



ECCLESIA IN  
MEDIO ORIENTE  
BAND 2

Gabriela Mihlig

# Common Christian Roots of the Church of Cyprus under consideration of the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of the Churches



Thanksgiving to His Holiness Pope emeritus Benedict XVI





## TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

Te Deum laudamus Te Dominum confitemur  
Te aeternum Patrem omnis terra veneratur  
Tibi omnes Angeli Tibi caeli et universae potestates  
Tibi Cherubim et Seraphim  
incessabili voce proclamant  
Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth  
pleni sunt caeli et terra Maiestatis Glorae Tuae

Te gloriosus Apostolorum chorus  
Te Prophetarum laudabilis numerus  
Te Martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus  
Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur Ecclesia  
Patrem immensae Maiestatis  
venerandum Tuum verum et unicum Filium  
Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum

Tu Rex gloriae Christe  
Tu Patris sempiternus es Filius  
Tu ad liberandum suscepturus hominem  
non horruisti Virginis uterum  
Tu, devicto mortis aculeo  
aperuisti credentibus Regna Caelorum  
Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes in Gloria Patris  
Iudex crederis esse venturus  
Te ergo quaesumus Tuis famulis subveni  
quos pretioso Sanguine redemisti  
aeterna fac cum Sanctis Tuis in gloria numerari

Salvum fac populum Tuum Domine  
et benedic haereditati Tuae  
et rege eos et extolle illos usque in aeternum  
per singulos dies benedicimus Te  
et laudamus nomen Tuum in saeculum  
et in saeculum saeculi  
dignare Domine die isto sine peccato nos custodire  
miserere nostri Domine miserere nostri  
Fiat misericordia Tua Domine super nos  
quemadmodum speravimus in Te  
In Te Domine speravi  
non confundar in aeternum

## IMPRESSUM



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## *Editorial*

I express my sincere devotion to His Holiness Pope emeritus Benedict XVI and His Holiness Pope Francis.

In my function as coordinator of this book-project the set-up of the project-group, the manuscript and the organisation of fundraising, travels and the publication and presentation with the publishing-house *Leopold Stocker Verlag*, Graz was necessary. In advance I ask pardon for errors, which have been overlooked.

Sincere thanks are addressed to His Eminence Walter Cardinal Kasper, Prefect emeritus of the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, Vatican City, who gave the *Letter of Assignment* 20110914, approved the *Exposé* 20120222 and accompanied in his function as supervisor the structure and the first project-phase of the volume until December 2012 and, furthermore, to His Eminence Kurt Cardinal Koch, Prefect of the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, Vatican City, who gave his verbal confirmation to this project and accepted the execution under his predecessor, His Eminence Walter Cardinal Kasper.

The “Declaration of Authors” is signed by the members of our working-group/representatives of the Churches and further authors, who are giving their articles and/or Accompanying Letters. All copyrights have been approved before publication.

Furthermore, my gratitude is also addressed to the *Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem* and the *Custodia Terrae Sanctae* for having supported my mission for this bookproject as coordinator, for having granted me hospitality and for having contributed with an official Introduction-Letter, textmaterial and pictures according to the agreed “Structure of the Chapter provided by the Latin Church of Jerusalem” approved by Most Reverend Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa O.F.M. and to the “Declaration of Authors” signed by His Excellency Bishop William Shomali. Furthermore, I thank His Grace Archbishop Chrysostomos II of Cyprus and All Neo-Justiniana and His Excellency Archbishop Joseph Soueif for the receptions and I thank, as well, our working-group in Cyprus for their warm hospitality, support and collaboration in our 8 meetings for the set-up of the manuscript.

To all benefactors and other persons who supported our bookproject with their prayers, blessings, advice, contributions and donations my sincere thankfulness be expressed. The *List of Benefactors* is enclosed. This comprehensive project was only possible to set-up with the generous support and courtesy granted by our benefactors.

Finally, I want to thank the publishing-house *Leopold Stocker Verlag*, Graz for their very benevolent support by having accepted our manuscript for the eBook-publication. The music-CD should be produced with reference to this volume in collaboration with our working-group.

May this volume be a thanksgiving to His Holiness Pope emeritus Benedict XVI and may it be also of support for the successor His Holiness Pope Francis for promoting interchurch-relations especially in the Church in the Middle East nowadays.

