

WELCOME - Maria Giovanna Ruggieri (Eng)

WUCWO IFCA and Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Women Believers at the Service of LIFE, DIGNITY and the COMMON GOOD

Conference with Christian women in Middle East - Amman 24-27 October 2013

Amman, October 25, 2013

Her Highness, Excellencies, Reverend fathers dear sisters and brothers welcome to this conference organized by WUCWO and IFCA, together with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah

I first wish to express my joy and gratitude to all those who have encouraged, trusted and helped in organizing this event. It has always been in my heart and finally it is a reality and we are here together. Allow me to dedicate our gathering to the memory of an extraordinary woman, Jacqueline Sfeir from Bethlehem who passed away last April. I can say that it was through her that I began to understand this varied world which is the Middle East, often presented only partially or in ways that are not conducive to our understanding the complexity of the various situations. We need only think about the conflicts in progress, the conditions in which Christians live in these contexts and the multitude of changes in the last few years.

WUCWO (World Union Catholic Women's Organizations) is an international organization which is comprised of more than 100 organizations from all over the world and whose main aim is the education of women in order to be active in both the Church and in the society. Since we had our general assembly in 2010 in Jerusalem, WUCWO has expressed the need to know in a deeper way this part of the world so rich in history and culture, the cradle of the three monotheistic religions and for us as Christians, the place where Jesus lived and spread his word of salvation.

IFCA (International Forum Catholic Action) is also an international organization with the specific goal of formation for laypeople: men and women, youth children and adults, and families, In the past few years, some contacts with local communities in Holy Land confirm that we have to work together concerning formation and participation with co-responsibility in the Church.

Together with us, there are women from Egypt, Emirates, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine and of course Jordan.

WUCWO representatives come from the USA, Canada, Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela, Australia, Korea, Fiji Islands, the Philippines, Spain, and Italy. We regret that our sisters from Africa were unable to obtain visas but they are with us in spirit and prayer.

IFCA representatives come from Burundi, Spain, Argentina and Italy.

We have felt the necessity to meet, listen, and share with women from this region who share our same faith and work to build up a better world based on peace, reconciliation, dialogue and justice in a spirit of solidarity.

We are convinced that as Pope Francis states, "education to solidarity means education to humanity, in fact to build a real human society means to put the human being and his dignity at the centre and never selling out to the logic of profit." In this perspective we are sure education to faith is in the center: we have to become **women believers**, to grow in our faith, to dialogue with other believers.

"Is it possible to walk the path of peace? Can we get out of this spiral of sorrow and death? Can we learn once again to walk and live in the ways of peace?" wondered Pope Francis during the vigil for peace last September 7th "Yes, it is possible for everyone! From every corner of the world. Tonight, I would like to hear us cry out: Yes, it is possible for everyone!... forgiveness, dialogue, reconciliation - these are the words of peace, in beloved Syria, in the Middle East, in all the world!"

Women, thanks to their feminine genius, can offer a specific and particular input for a united world based on respect of the human dignity of each person. For this reason, women are called to participate more actively in the life of the Church and of society. Our meeting can become a small workshop. We assume the words of Pope Francis and we want to offer our contribution also to work together for education to peace.

We are in the Middle East where destinies of the world intercross, where the presence of Christians has been continuous, fundamental. We cannot forget the words of Pope Benedict XVI in Ecclesia in MO : *"Fear not, little flock!" (Lk 12:32). With these words of Christ, I wish to exhort all the Pastors and Christian faithful in the Middle East courageously to keep alive the flame of divine love both in the Church and in all those places where they live and work. In this way, they will preserve in their integrity the essence and mission of the Church as willed by Christ. (...) The urgency of the present hour and the injustice of so many tragic situations invite us to reread the First Letter of Peter and to join in bearing witness to Christ who died and rose again. This "togetherness", this communion willed by our Lord and God, is needed now more than ever. Let us put aside all that could be cause for discontent, however justifiable, in order to concentrate unanimously on the one thing necessary: the goal of uniting the whole of humanity and the entire universe in God's only Son (cf. Rom 8:29; Eph 1:5, 109)*

Our meeting needs to be a sign of peace and unity, a place where we can tell, reflect and plan: if we decide together, it might become the first step on a path which involves other women, especially the youngest to grow together in our communities, in our families: **at the Service of LIFE, DIGNITY and the COMMON GOOD**