



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
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At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

“A bridge between peoples”: a report on the Pope’s trip to Cyprus



The ecclesial territory of Cyprus is under the jurisdiction of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, along with Palestine, Jordan and Israel. This is why, during his visit to this Mediterranean island in December 2021, the Pope was welcomed by Patriarch Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa at the beginning of the Pontifical Mass celebrated in Nicosia.

His Beatitude first of all recalled that Cyprus played a role of primary importance in the very first proclamation of the Gospel: “Thanks to the people of this beautiful island, the proclamation of the Gospel also reached the pagans and crossed all cultural and religious boundaries, reaching the outskirts of the ancient world (cf. Acts 11:20). A Cypriot Levite, Joseph known as “Barnabas”, led Paul to the Apostles and vouched for him (cf. Acts 9:27). Paul and Barnabas were brothers in the same community of Antioch. They were sent together to Cyprus on their first missionary journey (Acts 13).”

Archbishop Pizzaballa observed: “Since the beginning of Christianity, therefore, Cyprus has been a place of creativity of the Gospel, of evangelization and inculturation, a place of encounter, dialogue and acceptance of the Good News, synonymous with overcoming ethnic, cultural and religious boundaries.” This harmony between the Churches, welcome and integration were also evident in the assembly, where the most diverse backgrounds – Asians, Africans, Europeans, migrants, foreign workers – together with the local Cypriots formed a single community.

“History teaches us that Cyprus is like a bridge between peoples,” the Patriarch of Jerusalem went on to emphasise, adding that by now “Cyprus shares the wounds of Europe and the Middle East at the same time: wounds that are political, military and – it must be acknowledged not without bitterness – also religious divisions.”

“Nicosia, the Cypriot capital, is the last European capital divided by a wall, which is a deep wound on the island. Yet, together with our beloved Orthodox brothers, we look to Christ, ‘who has broken down the wall of separation (...), that is, the enmity’ (Eph 2:14).” That is why we express our hope, which is for us already a certainty,” reassured Archbishop Pizzaballa.

Finally, His Beatitude expressed his deepest gratitude to the Orthodox Church which, especially in Cyprus, is showing signs of great openness and friendship, allowing Catholics to celebrate the Eucharist in their churches. “I hope that this positive experience of ours may be a first step towards the unity our people long for. May Cyprus become for the other Churches a model of unity and harmony, of encounter and sincere friendship!,” he concluded, considering this small island a beacon of light and hope.

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