

Christian-Islamic celebration of Annunciation for the first time in Jordan

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His Majesty King Abdullah II addressed the 71st United Nations General Assembly on September 20, 2016. He said: “Jesus, whom we call ‘Christ Messiah’, is named 25 times in the Qur’an. His mother Mary, called the ‘best of all women in creation’, is named 35 times. And there is a chapter in the Qur’an called ‘Maryam’. The khawarej deliberately hide these truths about Islam in order to drive Muslims and non-Muslims apart. We cannot allow this to happen.”

From this premise and in light with the King’s address, which is based on the relevant congruent views of the Qur’an and the Holy Bible, the Catholic Center for Studies and Media (CCSM) in Jordan, in cooperation with the heads of the Churches in Jordan, has decided to hold an annual celebration marking the Annunciation to Blessed Virgin Mary as mentioned in the Holy Bible and the Qur’an, so that it would be a national feast celebrated in this grand homeland.

Lebanon, with its different religious affiliations, has been celebrating the Feast of the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary at the national level over the past 12 years after its religious leaders realized that as a character, Virgin Mary brings people together, and that She is neither a source of controversy nor dispute as She maintains a special status in Islam. She also has prominent status in the Holy Bible in Her capacity as the Mother of Lord Jesus Christ. Since the event relevant to the Annunciation is mentioned in detail in both books, the leaderships and the people of good will considered the view to mark this feast as a national and social feast. This feast officially had been celebrated in Lebanon over the past 12 years. It acquired prime importance when it was announced eight years ago, and it culminated with the announcement that it would be marked as a national holiday eight years ago. Its slogan continues to be, “The Islamic Christian Gathering Around Virgin Mary”.

Jordan, with its archaeological sites and national unity, is more qualified than any other country to mark a new renaissance of Muslim-Christian harmony and brotherhood that can be added to the numerous initiatives attributed to the wise Hashemite leadership, its people's awareness, and the harmony between its Muslims and Christians. Jordan issued the Amman Message in 2004 and A Common Word in 2007 in light of the unstinting efforts of His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Ben Muhammad, the King's advisor for religious and cultural affairs. Jordan also proposed launching the World Interfaith Harmony Week in 2010 which was adopted by the United Nations members. Jordan also called for convening the "The Challenges Facing Arab Christians Conference" in 2013 and hosted Christians forcibly displaced from Mosul in 2014.

Therefore, Jordan is the country of history, of civilization and of the Hashemites which contains sacred heritage and blessed water. It is the land Moses crossed, and where Elijah was born and from where he ascended to Heaven. It is the country of John the Baptist who baptized Lord Jesus Christ at the site known as Baptism Site. It is also the land crossed by Blessed Virgin Mary where she is remembered in Anjara. The Christian tradition states that she crossed this place with Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, a historic grotto was installed there in Her memory and known as Our Lady of the Mount.

There are also several other grottos in our country which are reminiscent of its holiness.

Thus, Jordan of today is the country of common living with its Muslim and Christian population. Since the establishment of the Emirate of Jordan in 1921, and a few years after the Great Arab Revolt, whose centennial was marked two years ago, the Christians and Muslims lived side by side, and contributed to the establishment of the Emirate of Jordan, which later became known as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Consequently, it is not a novel event to have feasts marked by everybody for at a time when His Majesty King Abdullah II assumed his constitutional authorities in 2000, he announced that Christmas would be marked as "an official holiday for all citizens". We call nowadays for celebrating the Feast of Annunciation so that its religious significance would serve as an incentive to enrich our national unity and social cohesion.

In view of this, the CCSM is holding the ceremony for the first time under the patronage of the Deputy Prime Minister Jamal Sarayrah on Wednesday, March 28. It will be attended by representatives of the General Ifta'a Department, of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and of the Chief Justice. Present at the ceremony will be head and members of the "Lebanese National Committee for the Celebration of the Feast and Annunciation" and several shades of society who are keen to worship God and to be loyal to the country, its leadership and people.

The Feast of the Annunciation, whose events took place in the holy city of Nazareth, invites us from the side of the immortal river, the Jordan River, to pray for Jerusalem, the Holy City, in light of the injustice and aggression being perpetrated against its history and civilization. We also call on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities by implementing the relevant international resolutions, to preserve the historic Hashemite guardianship, and to give the Palestinian people their right to an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.