

REMARKS OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES
JUBILEE CELEBRATION FOR BISHOP NICHOLAS SAMRA
BISHOP OF THE MELKITE EPARCHY OF NEWTON
ANNUNCIATION MELKITE CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL HALL,
WEST ROXBURY, MASSACHUSETTS
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2019

My Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Apostolic Nuncio, the personal representative of Pope Francis to the United States, I greet you in the name of the Holy Father. I wish to acknowledge the presence of His Beatitude Patriarch Joseph Absi, as well as the many other prelates and dignitaries here this evening. I thank the Right Reverend Philip Raczka, Cathedral Rector and Vicar General, for his hospitality.

In a special way, I greet my brother, Bishop Nicholas Samra, and express to him the spiritual closeness, paternal affection, and heartfelt congratulations on this occasion in your life and priestly ministry – the celebration of thirty years of episcopal ministry and fifty years of priestly service!

Your Excellency, fifty years ago, you were ordained as a priest and anointed with the oil of gladness, committing yourself wholeheartedly to the service of the People of God, promising to offer sacrifice to God for them. Twenty years later, you received the fullness of Holy Orders, deepening your commitment to pasture Christ's sheep. You certainly have taken that commitment seriously.

Indeed, as priests and bishops, our whole life is an oblation to God and a constant striving to imitate Christ, the Good Shepherd. Pope Francis has said:

“The Heart of the Good Shepherd is not only the Heart that shows us mercy, but it is itself mercy. There the Father's love shines forth; there I know I am welcomed and understood as I am; there, with all my sins and limitations, I know the certainty that I am chosen and loved. Contemplating that heart, I renew my first love: the memory of that time when the Lord touched my soul and called me to follow him, the memory of the joy of having cast the nets of our life upon the sea of his word.” (Homily, Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, 3 June 2016)

As you celebrate these milestones in your ministry of service to the Melkite Catholic Church, I am confident that your ministry will continue to bear much fruit in those places where you have sown the seed of life-giving faith.

On this happy occasion, the Holy Father commends you and all gathered here to Saint Nicholas and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Clergy, and paternally imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.

Once again, congratulations! Ad multos annos!