

Holy Land Collection: Card. Sandri (Oriental Churches), “solidarity and human fraternity pilgrimage”

“At this time of pandemic, may the Holy Land Collection be a veritable pilgrimage of material generosity, lived out through thought and prayer, to ask the Lord to have mercy on us at this painful moment and to give thanks for the consolation offered by front-line physicians, nurses and health workers in so many world countries. We want to make a pilgrimage with our poor offerings, with our generosity to help our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land.”



“We were forced to reschedule the traditional Collection Day due to Covid-19. We were perhaps overly optimistic to think that the situation would improve by September”, the Cardinal said. “Unfortunately we are still in the midst of a pandemic with reports of infections, deaths and hospitalizations, with a serious economic and social crisis that leads to increasing austerity”. The idea of postponing the Collection to the first Sunday before the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross that falls on September 14 and the celebration of Our Lady of Sorrows on September 15, the Prefect explained, “seemed to us extremely meaningful because the Cross of Jesus and his Good Friday Calvary remind us of the suffering of our communities in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East.”



The purpose of the Collection, initiated by Paul VI and promoted by all his successors, is to support, through the Custody of the Holy Land, the local Christian communities and to strengthen the bond between them and all world Christians. Thus, the Collection is the main resource to support life in the Holy Places. " The greatest concern today - Card. Sandri said - is the survival of Christian communities in this region. Many are leaving because of wars, tensions, terrorism and persecution that we all are familiar with, and now also because of the pandemic. So we need to ask ourselves if the Christian faith will survive in this region where Jesus himself walked and served.”

The 2020 Collection "will be difficult but full of sensitivity towards the Holy Land".

The challenge of the Collection. Showing solidarity and generosity in times of Covid is the challenge that lies ahead of the 2020 Collection. Prefect Sandri says that as we ask ourselves "how we can support the Holy Land when here, in the Western world, Covid causes so much suffering", we

should look for the answer in the Gospel. "We should think of all the actions and miracles of Jesus narrated in the Scriptures, among lepers, paralytics, possessed, dead, sinners and the suffering," he said. *The Holy Land Collection, taking place at such a critical time for the whole world, can provide an opportunity for each one of us to make a pilgrimage with thought and prayer, to ask the Lord to have mercy on us in this painful time and to thank Him for the consolation brought to us by doctors, nurses and health workers in so many world countries.*" We want to make a pilgrimage with our poor offerings, with our generosity to help our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. A pilgrimage of concrete and fruitful generosity."



"We are all brothers: it is the truth that flows from the Gospel and which can become reality in this Holy Land Collection" the Prefect points out referring to the next encyclical of Pope Francis titled "All Brothers - on human fraternity and social friendship." The same fraternity whose goal is peace, as stated in the Abu Dhabi Document on Human Fraternity last year. Following in this path of fraternity, Card. Sandri extends an appeal for the Collection, "not only to Catholics and Christians of other denominations, but also to our Muslim friends and friends of other faiths who live in the Holy Land, that they may accompany us on this industrious pilgrimage with generosity and prayer." In this moment of deep suffering caused by the pandemic," the Prefect said, "the feeling of fraternity radiates a special light. We overcome this situation only by remaining united, recognizing that our suffering is that of our brothers and vice versa. We are all invited, each according to the richness of their faith and spiritual tradition, to reach out to God and to our brothers and sisters who we must love like ourselves". "We are all called to a commitment of solidarity and human fraternity, which we already observe in the everyday reality of the Holy Land," reiterates the Prefect. In fact, in our local structures, be they healthcare, education, hospitality or community centres, everyone has full access and full citizenship regardless of their faith or ethnicity. The Holy Land Collection is also for this purpose." "We all seek justice, solidarity and peace - concludes Card. Sandri -. The Colletta of September 13 is thus to become a pilgrimage of solidarity, friendship and fraternity of all humankind".

Daniele Rocchi