



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO H. B. YOUSSEF ABSI,
NEW PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH FOR MELKITE GREEK CATHOLICS**

To His Beatitude Youssef Patriarch of Antioch for Melkite Greeks

It is with great pleasure that I received the letter in which you informed me of your election as Patriarch of Antioch for Melkite Greeks by the Synod of Bishops, requesting me to grant *Ecclesiastica Communio*.

I am pleased to congratulate you and assure you from now on of my prayer that Christ, the Good Shepherd, may support you in the fulfillment of the mission that has been entrusted to you and for the service required of you.

Your election, Your Beatitude, has come at a delicate time for the venerable Melkite Greek Church and when many Christian communities in the Middle East are called to bear witness in a special way to their faith in Christ who died and is Risen. In this particularly difficult time, Pastors are called upon to manifest communion, unity, closeness, solidarity and transparency before the suffering People of God.

I am certain that Your Beatitude, in fraternal harmony with all the Synod Fathers, will know, with the great wisdom of the Gospel, how to be not only *Pater et Caput* at the service of the faithful of the Melkite Greek Church, but also a faithful and authentic witness to the Risen One.

Therefore, Your Beatitude, as the Successor of Peter called by Jesus to preserve his one Church in unity, with profound joy I grant you the Ecclesiastical Communion requested in accordance with the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. As I entrust you to the maternal protection of the Most Holy Mother of God, I willingly impart to you the Apostolic Blessing which I extend to the bishops, priests, men and women religious and to all the faithful of the Melkite Greek Church.

From the Vatican, 22 June 2017

Francis

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