

# ***“Watch and Pray”***

(Mark 14:38)

## **A Pastoral Letter**

from

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**Vicar Apostolic of Arabia**



**Lent  
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"Our Bishop with Pope Benedict XVI in 2009"

## Vicar Apostolic of Arabia – Pastoral Letter 2010

### “Watch and pray”

(Mark 14:38)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

1. May the Lord give you peace and joy in the Holy Spirit! – In this pastoral letter I would like to speak to you about prayer as an essential expression of the common priesthood of the faithful. You know the words Saint Peter addresses in his first letter to the members of the Church: “You are a chosen race, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (*1 Peter 2:9*). These words are highlighting the dignity of the people of God, and expressing the priesthood that God has given to all baptized. Only within this “royal priesthood, holy nation, a people of his own” may we understand the meaning of the special priesthood of those who administer the word and the sacraments in order to lead people towards the full friendship with God in Jesus Christ. One of the basic expressions of the “royal priesthood” of all the faithful and of those the Lord has chosen for the ministerial priesthood is prayer. Saint Peter gives us all an extraordinary spiritual task: “Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house **to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**” (*1 Peter 2:5*). There is no “royal priesthood” of the faithful without prayer; and there is no ministerial priesthood that is not exercised in prayer. On this common ground we are answering the challenge of Jesus that we should “watch and pray” (*Mark 14:38*).

2. I still remember how important **the prayer example of others** was for my own religious and priestly vocation. I cannot forget my mother who taught me the first prayers, and whom I saw very often pray for the intentions of the Church and in a particular way for the vocations of priests and religious. The same is true for the parish priest I had during my childhood. He taught us the catechism, explained and celebrated the sacraments, and helped us altar servers to love the liturgy; but there was something else that was very important to us: we also saw him regularly praying in the church and in the garden of the parish house. The example of my parents and of our parish priest at home remind me still how important our own prayer example is for young people who one day may discover themselves the special call of the Lord. There is no doubt that the first prayer experience I had started in my family. With this pastoral letter I want you to renew your own dignity of the “royal priesthood” through a deeper understanding and practice of prayer, a dignity you share with all those who are called to the ministerial priesthood in the Church.

### **Jesus the model of prayer**

3. Jesus, the living Son of God, “a man like us in all things but sin” (*Eucharistic Prayer IV*), grew up similar to us. **Jesus learnt in the Holy Family the prayers of the Jewish people**, particularly the Psalms. Most probably he knew them by heart. This fact gives us already an idea about how important the regular prayer in our own family is, and how important it is especially for difficult times to know a certain

number of prayers by heart. Jesus is the best example of this. In the New Testament Jesus is shown very often as the one who lives an intimate relationship with his Father through prayer. The four Gospels show us in one way or another Jesus as the man in prayer. Nothing important is done unless Jesus spends time in prayer. At the beginning of his messianic mission we read in Luke's Gospel: "While Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in a physical form, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: You are my Son; today have I fathered you" (*Luke 3:21-22*). The choice of the Twelve is introduced as following: "In those days he departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God" (*Luke 6:12*). The Transfiguration is a turning point in Jesus' life: before his journey to Jerusalem, where he would offer his life on the cross, "he took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white" (*Luke 9:2-29*).

4. The fact that **the disciples** have witnessed Jesus in prayer made them **ask the Lord to teach them to pray**: "He was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him: Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples" (*Luke 11:1-2*). In reply to this request he introduced them to the "Our Father". Finally, we find Jesus praying at the beginning of his Passion when he went with his disciples to the Mount of Olives: "When he arrived at the place he said to them: Pray that you may not undergo the test. After withdrawing about a stone's throw from them and kneeling, he prayed, saying: Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done. When he rose from prayer and returned to his disciples, he found them sleeping from grief. He said to them: Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not undergo the test!" (*Luke 22:40-42.45-46*). In prayer Jesus made his will conform to the will of his Father, and invites us to do the same.

