Salaam, Peace to you in the name of the Lord

Christmas Greetings from Bishop Dawani

Dear Friends,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The season of giving thanks to God for the birth of the Christ-child is upon us. In the face of ongoing challenges to our ministry throughout the Diocese here in the Land of the Holy One, we are a thankful people. In our celebration of Christmas we offer thanks to God for the gift He has given us in the love which came down at Christmas, the birth of Jesus, God's only Son, born of Mary whose devotion to God is a witness to her faith for us all. Angels and Archangels, Gabriel and the heavenly host provide us the heavenly signs of God's favor upon the baby Jesus, upon Mary his mother and upon Joseph whose own faithfulness testifies to his strength of character as a man of God.

This is a season for us to give thanks to God for the guidance of his Holy Spirit in the ministry of our Diocese. I give thanks to God for the recent Majma which brought our Diocese closer together in spirit as one body in Christ. Our decisions, made in prayer and with the intent of building a stronger Christian presence for our parishes and institutions, were not always easy. However, by God's grace, we have a growing understanding of how vital and fulfilling our ministries are throughout the five nations of our Diocese and how important it is to speak with one voice and to stand together as one Diocese. We continue to appreciate St. Paul's discussion of how one part of the body of Christ affects the whole body. In this way we are able to celebrate how one success in our Diocese encourages us all and how one difficulty elsewhere in our Diocese moves us to help in the Name of our Lord and Savior.

In spite of all the political, social and spiritual challenges for our people and their children, we are people who gather at the stable in wonder and thankfulness at what God has done in bringing the Savior into the world. In spite of all the problems of life which distract us, we find our way to Bethlehem to gaze upon the Christ child, small, helpless and innocent.

Please know of my profound thankfulness to God for the ministry I have among you as your Bishop. My hope and prayer for each of you is that your celebration of Christmas is full of joy and hope as we offer our thanks and praise to God who so loved the world that He gave us his only Son.

I wish you a blessed Christmas.

+ Suheil Dawani
Big Announcements surprise gathering at Bishop’s Christmas Party

Bishop Suheil and Shafeeqa Dawani hosted their annual Christmas gathering for regional clergy, diocesan staff, volunteers, and friends. The evening began with a warm welcome and refreshments while awaiting the bus of clergy and staff traveling from the Galilee for the occasion.

When the bus of clergy, staff and spouses arrived, the gathering became a jovial reunion of the faithful unified in song. With Christmas carols sung in Arabic and English, the warmth of the One Body serving God through the Diocese of Jerusalem lifted everyone’s spirits in the joy of the coming of Christ.

After a lovely buffet dinner, Bishop Suheil caught the attention of the assembled guests and announced his appreciation for all who serve the Diocese, ordained and lay people alike. He then announced that he was conferring honorary Canon of the Cathedral titles on his senior clergy who have served over 15 years. Pictured here are the clergy who were canonized that evening, the Revd Canon Samuel Fanous, the Revd Canon Hatem Shehadeh, and the Revd Canon Zahi Nasser.

Others who were canonized that evening and will receive formal recognition in Amman in January are the Revd Canon Samir Esaid, the Revd Canon Faeq Haddad, the Revd Canon Andrew de Carpentier and the Revd Canon Hanna Mansour.

A further surprise announcement was the appointment of the Revd Samuel Barhoum (left) to Archdeacon for Israel and Palestine. The Venerable Samuel Barhoum will assist the Bishop in this region as the Venerable Luay Haddad serves as Archdeacon for Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

These changes give due recognition to the value of the ministry of diocesan clergy and will benefit the important ministries of the Diocese. We celebrate these recognitions and new beginnings.

St Barbara at St Paul’s Church, Ashrafieh

On 3rd December 2010, the first time for several years, the St. Paul’s church, Ashrafieh celebrated the life and witness of St. Barbara.

The name of Saint Barbara was known in Rome in the 7th century and her following can be traced as far back as the 9th Century. She secretly became a Christian to the dismay of her father and this resulted in her being heavily guarded in a tower that has since become a symbol of her life. She had
three windows put in it representing “Father, Son and Holy Spirit”. She was subsequently martyred and her tomb became a scene of miracles.

