

## **Holy Land Coordination 2023 Final Communiqué**

### **Communion with the Church in Jordan and the wider Holy Land**

*Jesus set out from there and went into the district of Judea [and] across the Jordan. Again crowds gathered around him (Mk 10:1)*

Jordan is integral to the Holy Land, as the site of the Lord's baptism and early ministry. Our presence was affirmed by Bishop Jamal Daibes, Patriarchal Vicar of Jordan, to have been more than a pilgrimage, indeed to have been a 'visit of communion' with all those who live out their Christian faith here.

Across the country we have been welcomed into parish communities, many of which we found to be vibrant. As Pope Francis reflected during his own visit to Jordan: "*Christian communities ... present in this country since apostolic times [are] contributing to the common good of the society of which they are fully a part.*"<sup>1</sup> Christian schools were highlighted as places of human flourishing and encounter between faiths. We witnessed the prophetic care Christians extend towards people with disabilities and their families. We heard of the important role that Christians play in building bridges of hope between communities. And we met many young Christians who, despite facing significant social and economic challenges, remain resolutely committed to enriching both Church and society.

We encourage pilgrims from our different countries to come and encounter these Christian communities, as well as visiting Jordan's deeply important holy sites. Praying with and learning from the country's Christians – its 'living stones' – will serve to expand and strengthen pilgrims' own faith.

As in previous journeys of the Holy Land Coordination to Jordan, we have witnessed the tireless and vital efforts of people inspired by the Gospel to uphold human dignity and defend human rights. Most prominent among these is support for those fleeing violence in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, through the provision of accommodation, skills-training, medical facilities, pastoral care, and advocacy.

Jordan today hosts more displaced people than almost any other country. Those whom we met from Iraq have little desire to return home, due to continued insecurity and lack of opportunity. We encourage the dignified treatment of all those seeking sanctuary here, especially access to healthcare and the right to work. We also recognise the pressure on local communities which have welcomed people yet lack the necessary resources to meet their needs, especially given the economic climate and high levels of unemployment. It is imperative that our own countries play their part in relieving the pressure on the people of Jordan, both by increasing humanitarian assistance on the ground and extending a wider welcome to refugees themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Meeting with the authorities of the Kingdom of Jordan* (24 May 2014)

We heard often of the high regard in which the Hashemite Royal Family are held as peacemakers and promoters of interreligious dialogue. We were struck by the respect for human dignity that we have witnessed in Jordan and how many Christians value the safety that the country affords them. This contrasts with the violations against human dignity increasing elsewhere in the Holy Land. We share the profound concerns expressed by the local Catholic ordinaries, in their recent Advent message, of threats to peaceful coexistence in Israel, the upsurge of violence in the West Bank, the sustained growth of settlements which is contrary to international law, and the highest Palestinian death toll in more than twenty years. We echo the Church leaders' call for a genuine peace process rooted in international law, for the Palestinian people to be granted their freedom, and for the equal rights of all communities to be respected.<sup>2</sup>

From Mount Nebo, where Moses first looked upon the Promised Land, we saw a land now sorely divided; and held in our hearts all the people we have encountered who yearn for a better future for themselves, their families, and their homelands. We recalled Pope Benedict XVI's message in that place: *"The memory of Moses invites us to 'lift up our eyes' to embrace with gratitude not only God's mighty works in the past, but also to look with faith and hope to the future which he holds out to us and to our world."*<sup>3</sup>

We commit ourselves to continued prayer and advocacy for our sisters and brothers across Jordan, Palestine, Israel, and the wider region, trusting in God's promise for all who dwell in this Land.

**Amman – 19 January 2023**

**Bishop Nicholas Hudson**

*England & Wales (Chair of the Holy Land Coordination)*

**Bishop Nicolo Anselmi**

*Italy*

**Bishop Udo Bentz**

*Germany*

**Bishop Peter Bürcher**

*Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden*

**Bishop Christopher Chessun**

*Church of England*

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<sup>2</sup> Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land, *Considerations of the Assembly of the Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land concerning the recent political and social developments in Holy Land* (12 December 2022)

<sup>3</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Visit to the Ancient Basilica of the Memorial of Moses* (9 May 2009)

**Bishop William Crean**

*Ireland*

**Bishop Michel Dubost**

*France*

**Bishop Martin Hayes**

*Ireland*

**Bishop David Malloy**

*United States of America*

**Archbishop William Nolan**

*Scotland*

**Bishop Paul Terrio**

*Canada*

**Archbishop Joan-Enric Vives Sicilia**

*Spain*

**Archbishop Cyril Vasil**

*Slovakia*