We have entrusted our project-work to Christ “the Supreme Pastor of the flock” and to Virgin Mary, *Regina Apostolorum*, and we remain in prayer and communion in this intention and for a peaceful coexistence of all Christians and all people in the Middle East.

May it be a “study-book”, may it be a book, which encourages us to continue the common way with Christ in peace and in love for the benefit of all humanity as a “bridge-building”-element between the East and the West!

Gabriela Mihlig osb obl  
*Jerusalem, on the Feast of Epiphany anno Domini 2014*

*Editorial*

**2<sup>nd</sup> edition of**

***“Common Christian Roots of the Church of Cyprus under consideration of the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of the Churches”***

Sincere gratitude to the publishing-house “Leopold Stocker Verlag”, Graz, who kindly transferred the rights including typesetting files to the theological publishing-house “Patrimonium Verlag”, Aachen.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of “*Common Christian Roots of the Church of Cyprus under consideration of the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of the Churches*” is, therefore, published by “Patrimonium Verlag”, Aachen, in the series “*Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*”, in the same version as in the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of 2014.

This series is open for further volumes accompanied and administrated for the publications by the publishing-house “Patrimonium Verlag”, Aachen.

Sincere thanks for the good cooperation.

*Dr. theol. Gabriela Mihlig osb obl*

Coordinator of this book-project



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*Walter Cardinal Kasper*

**LETTER OF ASSIGNMENT**

**To the Catholic and Orthodox Church and Christian communities in Cyprus  
and  
all benevolent persons contributing to this project**

This is to certify that Mrs. Gabriela Maria Mihlig is in mission on behalf of the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity* of the Holy See for the book-project

**“COMMON CHRISTIAN ROOTS OF THE CHURCH OF CYPRUS”.**

This project may be accompanied by my function as supervisor.

I kindly ask the Heads of the Churches/communities to grant full support for a benevolent and mutual cooperation witnessing herewith the common faith of the Church and its tasks to promote Christian unity.

Please remain in contact with Mrs. Gabriela Maria Mihlig for the set-up and for a smooth accomplishment of this volume and grant her hospitality and all necessary financial support in her forthcoming mission and further trips in this concern.

*Walter Card. Kasper*

Vatican City, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**Approval given by Very Reverend Fr. Frans Bouwen, M.Afr., Jerusalem**  
Consulter of the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, Vatican City

Quote

“(...)” = neutralised email address, but you can receive his email-address any time when you want to write to him, please let me know. Thank you.

----- Original-Nachricht -----

> Datum: Thu, 14 Mar 2013 21:14:31 +0200

> Von: "Frans Bouwen" <(...)@steanne.org>

> An: "'Gabriela \'" <gmtm@gmx.at>

> Betreff: bridge chapters

> To whom it may concern

>

>

>

> Ms. Gabriela Maria Mihlig showed me the draft text for the project

> entitled:

> "Common Christian Roots of the Church of Cyprus". She asked me in

> particular

> to look at the transition chapters or "bridge building" chapters, inserted

> between the various parts, in the light of my ecumenical experience. I can

> confirm that the selection of texts that she made for these chapters

> reflects faithfully the ecumenical spirit and relations that at present

> prevail in the countries of the Middle East and can contribute to promote

> further this ecumenical spirit.

>

>

>

> Frans Bouwen, M.Afr.

>

> Jerusalem

Unquote





## **Preface**

*Common Christian Roots of the Church of Cyprus under consideration of the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of the Churches* is dedicated to Virgin Mary, *Regina Apostolorum*, and is effected in honour of His Holiness Pope emeritus Benedict XVI.

Due to the *Declaratio* given by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and the election of His Holiness Pope Francis on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 this bookproject is also addressed to His Holiness Pope Francis, in the hope that its events and speeches may be useful for the Pontiff's interchurch-relations in the Middle East and the encounter with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople His Holiness Bartholomew I in Jerusalem in presence of all Christian denominations of the Church of Holy Land/Middle East on the occasion of the historical encounter between The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople His Holiness Athenagoras I and His Holiness Pope Paul VI, which took place 50 years ago in Jerusalem.

