

Canonical welcome of the new Patriarch
H.B. Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa
in the College of Consultors, Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, November 6, 2020
in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem, December 4, 2020

Beatitude,
Excellencies,
Priests of the College of Consultors of the Latin Patriarchate
All brothers,

Dearest Beatitude, you have been appointed Patriarch of the Latins of Jerusalem. The Apostolic Nuncio, H.E. Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, has just read to us and showed the decree of appointment issued by the Congregation for the Oriental Churches on October 24, 2020, to all the members of the College of Consultors, those of Palestine and Jerusalem personally present here, and those of Jordan, Nazareth and Cyprus virtually online, and to all the community in the Holy Sepulcher on December 4, 2020.

With this canonical act, you, Beatitude, officially take possession of the diocese and solemnly begin your patriarchal ministry. And we, the College of Consultors of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, sincerely and warmly welcome you, also on behalf of the entire patriarchal family: bishops and priests, men and women religious, deacons, seminarians and faithful; with all their ecclesial structures and associations, especially the Latin Patriarchal Seminary, all the other seminaries in the diocese, and the numerous schools, which always remain a solid and fundamental base of the Church in the Holy Land.

When I say 'patriarchal family' I mean to include, with this greeting and welcome, all the friends, the various volunteers, and the many benefactors of the Holy Land, especially the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, who generously support the Christian presence in the Land of Jesus. We allow ourselves to ideally express this greeting of welcome also on behalf of the very numerous pilgrims who traditionally visit the Holy Places and are part, in a certain sense, of the Church of the Holy Land and to whom the Patriarch consecrates a good portion of his ministry.

As soon as the news of your appointment as Patriarch was heard, the bells of the parishes and religious communities throughout the diocese rang in celebration, even some Orthodox churches. On your arrival at the airport and also your evening entry into Jerusalem, the faithful spontaneously sang the simple refrain they know best: "*Lauda, Jerusalem, Dominum,*" a sign of the joy and cheer of the city and the community for the gift that the Lord gives a new Father, a new Patriarch, to the Mother Church of Jerusalem.

"Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini"

On such auspicious and solemn occasions, it is a tradition in the Middle East to use the biblical and social expression of congratulations: *Mabrûk, alf Mabrûk*. We now like to use another expression that is even more biblical and moving for the inhabitants of Jerusalem: "*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna filio David, Hosanna in excelsis.*"

In reality, for you, who already know the Holy Land and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem well, having been Custos and Apostolic Administrator, we should rather say "*Benedictus qui redit in nomine Domini*" (Blessed is he who returns in the name of the Lord).

We want to, intentionally, repeat *Hosanna*. You know that this Aramaic term, typically biblical, means “*Lord, save us.*” Indeed, in the last four years, you came to ‘save,’ in some way, several material and practical problems of the Patriarchate, and we are very grateful to you, Beatitude.

Now, however, you are asked to be not only a good administrator but a diocesan bishop, that is, a true ‘father’ of this Mother Church of Jerusalem. Now your ministry as a father will have a more pastoral, cultural, and spiritual tone, perhaps no less demanding than that of Apostolic Administrator, but with a unique flavor much more consoling and corresponding to a pastor’s soul.

The verse we have quoted is happily completed with, *In nomine Domini*. Indeed, we welcome you sincerely and warmly, not only because we already know and esteem Your Beatitude, but because we firmly believe that a new bishop is sent by the Lord, the Church, and the Holy Father. For us, Catholics, especially of the Latin Patriarchate, this sure attitude of unity and availability towards the Mother Church is very much alive, and we want to remain traditionally firm in it.

If you permit, another suggestive allusion comes to us from the verse just recited: *Filio David*. In this simple expression, we see a very beautiful evocation of your previous pastoral and cultural experience with the *Kehilà* of the Vicariate of St. James and the care for the numerous migrants in the Holy Land, especially in Jerusalem.

