



Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine Of Siena, Iraq.
Erbil, Ankawa

March 27, 2016

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man...and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He has risen! He is not here. Mark 16: 5-6

Dear Sisters, Brethren and Friends,

It is great to hear the good news about Jesus' resurrection. But if we were to think about the place from where the good news is announced, we would be a bit surprised.

The women came into the tomb, and they saw a young man sitting there. Important things happen inside the tomb. The community that announce the good news is surprisingly in the tomb. The same community that lives in the darkness, in distress and anguish, now proclaim the good news about the Lord. Nothing could hinder that community of experiencing God's power and love.

In the same spirit, I would like to extend Easter greetings from a community that is inside the tomb with the women and the young man. At the same time, asking you to pray for us so that we may have the courage to announce the Lord's resurrection in our worn out community in Iraq.

It is true that the crisis of emergency is mitigated now, yet, our people are having crisis of the soul. In order to ease this crisis, we continue accompany the IDPs at the camps, ensuring having Masses, prayer meetings, spiritual activities, and gospel sharing. Additionally, we always keep in our mind that education contributes in creating a peaceful society. Therefore, we continue working in our school (with 440 pupils), and our three kindergartens (with 465 children). We are hoping to open a Trauma Healing Centre soon, and open another school in the city of Dohuk and enlarge our Elementary School to include secondary and high school.

As for our people, they are so hopeless. They hoped a lot, and they were disappointed. They do not see real opportunity for a better future that would safeguard their lives. Although people get their hopes up every time they hear news of liberating the Christian towns, they worry about their safety, and their future if they go back.

Conditions at the camps continue to be miserable. There have been some attempts to move people from the camps and provide better living shelters, but the number of IDPs is so large, that so many people are still living in inhuman conditions. That of course affects all aspects of their lives.



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As a community, we continue to stay with our people and share with them their fears and concerns. We have learned how to live with uncertainty and the unknown. That is how we understand itinerancy today: always ready to move with what is important for us: our trust in the Lord.

Despite everything, we try to see signs of God's love and power depending greatly on God's faithfulness.

I would like to end with the words of a pupil in our school said when his teacher asked him what Jesus said to him during prayer:

"Do not be afraid, angels are chanting in your churches". [referring to his church in the Nineveh plain]

We wish you a very blessed Easter.

Yours,
Maria Hanna OP
Prioress of Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine of Siena -Iraq