5. Jesus' own practice of **prayer reveals the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit**, and is given to us as a model. I said earlier that Jesus as an exemplary Jew must have known the Psalms by heart. It is therefore not by chance that the New Testament shows us Jesus in important moments of his life **praying in the words of the Psalms**. The letter of the Hebrews says about the Son of God entering human existence: "When he came into the world, he said: sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll, Behold, I come to do your will, O God'" (*Hebrews 10:5-7 = Psalm 40:6-8*). The last words of Jesus on the cross are taken from the Psalms. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark Jesus "cried out in a loud voice" the words of Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (*Mark 15:34 and Matthew 27:46*). According to the Gospel of Luke Jesus dies with Psalm 31 on his lips: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (*Luke 23:46*). Finally, in John's Gospel, Jesus breathes out his human life with Psalm 69: "I thirst" (*John 19:28*). These prayers reveal not only the way how the early Church understood the death of Jesus but also the fact that Jesus in the extreme test of his sacrifice on the cross cried to the Father in the prayer tradition of his people. Thus he put into practice the obedience he had promised entering the world: "Behold, I come to do your will, O God" (*Hebrews 10:7*). Jesus is the living example of the prayer he has taught his disciples: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (*Matthew 6:10*).

## Jesus teaches us to pray

6. We cannot separate the teaching of Jesus about prayer from his example. His words have always to be seen and read in relation to his life, death and resurrection. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, the reason why the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray was his personal practice of prayer. It was a question of identity: Whoever wanted to belong to Jesus had somehow to learn his language, his way of prayer. What we call **“the Lord’s prayer”** is precisely the divine language Jesus has taught us, and which **gives us the identity of adopted children of God and as adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus**. The prayer is rooted in Jesus’ own identity as the “only Son who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known” (*John 1:18*). Actually, the Son can be understood only with the help of the Father: “I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do” (*Matthew 11:25-26*).

7. Before teaching the disciples the “Our Father” Jesus speaks to them about a few **basic conditions for authentic prayer**: “When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (*Matthew 6:5-8*). Is it not still a temptation even for us Christians to make a lot of words, to shout and to babble? Jesus wants the prayer of his disciples to be humble and discreet, far away from every religious show business and self-exhibition.

8. Obedient to the word of Jesus, Saint Cyprian of Jerusalem, a Father of the Church, taught his people as follows (*Treatise on the Lord’s Prayer*, N. 5): **“Let our speech and our petition be kept under discipline when we pray, and let us preserve quietness and modesty** – for, remember, we are standing in God’s sight. We must please God’s eyes both with the movements of our body and with the way we use our voices. For just as a shameless man will be noisy with his cries, so it is fitting for the modest to pray in a moderate way. Furthermore, the Lord has taught us to pray in secret, in hidden and remote places, in our own bed-chambers – and this is most suitable for faith, since it shows us that God is everywhere and hears and sees everything, and in the fullness of his majesty is present even in hidden and secret places, as it is written ‘I am a God close at hand and not a God far off. If a man hides himself in secret places, will I not see him? Do I not fill the whole of heaven and earth?’, and, again, ‘The eyes of God are everywhere, they see good and evil alike’. When we meet together with the brethren in one place, and celebrate divine sacrifices with God’s priest, we should remember our modesty and discipline, not to broadcast our prayers at the tops of our voices, nor to throw before God, with undisciplined long-windedness, a petition that would be better made with more modesty: for after all God does not listen to the voice but to the heart, and he who sees our thoughts should not be pestered by our voices, as the Lord proves when he says: ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts?’ – or, again, ‘All the churches shall know that it is I who test your motives and your thoughts’.”

Would it not be a good thing to read this text from time to time in some of our churches and in some of our prayer groups and to ask ourselves if we are still conformed to the word of Jesus?

9. In the “Our Father” **Jesus is sharing with us the secret of his being Son of the Father**: “Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (*Matthew 11:27*). Jesus, the Lord, as our elder brother is taking us by the hand and leading us to the place where we have the courage to say: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one” (*Matthew 6:10-13*). We can do it because the Holy Spirit himself is pronouncing on the depth of our heart “Abba, Father” (*Romans 8:15*). We pray the words in solidarity with all the other adopted children of God. God is not simply “my Father” but “our Father”. We should not pray first of all for our daily needs but that God may always have the first place. Only when we give God the whole space “on earth as in heaven”, especially our own heart, only then we can proceed to our needs: the daily bread that means everything that makes us alive; reconciliation with the others and with God; the grace not to be tested to the point that we cannot survive.

