



M 405 /2006

Beirut, August 24 2006

Most Reverend Metropolitan Philip
Primate
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
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Beloved brother Metropolitan Philip,

Our last telephone conversations brought to me, as usual, deep joy and the gentle breeze of love and compassion which dwells in your heart especially when our country and its people were passing through the trial of fire and destruction.

Your generous donation of one hundred thousand US dollars came in the peak time of this crisis. I take this opportunity to express personally and on behalf of our people our grateful appreciation. You brought to us this assurance of togetherness in the one body of the suffering, but resurrected, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Please convey our thankful feelings to all our sisters and brothers of the Archdiocese. May God protect them all with their beloved ones and grant them the plenitude of His Graces.

As a Church, we usually do not serve on discriminatory basis, but due to demographical and religious differences, the Orthodox displaced persons did not (and sometimes were not allowed to) mix with non Christians in the public and private schools. Most of them were hosted in the houses of relatives of kin or rented furnished apartments with their little savings.

Part of your donation served in bringing food assistance and emergency items to this specific category of refugees, who were deprived from the regular relief of the official authorities. «Discovering» these

families needed more time and effort, since they only declared themselves to the parish priests. Many times, these refugees showed enough pride even by hiding their basic needs. Sometimes, both hosting and displaced families were assisted and subsidized.

This relief operation was conducted by the Archdiocese through the parish priests and especially through the efforts of the Rev. Fr. Economos George Dimas and the affiliated social workers of our dispensaries.

Now that we have a cessation of hostilities, even though precarious, we watched a massive operation of reintegration of the refugees to their hometowns and villages. We are now called to assuring some kind of sustainable relief for short and medium terms, allowing the head of the family to restart a minimum living for his/her family. In this post war (hoping that it is really the case), even the non displaced families will face more difficulties to assure their basic needs because the economic crisis is spreading all over the country hitting zones and people from different social strata not directly affected by war and destruction.

Punctual assistance will be offered in order to help relaunching small businesses, or subsidizing specific post war needs. We are planning to organize a daily soup for homeless and left alone elderly and needy families. We also need to set up a free of charge psychological assistance program for the children suffering the war trauma syndromes. This last issue is seriously studied and we hope to reach a feasible and efficient program in the next coming weeks. The remaining amount will be used to serve such kind of needs.

Once again, I reiterate my thanks and gratitude hoping that this work would bear its promising fruits and the fulfillment of our Lord's command to serve the poor, help the needy and wipe the tears of the distressed.

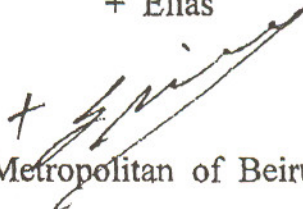
May all what we do be an acceptable offering pleasing to Him and may He, the all merciful God, bless your flock and grant you many, many years.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is with us and in our midst.

Seeking your prayers

Your brother in Christ

+ Elias


Metropolitan of Beirut