Successor of St. James (197th)

You are the successor of St. James, the ‘brother’ of Jesus and the first bishop of Jerusalem. It would be, therefore, if we pay attention to the lists that history presents us, the 197th successor of St. James. The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as a canonically constitute Diocese, dates to 1099, and, for about 200 years, the patriarchal See was in Jerusalem (until 1187 with 12 patriarchs) or in St. John of Acre (until 1291 with 16 patriarchs). The Patriarch then, for historical political reasons of this tormented land, could no longer, for centuries (556 years), stay in the Holy Land but had his seat in Rome, in San Lawrence outside the walls (57 patriarchs). But, in the far-sighted wisdom of the Church, the Patriarchate has never been suppressed. In 1847, Pius IX obtained the happy possibility of the Patriarch’s return to his natural home from the Sublime Porte.

You are therefore the 10th Patriarch of the so-called “restoration” (173 years), the 95th since the canonical creation of the Latin Patriarchate (921 years), and the 197th successor of St. James! We must not forget that during the absence of the Patriarch, the Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land had the great merit of ensuring, as far as possible, the spiritual and pastoral care of the pilgrims and of the few Latin faithful who remained at the major sanctuaries.

Many of your predecessors, Beatitude, have gone through difficult and even dramatic times. Some were named after these troubled times, that is, in times of rebirth, reconstruction, and new beginnings. Just think of Patriarch Valerga in 1847, Patriarch Barlassina in 1919, Patriarch Gori in 1949, Patriarch Beltritti 1970, and finally to the Patriarch Sabbah 1987, who began his ministry in the middle of the *Intifada*. Beatitude, according to the divine plan, you, also, are part of this category of Patriarchs of the rebirth. Now it is up to you, therefore, to hold the helm of the Church of Jerusalem and navigate the rocks, among other things, of this global

emergency of Covid-19 and, above all, to start a new phase of peace and unity in the historical path of the Patriarchate for which we hope. How and with whom?

“Sufficit tibi gratia mea”.

As the tradition of the Church teaches us, and as your predecessors have acted, we believe that Our Savior Jesus Christ instituted the Church, and His Holy Spirit guides it. Then, of course, you will appeal to your significant and beautiful Pauline episcopal motto: *“Sufficit tibi gratia mea”* (My grace is enough for you, 2 Cor 12.9). We are equally sure that Psalm 127 is remembered, which assures us: *“Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui aedificant eam”* (If the Lord does not build the house, the builders labor in vain).

At the same time, even if it is not now the time to distribute advice, we like to remember that the history of the universal and local Church itself shows us unmistakable and precious signs that can be treasured for a fruitful ministry: The spirit and the letter **of the Vatican Council II and the Pastoral Synod of the Catholic Church of the Holy Land**. From these stupendous documents, one could draw many useful guidelines for a bishop.

According to our modest experience, we can summarize them in the sacrosanct term **synodality** at all pastoral action levels, in the diocese, in parishes, and all ecclesial institutions. In other words, always and everywhere: unity, cohesion, participation, cooperation, decide, and work together. How many problems would have been avoided if the Christian community of Holy Land had walked that road!

A dream of ecclesial renewal!

Explaining more clearly what has been said, I am grateful to end this greeting to the new Patriarch with a “dream” which I had, inspired by Pope Francis’ wonderful exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* when he speaks of the “Pastoral conversion ... and ecclesial renewal”: *“I dream of a “missionary option,” that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world.”*

In the community, where is the bishop located, or better, what is his role for this conversion of renewal and rebirth? Pope Francis specifies in a straightforward and interesting way:

- *“He (the bishop) will sometimes go **before** his people, pointing the way and keeping their hope vibrant.*
- *At other times, he will simply be **in their midst** with his unassuming and merciful presence.*
- *and in some circumstances, he must walk **after** the people, to help those who are left behind”* (E.G., 27 and 31).

Mabrûk. Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Procedamus in pace.

+ Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo
Patriarchal Vicar General
(Donec aliter provideatur)

November 6, 2020
December 4, 2020
Jerusalem