10. The “Our Father” is **an eminent social prayer**. Pope Benedict XVI in his Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (79) has a wonderful passage related also to the Lord’s prayer: “Development needs Christians with their arms raised towards God in prayer, Christians moved by the knowledge that truth-filled love, from which authentic development proceeds, is not produced by us, but given to us. For this reason, even in the most difficult and complex times, besides recognizing what is happening, we must above all else turn to God’s love. Development requires attention to the spiritual life, a serious consideration of the experiences of trust in God, spiritual fellowship in Christ, reliance upon God’s providence and mercy, love and forgiveness, self-denial, acceptance of others, justice and peace. All this is essential if ‘hearts of stone’ are to be transformed into ‘hearts of flesh’ (*Ezek 36:26*), rendering life on earth ‘divine’ and thus more worthy of humanity. All this is *of man*, because man is the subject of his own existence; and at the same time it is *of God*, because God is at the beginning and end of all that is good, all that leads to salvation: ‘the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s’ (*1 Cor 3:22-23*). Christians long for the entire human family to call upon God as ‘Our Father!’ In union with the only-begotten Son, may all people learn to pray to the Father and to ask him, in the words that Jesus himself taught us, for the grace to glorify him by living according to his will, to receive the daily bread that we need, to be understanding and generous towards our debtors, not to be tempted beyond our limits, and to be delivered from evil (cf. *Mt 6:9-13*)”.

### **God does not need our prayer but he thirsts for our faith, hope and love**

11. In all the chapels of the Missionaries of Charity who are also working in four places in our Vicariate (Yemen) we find the word of Jesus dying on the Cross: “I am thirsty” (*John 19:28*; cf. also *Psalms 69:22*). Actually **Jesus is thirsty for our faith** as he was thirsty at Jacob’s well for the faith of the Samaritan woman (cf. *John 4:7*). The

Catechism of the Catholic Church expresses the same truth in the following way: “Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him” (CCC 2560). Prayer therefore is a sign of our longing for God in every situation of our personal, ecclesiastical and social life. It does not need first of all a lot of words. It needs the presence of our heart, of our whole being. Between friends there are not needed many words. We simply enjoy the presence of the other. Remember the peasant who according to reports was found by Saint John Vianney in silence before the crucifix in his church. Answering the priest’s question what he was doing he simply said: “Father, He looks at me, and I am looking at Him!” This man has understood that prayer means simply deep love and recognition between friends who take time for one another. Saint Theresa of Lisieux expresses her understanding of prayer in a similar way: “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look, turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy” (*Story of a Soul*, C 25r).

12. Prayer needs first of all a **pure heart** which is ready to surrender the whole person to God. Saint Paul teaches the Romans in the following way: “I urge you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect” (*Romans 12:1-2*). Prayer requires therefore that we turn away from sin and the effort of a moral life that corresponds to the Christian standard.

13. Prayer requires **vigilance**. It is Jesus himself who is telling the disciples: “Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come.” (*Mark 13:33*). We are passing through trial and temptation coming from within and without. Because Jesus knows about it he says: “Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man” (*Luke 21:36*). The Lord himself is a wonderful example of this vigilance in trial and distress as we read in Luke’s Gospel: “When Jesus arrived at the place (i.e. Gethsemane) he said to the disciples, ‘Pray that you may not undergo the test.’ After withdrawing about a stone’s throw from them and kneeling, he prayed, saying, ‘Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done.’ When he rose from prayer and returned to his disciples, he found them sleeping for grief. He said to them, ‘Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not undergo the test’” (*Luke 22:40-42.45-46*). Jesus knows our human nature through and through, and how easily we may give in when we are put to the test: “Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” (*Mark 14:38 = Matthew 26:41*). Prayer is not something for the sunny and happy days of our spiritual life, but particularly needed when we are tested by all kinds of worries. On those days we should simply kneel down as Jesus did and conform our will to the will of God.

### **Pray without ceasing**

14. The New Testament says more than once that we should “**always pray**”. In the first letter to the Thessalonians Saint Paul encourages the faithful: “Pray without ceasing!” (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*) And in the second letter to the same community he gives an example of his own practice: “We always pray for you, that our God may

make you worthy of his calling and powerfully bring to fulfilment every good purpose and every effort of faith, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, in accord with the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ” (2 *Thessalonians 1:11-12*). As a young student I could not understand how we should be able to “pray without ceasing”, because it seemed obvious that we could not always have words of prayer on our lips. However, there are two important things we have to take into account.

15. The first thing we have to learn: Prayer is not simply a matter of words but of a whole attitude in **giving space to the Spirit of God**. He is the one who prays in us while we are doing our duties. And he is the one who complements our speech when we are unable to find the right words. Saint Paul teaches us in the following way: “The Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will” (*Romans 8:26-27*). As we are temples of the Holy Spirit we can be confident that he prays in our heart whether we are awake or asleep, at work or at leisure!

