

**LATIN PARISH
ST. FRANCIS ASSISE**

*Aleppo - Syria
P.B.201*



Aleppo, 02.10.2023

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

May the blessings of peace and goodness be upon you. We wish to convey our profound appreciation and heartfelt thanks for the unwavering support you have extended to us during these trying times. Your immense sacrifices and boundless generosity go beyond mere material assistance; they are a profound expression of love that never fails to touch our hearts and rekindle hope within us.

We continue to reside in our beloved city of Aleppo, confronting formidable and exceedingly challenging circumstances. The aftermath of the earthquake still lingers, affecting people of all ages, both mentally and physically. The prevailing atmosphere is marked by pallor and the haunting grip of fear.

Regrettably, securing the basic necessities of life has become an almost insurmountable ordeal. Beginning on August 15th, a harrowing wave of inflation has swept through, with prices soaring by 80-90% for essential items such as food, medicine, and supplies for infants and the elderly, including diapers. Furthermore, fuel prices have skyrocketed by an alarming 130%, reaching their peak on August 18th. These hardships compound the ongoing struggles caused by frequent power outages and the relentless sweltering heat, further exacerbating our suffering.

Despite the salary increments for workers, they have proven ineffective, as the purchasing power has diminished. Even with the exorbitant rise in transportation costs, obtaining even the most basic necessities has become an insurmountable challenge. These circumstances have intensified psychological stress, anxiety, and family discord, rendering the situation challenging for all. As a church and a closely-knit family, we persistently exert our utmost efforts to provide diverse forms of support and assistance, enabling them to lead a semblance of a normal life despite the adversities. I was once told that we resemble the eight musicians on the Titanic, who, amid the looming disaster, continued to play. Similarly, we persist in our efforts, believing that our actions can be a lifeline for our families amidst the prevailing

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darkness. We have unwavering faith in the miraculous work of the Lord, made possible by your unwavering love, support, and constant assistance. This support serves as a vital thread, enabling us to persevere in our mission of serving our brethren with joy and love.

Despite the pain and difficulties, we are experiencing, God has blessed us with great joy for our Church, which is the Episcopal Ordination of Father Hanna Jallouf, a Franciscan father, as the new Apostolic Vicar in Syria after a wait that lasted for more than a year. He is a well-known monk from the village of Al-Qnayeh (in the Province of Idlib) a generous land that gave more than 15 vocations (Monks, Nuns, etc.). The presence of Fr. Hanna in his village, and his perseverance and dedication contributed to establishing the Christian Church in Northern Syria, especially during the years of war. The celebration was in our church on September 17th, which is the feast of the stigmata of St. Francis.

His Excellency Hanna Jallouf moved to Aleppo, and Fr. Khoukaz Mesrob, who has been a member of our religious community in Aleppo, took his place, becoming the Parish Priest of Al-Qnayeh. I recommend both of them to your prayers. Our Lord Jesus may bless their mission for the good of the church in our beloved country, Syria.

I take advantage of this letter to wish you a happy feast of Saint Francis, which the church celebrates on October 4th. This saint managed, with his faith and simplicity, to open a new path in the history of the Church. We ask for his intercession, so that each of us can leave an imprint of Peace and Goodness in our humanity, so thirsty for Truth and Beauty.

God bless you.

Fr. Bahjat Karakach, ofm

