



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING COORDINATING THE ACTIVITIES
CARRIED OUT BY THE CATHOLIC CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS
WORKING IN SYRIA AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES
PROMOTED BY THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL "COR UNUM"**

*Hall of the Domus Sanctae Marthae
Wednesday, 5 June 2013*

Dear Friends, I would like to thank you for coming together and for all the humanitarian work which you are doing to aid the suffering peoples of Syria and nearby countries owing to the conflict there. I encouraged the [Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*](#) to promote this meeting designed to coordinate the activities carried out by Catholic charitable organizations in the region. I wish to express my gratitude to Cardinal Sarah for his greetings. I offer a special welcome to those who have come from the Middle East, especially those representing the Church in Syria. The Holy See's concern for the crisis in Syria, and in a particular way, for the people, often defenceless, who are suffering as a result of it, is well known. [Benedict XVI](#) repeatedly called for a ceasefire and for a search for a resolution through dialogue in order to achieve a profound reconciliation between sides. Let the weapons be silent! Furthermore, he wished to express his personal closeness this past November, when he sent Cardinal Sarah into the region, accompanying this gesture with the request to "spare no effort in the search for peace" and manifesting his concrete and fatherly solicitude with a donation, to which the Synod Fathers had also contributed in October. The destiny of the Syrian people is a concern that is close to my heart also. On Easter Sunday I asked for peace: "above all for dear Syria", I said, "for its people torn by conflict, and for the many refugees who await help and comfort. How much blood has been shed! And how much suffering must there be before a political solution to the crisis is found" (His Holiness Pope Francis, [Urbi et Orbi Message, 31 March 2013](#)). In the face of ongoing and overwhelming violence, I strongly renew my appeal for peace. In recent weeks the international community has

reaffirmed its intention to promote concrete initiatives to bring about a fruitful dialogue designed to bring an end to the war. These initiatives are to be encouraged, and it is hoped that they will lead to peace. The Church feels herself called to give her humble yet concrete and sincere witness to the charity which she has learned from Christ, the Good Samaritan. We know that where there is suffering, Christ is present. We cannot pull back, precisely from those situations where the suffering is greatest. Your presence at this coordinating meeting demonstrates your will to faithfully continue this precious work of humanitarian assistance, in Syria and in neighbouring countries which generously receive those who have fled from the war. May your timely and coordinated work be an expression of the communion to which it gives witness, as the recent Synod on the Church in the Middle East suggested. To the international community, besides the pursuit of a negotiated solution to the conflict, I ask for the provision of humanitarian aid for the displaced and refugees, and Syrians who have lost their homes, showing in the first place the good of each human person and guarding their dignity. For the Holy See the work of various Catholic charitable agencies is extremely significant: assisting the Syrian population, without regard for ethnic or religious affiliation, is the most direct way to contribute to peace and to the upbuilding of a society open and welcoming to all of its different constituent parts. To this also the Holy See lends its efforts: to the building of a future of peace for a Syria in which everyone can live freely and express themselves in their own particular way. My thoughts at this moment also go to the Christian communities who live in Syria and throughout the Middle East. The Church supports the members of these communities who today find themselves in special difficulty. These have the great task of continuing to offer a Christian presence in the place where they were born. And it is our task to ensure that this witness remain there. The participation of the entire Christian community to this important work of assistance and aid is imperative at this time. And let every one of us, let each of us think of Syria. What great suffering, what great poverty, what great grief experienced by Jesus who suffers, who is poor, who is expelled from his homeland. It is Jesus! This is a mystery, but it is our Christian mystery. Let us contemplate Jesus suffering in the inhabitants of beloved Syria. I offer my gratitude once again for this initiative and I invoke upon each one of you abundant divine blessings. This heavenly benediction extends in a particular way to the beloved faithful who live in Syria and to all Syrians who have been forced to leave their homes because of the war. May all of you here present tell the beloved people of Syria and the Middle East that the Pope accompanies them and is near to them. The Church will not abandon them!