic reformation can mean the upgrading of the quality, strength and creative presence of all those who live and witness to the Gospel of Love, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Middle East".