

Fifth Sunday of Easter, 2020

The Most Reverend Bernard Longley
Archbishop of Birmingham

Dear Archbishop Bernard,

I am delighted to inform you that the International Day of Prayer for Eastern Christians will take place on Sunday, 17th May 2020, with the participation of Christians from all over Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, the Horn of Africa and India.

The occasion – organised by our sister charity Oeuvre d'Orient in France – offers Eastern Christians and Western Christians an opportunity to unite in prayer, during the Easter celebrations.

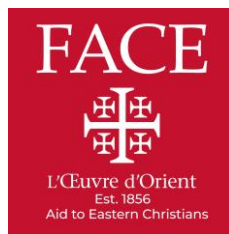
Moreover, it offers Western Christians a moment to remember and give thanks for all that we owe the Eastern Churches, not least the first preaching of the Gospel, the monastic tradition, the early Church Fathers, the different liturgical traditions, and the witness of the Eastern Christians down the centuries, which has been, and still is, an inspiration to our faith.

Today, the Eastern Christians, already an oppressed minority group in their Arab societies, now face the added crisis of the Coronavirus epidemic, with its concomitant threat to their livelihood, health and well-being. For them, this is yet another crisis: a crisis within an already existing crisis! How can they overcome their desperation and live the joy of Easter? How can we support them and give succour to their broken hearts. For sure, this is an impossible mission for us without the hand of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

On behalf of our board of trustees - including our Patron, Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald, and our Pastoral Advisor, Father Timothy Radcliffe – I wonder whether you would be so kind as to commend this day of prayer to all parishes under your pastoral care, and to send the attached information pack and poster to them, so that the following prayer may be included in the Bidding Prayers at Mass on the Sixth Sunday of Easter:

Fellowship and Aid to the Christians of the East (FACE)

Patron: His Eminence Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald, M.Afr. | *Pastoral Advisor:* Father Timothy Radcliffe, OP | *Chairman:* John Adam Fox
Registered Charity Number: 1178592 | *Address:* 5 Leicester Place, London, WC2H 7BX | facecharityuk@gmail.com | www.oeuvre-orient.fr



“Heavenly Father, we pray today for peace in the world, especially in the Middle East. By your heavenly grace, strengthen the faith and hope of Eastern Christians. May they be blessed with peace and prosperity in their lands. And may we be inspired by their devotion and witness to the Gospel, by their love and compassion for all in their communities, and by their courage, their endurance and self-sacrifice against oppression. Through their charity, tolerance and friendship, bring peace and reconciliation to those troubled lands, where Christianity was born and first spread. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Whilst current measures of social confinement across Europe and the Middle East will prevent most of us from joining with others in person in our parishes and communities, the International Day of Prayer will resound vibrantly and joyously none the less through the communion of prayer across many nations, and through our heartfelt focus on Eastern Christians.

With every hope that you are keeping safe and well in these challenging times, I send you my warmest salutations for a joyful Easter.

With my kindest regards, and with the prayers of Cardinal Fitzgerald, Father Timothy Radcliffe and all our trustees,

John Adam Fox,
Chair of Trustees,
Fellowship and Aid to the Christians of the East (FACE).

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