16. But there is something else that can help us to “pray without ceasing”. When I was a child my mother told me once: “You do not need to have a book to pray nor have you to make long and complicated prayers; you can simply say ‘Jesus’ or ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me’ and repeat it constantly. This you can do wherever you are.” Many years later I understood that my mother knew exactly what the famous spiritual author, known as “The Russian Pilgrim”, meant when he taught the migrant monk the so-called “**Prayer of Jesus**” asking him to repeat incessantly. “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner!” It is a very simple but efficient way to deepen our friendship with the Lord and to be in constant touch with him wherever we are and whatever we are doing. You can do it travelling in your car or in the plane, lying upon your bed or during your daily work. Simply say in your heart with the rhythm of your breath: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!” You will experience the closeness of the Lord. Aside from these short prayers I highly recommend you to **learn a certain number of prayers by heart**: Not only the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit but also the Glory to God in the Highest, the Creed, the Come Holy Spirit and many others. The richer the treasure of prayers in your memory the easier it is to make them alive during the day or sleepless nights!

17. We know from our experience how important it can be for a professional career or for obtaining a particular favour when we can refer to the name of an important person who is able to open doors which seemed to be locked forever. If a good friend of mine whom I trust is asking me a favour for another person I will do everything in my power to fulfil his wish. This is precisely how it works with God. There is a name which is the key to the Father's heart: When we **ask the Father in Jesus' name** we shall obtain everything we need for our salvation. On the evening before his death Jesus said to his disciples: “On that day you will ask in my name, and I do not tell you that I will ask the Father for you. For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have come to believe that I came from God” (*John 16:26-27*). Just prior to these words Jesus had given the following promise: “Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. Until

now you have not asked anything in my name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete” (*John 16:23-24*). The only question therefore is: Do we truly believe in Jesus, and do we have the courage to pray to the Father in his name? God cannot resist when we ask him in the name of Jesus! Why? Because of the intimate union of the Father with the Son in the Holy Spirit as Jesus says: “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (*John 14:23*).

### **Pray for the needs of the Church and of the World**

18. There are so many things we have to pray for. The Lord and his disciples are encouraging us to do it without ceasing. - Thus we should **pray for labourers** that are needed for the harvest all over the World: “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is abundant but the labourers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out labourers for his harvest’” (*Matthew 9:37-38*). Furthermore we should follow the example of Christ who prayed for his disciples, and pray for all brothers and sisters, including the bishop, the priests and the deacons. Remember what Jesus said to Peter on the evening of the Last Supper: “Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers” (*Luke 22:32-33*). Yes, we all need to pray as Jesus did according to John’s Gospel: “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours, and everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in them” (*John 17:9-10*). Saint Paul more than once asks the faithful to pray for him. He implores the Thessalonians: “Brothers (and Sisters), pray for us!” (*1 Thessalonians 5:25*) And again he invokes the same community in this way: “Finally, brothers, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified, as it did among you, and that we may be delivered from perverse and wicked people, for not all have faith” (*2 Thessalonians 3:1-2*). Do you regularly pray to the Lord that he may call young men to the priesthood, and that he may guide and protect the Pope, the bishop and the priests?

19. We should **pray for and with the children** as Jesus did: “Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray” (*Matthew 19:13*). We know that the first reaction of the disciples about the children disturbing Jesus was anything but friendly. Jesus rebuked them saying: “‘Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’ After he placed his hands on them, he went away” (*Matthew 19:14-15*). It is wonderful to see that so many of the faithful maintain the tradition of asking the blessing and special prayer from the bishop or the priests for the children. The parents equally should never cease to bless their children and to pray with them and for them. Do not hesitate to bring them with you to church! Again I stress the importance of prayer in the family which should always be a “school of prayer”. In many letters I am getting from the candidates for the sacrament of confirmation during my pastoral visit the children emphasize the impact of the family prayer on their own life.

20. We know the particular care Jesus took for the sick in healing them. The disciples continued this particular care for the physically and mentally suffering and asked us explicitly to **pray for and with the sick**. Remember the beautiful text in the letter of James: “Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good

spirits? He should sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful” (*James 5:13-16*). This text speaks not only about the sacramental anointing of the sick but also of the power of “the fervent prayer of a righteous person”. I thank all those in our Vicariate who are visiting the sick and praying over them. Do it always in a way that the sick do not feel spiritually violated. They should first of all experience the human warmth of a loving brother or sister as with Jesus when he healed the sick.