This book-project is a common work elaborated by the Catholic Church in Cyprus – the *Maronite Archbishopric*, the *Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem* and the *Custodia Terrae Sanctae* –, the Orthodox Churches, mainly represented by the Greek-Orthodox and the Armenian-Orthodox Sister-Churches, the Old Oriental Coptic Orthodox Church and the Anglicans. In a wider range Orthodox Bishops from the Church of Jerusalem and Europe as well as the Patriarch of the *Melkite-Greek Catholic Patriarchate* are providing Spiritual Accompanying Letters. The Bishop Vicar of the Archdiocese of Paris is giving his Spiritual Accompanying Letter with reference to the Spirit of Unity in our risen Lord.

Our gratitude is also addressed to His Eminence Walter Cardinal Kasper, Prefect emeritus of the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, Vatican City, who gave the *Letter of Assignment* 20110914 and approved the *Exposé* 20120222, as well as to his successor His Eminence Kurt Cardinal Koch, Prefect of *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, who agreed to this project-work to be built-up under the supervisor His Eminence Walter Cardinal Kasper.

We express our utmost gratitude to His Holiness Pope emeritus Benedict XVI for his pilgrimage to Holy Land in May 2009, his Apostolic Visit to Cyprus in June 2010 and to Lebanon in September 2012 as well as for the transactions of the Synods, the *Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, meeting in the Vatican from 5-26 October 2008, had as its theme: The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church, further the *Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops*, meeting in the Vatican from 10-24 October 2010, on the theme: The Catholic Church in the Middle East Communion and Witness "Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul" (*Acts* 4:32), and the *Thirteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, meeting in the Vatican from 7–28 October 2012, on the theme: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.

We thank His Holiness Pope emeritus Benedict XVI for his special attention and love for the Church in Holy Land and his care for promoting the interchurch relations among the Christian denominations living in the Middle East.

The Christian heritage of the Church of Cyprus shows in its tradition the roots of the life of the Holy Apostles and originates in its liturgical and pastoral orientation in the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of the Universal Church. The Church of Cyprus has a particular role in the history of the Church due to its ecclesial bridge-function between "East and West". The Christian denominations present in Cyprus are living in a peaceful co-existence on the island and are aware of the fact that the Christian faith and the foundation of the Church of Cyprus are based in the life of the Holy Apostles, first and foremost Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas, who came in mission to Cyprus.

The historical texts, the liturgical texts, the texts related to Christian origin and the holy sites where our Lord Jesus Christ lived, the texts related to ecumenical encounters, the texts about the holy icons, the various images of holy icons and the holy sites are providing a deeper understanding of the tradition of the Christian faith and the challenge how to announce the Gospel, the Good News, nowadays and how to promote Christian unity in the Church in the Middle East with the graces the Holy Spirit is giving to the people of God.

In the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* the importance of Christian unity is outlined in point no. 17: “Ecumenical unity does not mean uniformity of traditions and celebrations. To begin with, I am sure that with God’s help agreement can be found for a common translation of the Lord’s Prayer, the Our Father, in the local languages of the region, wherever necessary. (...) By praying together in the same words, Christians will acknowledge their common roots in the one apostolic faith which is the basis of our pursuit of full communion. Engaging together in a deeper study of the Eastern and Latin Fathers, and of our respective spiritual traditions, could prove greatly helpful to this end, in the correct application of the canonical norms regulating this material.”

We as Christians are day-by-day on “pilgrimage” alongside and in a peaceful co-existence. The Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of the Universal Church, is giving us the best example of expression of the unity of the whole Church as to how different members of denominations get together and pray together. Unity is a gift from God. No man can “do” it, but what we as Christians can do in order to achieve unity is to pray and to pray together, to do repentance, to have good will, mutual respect and a profound understanding of our history of the Church and the desire to carry the Holy Spirit with true love in Christ risen in our hearts. This leads to reconciliation and unity.

Saint Paul teaches us in his letters to the Corinthians the reconciliation, which originates in the crucified Lord Jesus Christ. Pope Benedict XVI illuminates this mystery of faith with following words: “St Paul gave a wonderful synthesis of the theology of the Cross in the Second Letter to the Corinthians (5: 14-21) where everything is enclosed between two fundamental affirmations: on the one hand Christ, whom God made to be sin for our sake (v. 21), *he died for all* (v. 14); and on the other, God *reconciled us to himself* without imputing our sins to us (vv. 18-20). It is from this ‘ministry of reconciliation’ that every form of slavery is already redeemed (cf. 1 Cor 6: 20; 7: 23). Here it appears how important this is for our lives. We too must enter into this ‘ministry of reconciliation’ that always implies relinquishing one’s superiority and opting for the folly of love. St Paul sacrificed his own life, devoting himself without reserve to the ministry of reconciliation, of the Cross, which is salvation for us all. And we too must be able to do this: may we be able to find our strength precisely in the humility of love and our wisdom in the weakness of renunciation, entering thereby into God’s power.”

