

Nasara

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The R. C. Mission of Afghanistan Newsletter

21 March 2018 AD

No. 5 (Springtime)

1 Hamal 1397 HS

NOWRUZ, SPRING AND EASTER

Last March 12 was the 6,000th day of war in Afghanistan—if we consider only the war started on October 7, 2001 with Operation *Enduring Freedom* (until December 28, 2014) and continued with *Resolute Support Mission* (from January 1, 2015). If we consider also the previous years, we realize that Afghanistan is at war since 1978, when, with the “Saur Revolution,” President Daoud was assassinated and a Democratic Republic was established. Since then Afghanistan has not had peace any more. A forty-year-long war!

This last period has not been certainly one of the best; suffice it to think of the “black week” at the end of January: first the assault on Inter-Continental Hotel in Kabul, then the attack on *Save the Children* offices in Jalalabad, and finally the ambulance bombing in Kabul. It would seem that the situation is coming to a head.

And yet, on these last days, there were also some positive signals: in mid-February the Taliban declared themselves ready to enter into negotiations with the US; at the end of February, at *Kabul Process*, President Ghani offered a generous peace deal to the Taliban. Evidently, both parties know they are unable to prevail; so, they realize that time has come to reach an agreement.

If then we consider that only with peace it is possible to take advantage of some juicy opportunities (TAPI gas pipeline; exploitation of natural resources; etc.), which could be more lucrative of the opium criminal business, we understand that it is profitable for nobody to continue such an endless war. The economic interest could succeed where weapons, politics and diplomacy failed.

Today a new year starts. If only 1397 marked the beginning of a peace process in Afghanistan! In this country, the year opens with spring. Spring is the season when nature revives after the winter slumber. How we wish the spring in nature would be followed by a spring in society! May Afghanistan also revive in the year just begun.

For Christians, spring coincides with the celebration of Easter. On Easter we relive the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We would like our Afghan brother and sisters to share in the grace of this event. Christ died for all. May all—Christian and Muslims—benefit by the life springing from Jesus’ death! *Nowruz mubarak! Happy New Year and Happy Easter! God bless Afghanistan!*



نوروز مبارك

Happy 1397 & Happy Easter!

THE NEW COATS OF ARMS OF THE MISSION

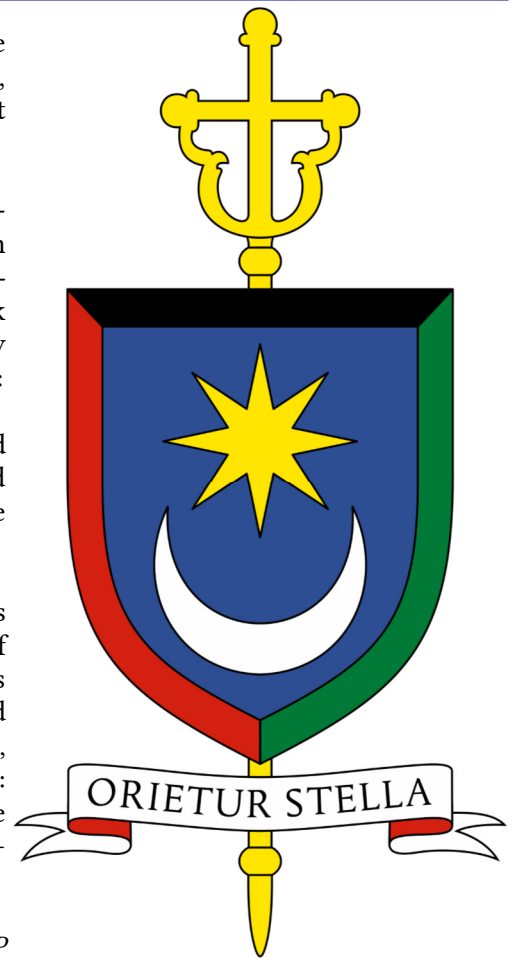
If you remember, on the last issue of our newsletter there was an article about the Mission's motto and logo. It ended with the following wish, "Hopefully, our logo and motto will be soon converted by some heraldist into a proper coat of arms, respectful of heraldic rules."

No sooner said than done, just few days after the release of the newsletter, at the beginning of January, we received a letter, written a month before, from a Slovak heraldic artist, Mr. MAREK SOBOLA, who volunteered to design, free of charge, the coat of arms of our Mission. Talk about Providence! I sent him the article of *Nasara*, providing all necessary explanations, and after a sequence of tries, the following sketch came out:

"In the blue shield is laid the silver crescent with a golden eight-pointed star. All this in the bordure — up black, right red and left green. Behind the shield is the golden processional Herat cross. Under the shield is the red-lined silver ribbon with the motto ORIETUR STELLA."

Compared with the logo illustrated on the last issue of *Nasara*, there is something new: the star is golden and the crescent silver (the colors of the Holy See, on which the Mission immediately depends); the shield is surrounded by a bordure with the colors of the Afghan flag (black, red and green); the shield is ensigned with the processional cross of Herat, one of the few vestiges of Afghanistan's Christian heritage. As if to say: Christianity does not pop up in this country with our Mission; until the 14th century — so, quite a long after the Islamic conquest (7th century) — there were "Nasara" hereabouts!

— Giovanni Scalese, CRSP



LATEST NEWS

DONATION FOR THE MISSION'S POOR CHILDREN

On the occasion of Christmas, the Italian contingent in Afghanistan, led by General ANTONIO BETTELLI, arranged among the soldiers a fund-raising in favor of the civilian population. A generous contribution came from the Italian Military Ordinary, Bishop SANTO MARCIANÒ, who visited the troops on

Christmas. They decided to give the results of the fund-raising to our Sisters, both the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa and the PBK Sisters, who respectively run an orphanage for disabled kids and a school for children with development delay (*see on next page*). On Sunday, February 4, the contingent's Officers attended Mass in our church and, at the end of the celebration, handed the donation over to the Sisters. *May God reward all the donors!*



THANK YOU, SISTER RAZIA!