21. Many of us are or feel persecuted in one way or in another. In such situations we all are tempted to revolt against those who are doing wrong and to curse them. Jesus teaches us a different way in the Sermon on the Mount: “But I say to you, love your enemies, and **pray for those who persecute you**, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.” (*Matthew 5:44-45*). Saint Paul applies the teaching of the Lord to the faithful in Rome as follows: “Bless those who persecute (you), bless and do not curse them ... Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ Rather, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.’ Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good” (*Romans 12:14.17-21*). Prayer will make us instruments of peace and thus change the world around us. Finally, **pray for those who are persecuted** right now!

22. From the beginning of the Church the faithful were invited to **pray for the civil authorities**. Saint Paul is very clear about this point although the authorities were not always friendly to the Christians: “I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity” (*1 Timothy 2:1-3*). It is our duty in all the countries of our Vicariate to pray regularly for the authorities and for the hosting peoples.

23. We **pray in communion with the saints** who have preceded us. Their intercession and their solidarity are encouraging us. Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, is still with us when we pray, as she was present with the Apostles in the “Upper Room”, expecting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The **holy Rosary** prayed with devotion is an excellent means to follow the way of Jesus with the eyes and with the faith of his Mother. We may do it as an individual member of the faithful or as a community gathered in the church or in small groups: she will always be present as the one who reminds us: “What ever he tells you, do it!” This is precisely what we want to do as disciples of Jesus Christ whom we profess as our Lord and our God. I am inviting everyone to take the prayer as an eminent mission task as it is known from Saint Theresa of Lisieux. If you are living alone or in a family, if you are in good health or sick, if you are young or old: You have a wonderful mission to fulfil through prayer as the expression of your “royal priesthood”, and you being “a temple of the Holy Spirit”. Do not forget: Prayer more than anything else can change the

world for the better!

24. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is impossible to speak in a pastoral letter about all the aspects of the Christian prayer. I invite you to deepen your knowledge of prayer and to animate your own prayer life as individuals and as communities in reading carefully the relevant section of the **Catechism of the Catholic Church about “Christian Prayer”**. You find it in Part Four of the Catechism (numbers 2558 to 2865). At the end of this pastoral letter about prayer as the priestly task of every member of the faithful, I want to make my own the words of the Apostle Paul to the Colossians: “Therefore, from the day” when I came to you as your bishop, I “do not cease praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding to live in a manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with every power, in accord with his glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy giving thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light” (*Colossians 1:9-12*).

May the Lord bless you and keep you!

+ Paul Hinder OFM Cap  
Vicar Apostolic of Arabia

## **REGULATIONS**

### **FAST, ABSTINENCE, AND HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION**

1. FAST & ABSTINENCE are prescribed for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, limited to the ages 21 to 60.
2. ABSTINENCE is prescribed as a general rule for every Friday in Lent, applicable to the age of 14 onwards. However, for the particular circumstances of the Vicariate of Arabia, Abstinence is to be observed on Wednesdays of Lent. Out of devotion, Abstinence may be observed every Wednesday during the year.
3. EUCHARISTIC FAST: The faithful must abstain from solid food and liquids for one hour before receiving Holy Communion. This regulation is applied to Masses celebrated in the morning, afternoon, or at midnight. Water does not break the fast. Those who are sick, even though not confined to bed, may take any liquid or food as medicines at any time before Holy Communion without asking permission.
4. EASTER DUTY may be fulfilled any time between the First Sunday in Lent and Trinity Sunday.
5. FEAST OF OBLIGATION: Sundays or Fridays (where it has been decided) and Christmas.
6. FEASTS OF DEVOTION: January 1st; St. Joseph (March 19th), Immaculate Conception (December 8th).
7. FEASTS TRANSFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING SUNDAYS: Epiphany; Corpus Christi; Ascension; SS Peter & Paul; Assumption of Our Lady (August 15th); All Saints (November 1st).

### **COLLECTIONS TO BE MADE IN ALL CHURCHES OF THE VICARIATE**

1. Christmas Day & Easter Day for our mission
2. Good Friday for the Holy Land
3. SS Peter & Paul for Peter's Pence
4. Mission Sunday for the Propagation of the Faith
5. 1st week of every month for the Vicariate