(Benedict XVI, General Audience, St. Peter’s Square, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2008, link in internet: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/audiences/2008/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20081029\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20081029_en.html))

Gabriela Mihlig osb obl  
*coordinator and editor*

*Jerusalem, on the Feast of Epiphany anno Domini 2014*



Obelisk St. Peter's Square, Rome © GM



# 1 Introduction given by the Heads of the Churches in Cyprus and Holy Land

## 1.1 *Latin Church of Jerusalem*

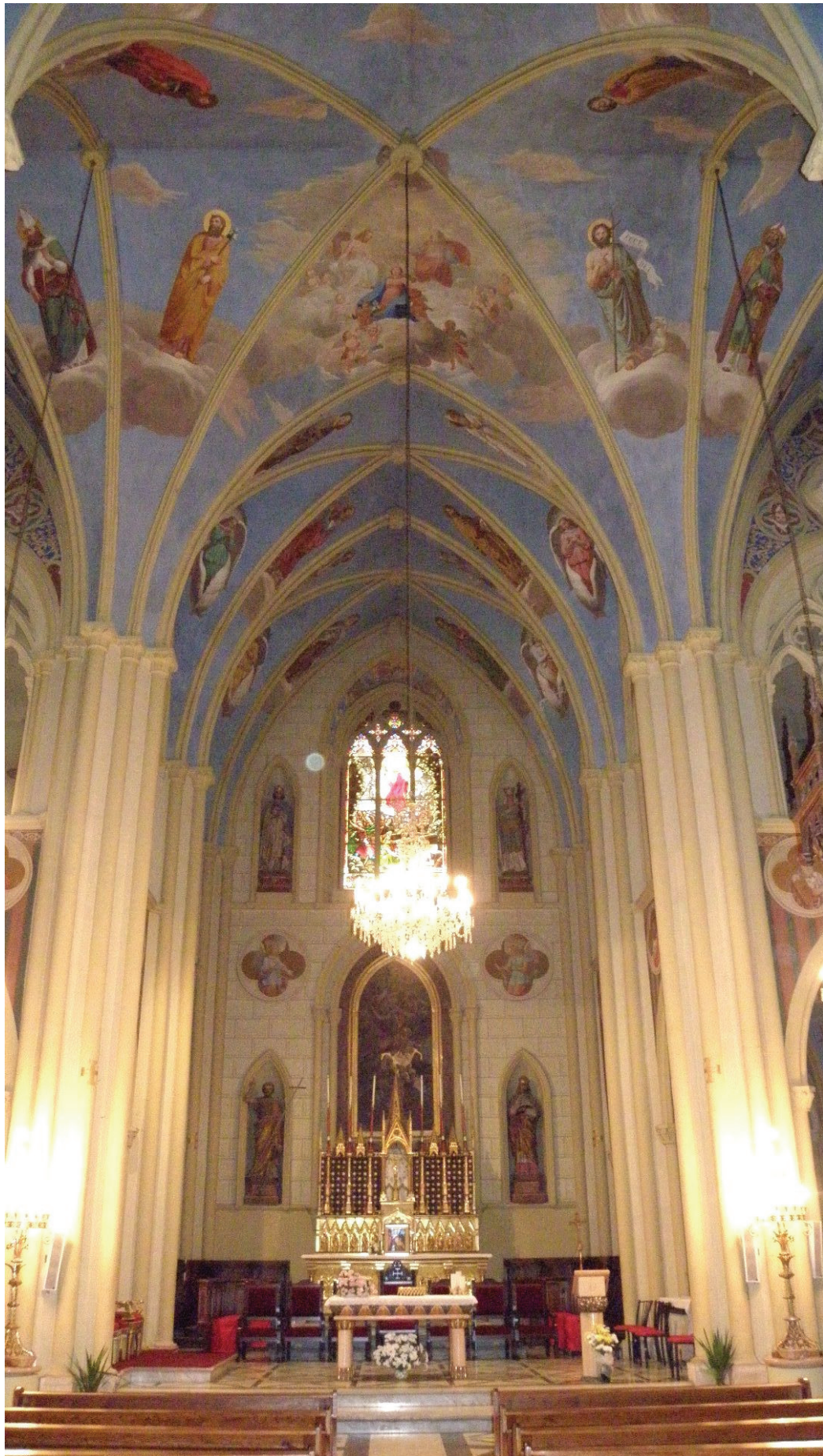


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### 1.1.1 The Introduction given by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem



