



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Audience with members of the Conference of Latin Bishops of the Arab Regions (C.E.L.R.A.)

This morning, before the General Audience, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Conference of Latin Bishops of the Arab Regions (C.E.L.R.A.), on the occasion of their plenary gathering.

The following is the greeting prepared by the Pope for the occasion, handed out to those present:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers!

I am pleased to meet you on the occasion of the plenary assembly of the Conference of Latin Bishops of the Arab Regions, which you are holding in Rome in these days.

The Middle East is experiencing moments of very strong tension, which in some contexts lead to open clashes and outbursts of war. The conflict, instead of finding an equitable solution, seems to be becoming chronic, with the risk that it will spread to ignite the entire region. This situation has caused thousands and thousands of deaths, enormous destruction, immense suffering and the spread of feelings of hatred and resentment, which prepare the ground for new tragedies.

Today I have the opportunity to express directly my closeness to you and to the Churches you represent. May the Lord always give you the strength to bear witness to faith in Him, also through respectful and sincere dialogue with everyone.

May you keep hope alight! Be yourselves, for everyone, signs of hope, a presence that fosters words and gestures of peace, brotherhood, and respect. A presence that, in itself, invites reason, reconciliation, overcoming with good will the divisions and enmities stratified and hardened over time, which are becoming increasingly inextricable. Thank you for being the flame of hope where it seems to have been extinguished!

And I wish you well in your pastoral initiatives. In particular, may you identify the best and most effective way to ensure adequate Christian formation for students in public schools, in contexts where the Christian presence is a minority. This formation is of great importance, so that the content of faith may be known and accompanied by reflection, and so that faith, in confrontation with culture, may thus be strengthened and have the means to give reasons for Christian hope (cf. *1 Pet* 3:15).

Dear brothers, thank you for this visit! May Our Lady keep you and comfort you. I bless you from my heart. And let us pray for one another.
