

Foreword

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The crisis of civilisation must be countered by the civilisation of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty, which find their full attainment in Christ.²

Pope Saint John Paul II teaches that, in Christ, Man finds his greatness, his dignity and the true value of his life. Indeed, when he gets to know God who is love, he will then be able to build the civilization of love. In other words, without the love of Christ, we could never live or understand the significance of our human vocation, or the mystery of our presence in the world. Only the mighty hand of Christ can lead us along the varied paths of our lives, just as He has already done in the lives of the apostles in the past. Thus, He opens new horizons in front of us, and presents us with new challenges and with new ways of working.

The book of the Acts of the Apostles describes the early life of the Church. In its pages, we gain an understanding of the lives of the believers from across the centuries. Acts 16:9 recalls St Paul's vision of a Macedonian standing before him and begging him with the words: "Come to our aid!" We know that St Paul was very affected by this vision. It prompted him to waste no time in going forth to preach the Good News throughout the world, to teach the Gospel to people who wished to build a new civilisation founded on Christ and to replace the ruins of Alexander the Great's empire.

Do we not still hear similar calls today? Do we not hear people in search of the true faith calling out in our world today? Perhaps there are people who do not even have the courage to ask for our help with the words: "Help us to discover the true face of God; help us to know his will in our lives, so that we can implore him and live for him!". Personally speaking, I lived as a missionary in Africa for many years and I was able to grasp fully how much that continent hungers for the faith. This applies to

² John Paul II, *Tertio Millenio Adveniente*, 52.

Christians and Muslims alike. The greatest help we can bring to them, apart from material aid, is the one which satisfies all hunger, as spoken of by Christ: “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.”

All these ideas have contributed to this book. Indeed, the aim of the book is to help Arabic speakers and those who are searching for the Christian faith through Baptism, to know God who is love. The title of the book “Our Way to God” was deliberately chosen to reflect our aim.

Of course, there are many books in Arabic which explain the Christian faith. However, until now we have not found a book anywhere which is addressed specifically to those who want to understand the principles of the Christian faith; in short, a Catholic, Christian catechism. Doubtless we could have chosen a European book which explains our Christian principles. However, such a book would not have taken into account the linguistic, cultural and religious background required by an Arabic reader. That is why we wanted to write it in a specific way, so that it would be like a path towards a knowledge of the Christian faith, helping every reader who wishes to know God, to engage himself in the process of preparation for Baptism and integration into the Church.

This book contains scriptural, dogmatic and liturgical teachings. It explains the content of authentic Christian teaching to meet the needs of people who have no previous knowledge of the Christian faith. This book guides the reader towards a deep understanding of the teachings of the Gospel, enabling them to attain salvation. At the same time, they will discover the values of divine grace, the theological virtues – faith, hope and charity – and the effects of mercy and justice.

St Thomas Aquinas, one of the great Western theologians (1225-1274), explaining the essential principles of the Christian faith, said: “What we must believe in, we find in the Creed; what we have to pray, we find in the Our Father and what we have to live, we find in the Ten Commandments.”

I hope that this book, which truly is unique, will help the candidate for Baptism in three areas: how to believe, how to pray, and how to live as a true Christian.

It is also my hope that the translation of this book from the Arabic into French, German, English and Spanish, will also help the baptismal candidate to communicate better with the community in which he lives as an immigrant.

I would like to mention that this book would not have seen the light of day without the cooperation of several people including His Beatitude Gregory III Laham, Melkite Emeritus Patriarch of Antioch and of all the East and of Alexandria and of Jerusalem; His Eminent Beatitude Louis Raphaël I Sako, Cardinal Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans, and other bishops. To them all, I express my profound gratitude for their time, their suggestions, their recommendations and their blessings.

More especially, I would like to thank the authors of this book, Fr Michel Sakr, Mgr Antoine Assaf and Mgr Toufic Bou Hadir who guided us in bringing this book to completion.

Finally, I wish for the reader to experience what Pope Francis wrote right at the beginning of his Apostolic Exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel": "[T]he joy of the Gospel fills the heart of those who encounter Jesus; those who allow themselves to be saved by him are freed from sin, from sadness, from inner emptiness, from isolation; with Jesus Christ joy is born and always reborn."

