



Dear Father John,

Visiting your parish and taking part in the NAM Convention that you have hosted has been a very special experience for His Beatitude and our delegation. Starting with the very warm welcome received upon our arrival, and ending with the nice send off that you reserved for us at the conclusion of the Convention and our pastoral visit.

Our first meeting with the parish for the Mass, on our first day, gave a very good image of the lively parish community gathered around its shepherd to welcome their Father and Head of their Church for the first time amongst them. The choir and the altar servers and the participation of all involved with the celebration showed a very lively pastoral atmosphere.

That atmosphere of a dynamic, well organized and efficient parish set up was more clearly projected, day after day, as we went into the Convention. It became quite evident also, as the program started to unfold, how well organized that whole big operation was.

Although the team of the Convention "Holiness in Solitary and Communal Living" was not often mentioned explicitly, it was clearly permeating the whole atmosphere through the prayerful community celebrations, so enriched by the very good choirs of all age levels, each of which was impressive in their own way, but all helping us worship in an especially prayerful way. The time allotted for individual prayers and confessions, on the other hand, clearly aimed at fostering the "solitary dimension of Holiness" in a discrete and yet efficient way.

We were all highly impressed by the performances offered by the children and youth and young adults of the parish. They showed exceptional talent and a clear attachment to our Lebanese culture. It is very clear, especially from the choirs and the folkloric performances that here is a parish investing heavily in its future and this is a great sign of hope. Please pass on our gratitude and admiration to all your young people and all those involved in their training and formation.

Another aspect of our culture was very evident and that was the very generous hospitality reflected on all occasions. The organization and work that has gone into that side of the Convention, and especially the preparation of the food, is tremendous and I wish to recognize that and express both my admiration and gratitude to all involved, and mainly the ladies of the parish.

All that big operation and the management of all those committees could never have been possible had it not been for the distinctly high leadership qualities that you are blessed with.

On behalf of His Beatitude and our delegation I wish to congratulate you heartily for an outstanding all around performance in the planning and execution of this special NAM Convention, on the occasion of the 50th. Anniversary of the founding of the Diocese. Please pass on our thanks to all those who assisted you in this big task, especially the Chairpersons Joe and Carmen Maroun, their many committees, the President of NAM, Mr. Samir Farah and his Board, the President of the Order of Saint Charbel, Dr. Elias Ayoub, the President of your Parish Council, Mr. Elie Antoun and his team, and all other people involved. I was personally very happy to meet Elie again after having known him as a bright young student over 40 years ago, and I am proud of what he has achieved since. I wish also to thank the volunteers and all your parishioners, and all those involved in this big and very successful operation.

I wish to thank especially for the donation you offered to His Beatitude for the charitable work of the Patriarchate, and an official receipt for the amount will be forwarded to you later. I also would like to thank you for what you offered me, as there are so many ways one could use that sum in the present economic situation in the country.

I pray that God may continue to bless you, Abouna John, your team and all your parishioners, and may He continue to grant you wisdom and strength to pursue your ministry with an ever greater commitment and zeal.

With renewed gratitude, good wishes and all God's Blessings upon you, your helpers and all your parishioners.

Arch. Paul Sayah
Patriarchal Vicar General