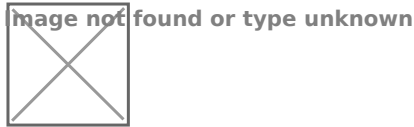


10/12/2024

## **Archbishop Elpidophoros Remarks and Benediction at the Healing and Hope Gala of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association**



Your Excellency Archbishop Caccia, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations,

Gayle Benson, Laureate of the Faith & Culture Award,

Gala Committee Chair, Amanda Bowman,

Dear Friends,

Before I close this wondrous evening with prayer, please allow me a few words of encouragement before those of blessing.

This Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Pontifical Mission, the Association's operating agency in the Middle East, is a milestone worthy of recognition. Your ecumenical spirit that embraces all Christians, and which extends to other faith communities via inter-spiritual dialogue, is praiseworthy from every point of view. The Orthodox Churches of Antioch and Jerusalem have benefitted mightily from your support, and especially the suffering Christians of Gaza.

In this hour, when we face uncertainty and perhaps radical change in Syria that will affect all of the Middle East, we gather in solidarity in a manifestation of unity within our diversity is a sign of God's blessing.

Therefore, as we close this evening of fellowship, I invite you to join me in prayer.

Let us pray:

O Lord our God, You willed to be born in Bethlehem of Judea, in order to redeem and save the cosmos.

We humbly ask that You shower with abundant blessing the workers and friends of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, who labor with love and ardor to

support Christians throughout the Middle East.

As You are the Prince of Peace, we urgently call on You to healing and hope to the People of Syria, protecting the Christian minorities who dwell in this most ancient land. Inspire peace and reconciliation in the hearts of all whose decisions and choices will profoundly shape the lives and destinies of all who dwell in these lands.

May wars may cease, and the rebuilding of lives and lands be the chief concerns of all their leaders.

As You were born in a humble stall and laid in a trough for beasts, may You be born anew in the hearts of those who need You most.

And may we all be blessed to celebrate with faith and hope Your Holy Nativity, which brings great light to those in darkness, and the dawn to dispel the shadows.

By the prayers of Your Most Holy Mother and all the Saints. Amen.

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