On Monday, February 19, Sister RAZIA BARKAT O.P., after a dozen years spent in Afghanistan returned to her homeland—Pakistan. She was among the founders of PBK Center in Kabul, in 2006. These last years, she was the Superior of the PBK inter-congregational community. We bade her farewell on Sunday, February 18, at the end of the Community Mass. The Mission is very grateful to Sr. Razia for her prolonged service and for her silent example of religious life. *Tashakkur! God bless you!*

Gen. Bettelli handing the donation over to Sr. Razia for PBK Center on Feb. 4

“PRO BAMBINI DI KABUL”

Inspiration for the PBK School (“Pro Bambini di Kabul”) came from the call of Pope John Paul II in his Christmas message of 2001. During the long war many children had been left orphans, abandoned and homeless; his cry was, “Save the children of Kabul”. God opened the heart of Fr. GIANCARLO PRAVETTONI, of the Congregation of the Servants of Charity (S.d.C.) of St. Aloysius Guanella. To answer this call certainly he could have been unable to do it alone, so he asked several religious Congregations to join him in this work.

On May 22, 2006 the School for children with development delay between 6 and 10 years of age was inaugurated under the direction and leadership of an inter-congregational religious community made up of Sisters belonging to different Congregations that over the years have experienced communion of charisms and shared with the local staff the birth and development of the PBK School.



For many years in Afghanistan girls were forbidden to study and boys forced to attend Koranic schools. Only after 2001 girls were readmitted to schools, women readmitted to teaching and all subjects were allowed in schools. Therefore we are committed not only to the education and care of children with developmental delays, but also to supporting young women and men through scholarships. Equally important is the collaboration with local authorities, and in particular the University and the Ministry of Education, with whom we have regular contacts and participation in courses and conferences. Finally, we help several families by distributing material, food and medicine.



The children with their teachers

Today, the School receives 40 students annually with the aim of preparing as many as possible for inclusion and integration in the normal school. For all we propose a path that contributes to develop their autonomies: intellectuals, relationships, communication and social skills.

But the School is also a welcoming port for children who are highly discriminated and even segregated at home by the family itself, for a misunderstood feeling of guilt and shame. These children are also not guaranteed access to normal school or have been removed because they are not considered able to learn.

A group of Afghani employees (4 teachers, driver, cook, cleaner, 3 guards and a consultant/translator) collaborate with the Sisters (currently two: Sr. MARIAMMAL, of the Guanellian Sisters from India, and Sr. IRENE, of the Consolata Missionary Sisters from Mozambique. Sr. RAZIA, of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, has finished recently her mission to the PBK, and now we are waiting for a new Sister).

From the website (www.probambinidikabul.org) I take this definition of the PBK, “The PBK School is the result of a successful experience of inter-congregational collaboration. The PBK Educational Day School has become the ‘court of the gentiles’ of charity. A small courtyard but as big as the world, because it was built by the courage of religious women and men who came out of their Institutes, meeting all men of good will, certain that charity is the only language capable of sustaining the dialogue of life at any latitude, with any culture, religion or ethnicity.”

— Bro. CARLO FONDRINI, S.d.C.
Legal Representative & Director



The PBK Staff with Bro. Carlo and the Sisters

EASTER CELEBRATIONS 2018

25 March PALM SUNDAY

5:30 p.m. Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem (Procession of Palms)
Mass of the Lord's Passion

28 March HOLY WEDNESDAY

5:30 p.m. Chrism Mass

29 March HOLY THURSDAY

5:30 p.m. Mass of the Lord's Supper
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
(*Plenary Indulgence*)

30 March GOOD FRIDAY (Day of fasting & abstinence)

5:30 p.m. Celebration of the Lord's Passion
Adoration of the Holy Cross
(*Plenary Indulgence*)

31 March HOLY SATURDAY

8:30 p.m. Easter Vigil in the Holy Night
Renewal of Baptismal Promises
(*Plenary Indulgence*)

1 April EASTER SUNDAY

5:30 p.m. Solemn Mass of the Lord's Resurrection
Apostolic Blessing (*Plenary Indulgence*)

8 April SUNDAY of DIVINE MERCY

5:30 p.m. Holy Mass

9 April ANNUNCIATION of the LORD (from 25 March)

5:30 p.m. Holy Mass

10 May ASCENSION of the LORD (Holyday of Obligation)

5:30 p.m. Holy Mass

20 May: PENTECOST SUNDAY

5:30 p.m. Holy Mass

21 May B.V.M. MOTHER of the CHURCH (a newly instituted celebration!)

5:30 p.m. Holy Mass

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The Roman Catholic
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The INDEPENDENT MISSION OF AFGHANISTAN (*Missio sui juris Afghanistaniensis*) is a jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church, immediately subject to the Holy See, covering the whole territory of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It is a "particular church"—that is to say, a portion of the people of God—likened to a Diocese (Can. 368). By the law itself, it possesses juridical personality (Can. 373). It was established by the Holy See on the 16th of May, 2002 and entrusted to the care of the ORDER OF CLERICS REGULAR OF SAINT PAUL—BARNABITES (CRSP). It is presided by an Ecclesiastical Superior (*Superior ecclesiasticus*), who acts as the Local Ordinary (Can. 134 §2).