

September 9th, 2014

“ A Time to give birth and time to die”

Ecc 3:2

We often hear the powerful words of Ecclesiastes that remind us of the inevitability of birth and death, that these realities come upon us regardless of whether we are prepared for them or not. No doubt we must accept and embrace them, but rarely, however, do we experience them both on the same day. Yesterday at Mass, though, we did just that.

We celebrated the birth of our Lady and committed one of our elderly sisters into the hands of God. The sister, whom we buried yesterday, is among the elderly sisters whom we had promised to take to Karakosh after the construction of our general house. Unfortunately, our unforeseen displacement and journey to Ankawa/Erbil was a shock for them, for they were eager to return back to Karakosh. Although they were not able to help out in the camps and centres with the young sisters at Erbil, they were diligently following the news on TV. This doubled their heartache and worry over people's suffering. So heavy was their burden that three of them passed away within ten days.

Despite the loss and pain our community is experiencing, we rejoice in the reality that our sisters have decisively chosen to live life, never letting despair extinguish the light within them, and in the midst of overwhelming hardship, two sisters renewed their vows yesterday evening and two postulants received the habit, becoming novices.

It was a day where the contradictions of life and death converged; we witnessed simultaneously death and resurrection. This was a sign of hope and God's presence among us, and it gave us courage to continue our journey with our people who are still displaced, weakened, and impoverished.

We have entered the fifth week of displacement, and people are still living the same misery, which is only worsening, it seems, as our cries are ignored, and the world turns a blind eye to our sufferings. The challenges that threaten our people are now even greater as we face homelessness. The refugees taking shelter in schools are told to leave, as the school year starts soon. They do not know where to go, and there is a shortage of medicine, food, mattresses, blankets, and clothing. The dignity of the people has been utterly stripped away. Most painful of all is that we do not know when this ordeal will end. So far, neither the central government nor by the Kurdish forces have made serious actions to reclaim all the Christian towns from the IS.

Also, we would like to inform you that we have started setting up temporary housing for our sisters in the back yard of our convent, but the needs are great. We hope that the work will be completed within two weeks.

Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers. Your help can make huge difference.

Sister Maria Hanna OP
Dominican Sisters of Catherine of Siena –Iraq.