Memorial plaque in courtyard of Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem © GM



Con-Cathedral of Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem © LPJ



LATIN PATRIARCHATE - JERUSALEM

بطريركية القدس للاتين

AUXILIARY BISHOP OFFICE

### Introduction

Cyprus is a wealth of beauty, archeology, Byzantine art and Biblical history. Its glorious past comes mainly from the fact that it was the Gateway to St Paul's Missionary Journeys. It was evangelized by Saint Barnabas who is originated from the Island.

Cyprus today has a very modest Latin Presence in comparison with the Greek Orthodox majority in the South and the Moslem majority in the North. The faithful of the Latin Patriarchate consist mainly of the young and dynamic migrant community coming from Asian countries and of a smaller number of Europeans coming to work or for retirement because of the good climate of the Island and the hospitable character of its people.

Situated in Europe but still belonging to the middle East, it is for this reason that it was chosen to be the Headquarters for the Middle East Council of Churches. For the same reason, the Holy Father Benedict XVI visited it to hand to the bishops of the Middle East the "Instrumentum laboris" in preparation of their coming synod of 2012.

Living in a pluralistic society, the vocation of the church is to foster unity and to be a bridge of peace in a divided island. It is not by coincidence that our parish of Nicosia is at the borderline between the Moslem North and the Christian South. The church is aware of its vocation to be an instrument of peace, unity and reconciliation.

+ *William Shomali*

+William Shomali,  
auxiliary bishop of Jerusalem





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## 1.1.2 The word of the Custos



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The Intervention of Most Reverend Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa O.F.M., Custos of the Holy Land, in the *Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops* on 13.10.2010 in Vatican City is of greatest importance and may be considered as actual at any time:

„Too often the pastoral perspective in the Holy Land starts from the situation rather than the vocation of the Church. Our vocation has as its starting point *Acts 2:9-12*. Then as now, the Church of Jerusalem was born and developed as a universal Church. The holy places of the Holy Land are not only the steady<sup>1</sup> point of the local Christian identity, but they are a living memory of the Incarnation. This did not happen only in time but also in space. To live in that space is our vocation. Pilgrimages from all over the world and the presence of Jews and Muslims appear to the eyes of faith as the fulfillment, even if only a partial one, of the

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<sup>1</sup> Note of editor done in final redaction, because the originally published sentence in English translation is the following and has obviously an error: “The holy places of the Holy Land are not only the stable point of...”

prophecy of the gathering of all peoples on Mount Zion (*Is* 2:2-4). Pilgrimages and the multi religious character of the Church of the Holy Land ask us to be always more outgoing, hospitable, open to others. Being a minority urges us to be more proactive. The institutions of the Church are a living witness of this proactive approach. In the end it is up to us<sup>2</sup> Christians in the Holy Land to remember our duty to preserve the Christian character of the Land of the Lord.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Note of editor done in final redaction, because the originally published sentence in English translation is the following and has obviously an error: “In the end it is up to we Christians...”

<sup>3</sup> Source in internet: [http://storico.radiovaticana.org/en1/storico/2010-10/430027\\_intervention\\_of\\_rev\\_f\\_pierbattista\\_pizzaballa\\_o\\_f\\_m\\_custos\\_of\\_the\\_holy\\_land\\_jerusalem.html](http://storico.radiovaticana.org/en1/storico/2010-10/430027_intervention_of_rev_f_pierbattista_pizzaballa_o_f_m_custos_of_the_holy_land_jerusalem.html); [00063-02.03] [IN041] [Original text: Italian]

## 1.2 Maronite Church

Given by Monsignore Youssef Antoine Soueif, Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus



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## L'Eparchia Maronita di Cipro



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### I – Dimensione storica e antropologica

La presenza dei Maroniti a Cipro inizia nell' 8° secolo. La tradizione dice che la loro prima emigrazione all' isola ebbe luogo in seguito alla fuga dal Libano. Il secondo gruppo di emigranti arrivò a Cipro verso il 938 d.C., dopo la distruzione da parte degli Arabi del Monastero di San Marone, che si trovava in Afamea di Siria nei dintorni di Oronte. La terza emigrazione ebbe luogo alla fine del 12° secolo, quando dominavano a Cipro i Lusignani. Esisteva già all'epoca un monastero ben organizzato: San Giovanni Crisostomo, dipendente dal Patriarca Maronita del Libano, che ne nominava il Superiore. Molti Maroniti vennero a quell' epoca a Cipro dove costruirono le loro case e le loro Chiese, sulle montagne di Pentadaktilos, isolati nei loro villaggi. Ecco perché hanno conservato la loro lingua, la loro religione e le loro abitudini e tradizioni. La quarta emigrazione dei Maroniti a Cipro fu alla fine del 13° secolo, dopo la sconfitta dei Crociati da parte degli Arabi a Tripoli del Libano e

nei Luoghi Santi della Palestina. Questo periodo viene considerato il periodo glorioso dei Maroniti a Cipro. Erano più di 80.000 persone che abitavano in 60 villaggi. Era la Comunità più numerosa, dopo quella greca ortodossa. Prima della dominazione turca dell'isola, nel 1572, diminuirono in modo consistente e i loro villaggi si erano ridotti a 33. La dominazione degli Ottomani ha provocato molti guai alla Comunità Maronita; infatti 15 anni dopo il loro arrivo nell'isola, i villaggi Maroniti erano ridotti a 19. Nell'anno 1680 a Cipro erano rimasti 150 Maroniti in 8 villaggi. Dal 1672 la sede dell'Arcivescovado Maronita non era più a Cipro. Nel periodo del 17-18 secolo, i maroniti vivavano grosse difficoltà nell'isola di Cipro sul livello pastorale, politico e socialdemografico, fino al 1736, quando ebbe luogo il Sinodo del Libano che mise in ordine le cose, allora il territorio patriarcale fu diviso in otto eparchie e ogni eparchia, aveva il proprio territorio; il Vescovo aveva pieni poteri e doveva risiedere nel territorio della sua eparchia. L'isola di Cipro, con una parte del Libano, costituiva l'eparchia di Cipro; questa situazione è rimasta fino al 20 secolo quando nel 1988 l'eparchia era ripartita in due parti, l'isola di Cipro che conservò il titolo originale e la parte libanese che diventò l'eparchia di Antelias, vicina a Beirut.

Durante l'impero ottomano, i Maroniti furono quasi sempre sotto la giurisdizione del Vescovo ortodosso, fino all'anno 1840, quando il Papa intervenne presso il Governo turco che stabiliva che i Maroniti fossero sotto la giurisdizione del Patriarca Maronita in Libano. Pochi anni dopo, il Vescovo Maronita di Cipro Giuseppe Geagia, che risiedeva in Libano dove si trova la più grande popolazione della sua chiesa, fece visita ai Maroniti di Cipro nell'anno 1844. In quel tempo Cipro contava 110 mila abitanti, dei quali 75.000 greci, 32.000 turchi, 1.300 maroniti, 300 cattolici latini, 150 armeni. Nel 1878 i Turchi hanno ceduto il governo dell'isola agli Inglesi e nel 1928 Cipro era diventata una colonia dell'impero britannico.

Nel 1960 Cipro è diventata una repubblica indipendente formata da due Comunità: Greca e Turca. Le minoranze dovevano scegliere in quale delle due comunità volevano appartenere. I Maroniti scelsero la Comunità Greca, però continuarono a vivere nei loro quattro villaggi: Kormakitis, Assomatos, Ayia Marina e Karpashia. Pochi Maroniti vivevano nella capitale Nicosia, a Limassol, Larnaca Pafos e Famagusta. In ogni villaggio c'era la Chiesa e la scuola elementare. Per gli studi secondari gli studenti dovevano andare nelle scuole cittadine. La maggior parte dei Maroniti erano agricoltori.

Dopo la guerra, nel 1974, i Maroniti hanno dovuto lasciare i loro villaggi a causa degli eventi per vivere nel Sud dell'isola; poche persone sono rimasti nei villaggi e sono un vero segno di speranza per il futuro.