Each year this festival is celebrated by the making and eating of a special dish made from whole and ground wheat, sugar spices and decorated with nuts, sultanas and coconut.

The young people of the Church of the Redeemer, Amman under the guidance of Deacon Fursan Zurmot entertained the congregation with Christmas songs and short sketches. Based on the parable of the Good Samaritan and Jesus’ words asking “who is your neighbor?” the young people were very clear in their message about being a practical Christian.

St. Paul’s is led by Deacon Ayed Ajji. He and his family are encouraging the small but faithful congregation and plan to hold more social events in the coming months beginning on the 17th Dec with a Sunday School Christmas Party.

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**Bishop Suheil opens the Library and Study centre of St Matthew’s Church, Zababdeh**

In November Bishop Suheil celebrated the Eucharist at St Matthew’s Church joining Fr Nael Abu Rahmoun and his congregation in a time of fellowship. The Bishop preached on the teaching and healing of Jesus and afterwards the congregation joined the Bishop and Fr Nael at the opening of the St Matthew’s Library and Study Centre. The centre will provide the community with a computer suite, library, and language courses which will benefit the local community and congregation.

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**Bishop Suheil travels to Lebanon for a meeting with the Grand Mufti**

Bishop Suheil, as part of his visit to Lebanon in December of this year, met the Grand Mufti, the religious leader of Muslims in Lebanon, as part of the Diocese’s active interfaith ministry. The meeting focused on the strengthening of interfaith ties with religious leaders in Lebanon and on the work of the church.

Discussion focused on the importance of interfaith dialogue and the need to develop and strengthen ecumenical bonds within the church itself.

The meeting took place at the residence of the Grand Mufti and emphasized the importance of such meetings which are central to the Diocese’s interfaith ministry.

Also present, alongside other religious leaders, were Bishop Cheyne, The Pontifical Mission in Lebanon, the Maronite Bishop, and the Revd John Peterson.
St Luke’s Hospital, Nablus, Christmas Party 2010

The annual Christmas party at St. Luke’s Hospital took place on the 17th December this year. Bishop Suheil Dawani attended the event and was welcomed by Dr Walid Kerry, Director of St Luke’s hospital, and the Mayor and Governor of Nablus.

It was an occasion of celebration and fellowship with St Luke’s hospital staff in attendance alongside local dignitaries. Carols were sung to mark the Christmas celebration and hospitality extended to all in a Christmas meal. Speeches during the evening focused on the importance of peace and the Christmas message of love and fellowship.

It was an opportunity for all to come together and mark this important time with warmth and companionship.

Bishop Dawani visits St Luke’s Centre for Rehabilitation, Lebanon

Bishop Suheil Dawani and his wife, Shafeeqa Dawani, paid a Christmas visit to the Diocese’s St Luke’s Centre for Rehabilitation in Lebanon earlier this month.

The centre cares for children with severe learning disabilities and offers a safe and caring environment in which they receive therapy and support from the staff.

The Dawanis spent time with the children who had prepared a Christmas concert in their honour. It was a particularly moving occasion as the Bishop and his wife listened to the concert and talked with the carers and staff at the centre.

The visit highlighted the important work of the Diocese in Lebanon and the need for these centres which do so much to care for the children and families who need help and support. The Dawanis were very touched by the care and attention that had gone into their visit and the music and carol singing from the children present.

The visit emphasized the importance of such work across the Diocese and thanks were extended to the staff and workers who strive so hard to look after the children in their care.
Laylatal Milad – On Christmas Night

On Christmas Night there is no hatred
On Christmas Night the earth flourishes
On Christmas Night war is buried
On Christmas Night love grows

When we give someone who is thirsty a drink, it is Christmas night
When we give someone who is naked clothes, it is Christmas night
When we comfort someone and wipe away their tears, it is Christmas night
When our hearts are full of hope, it is Christmas night

When I kiss my friend in honesty, it is Christmas night
When the spirit of revenge dies in me, it is Christmas night
When my heart is content and open to love, it is Christmas night
When my heart is full of the Spirit of God, it is Christmas Night

Translation by Jeries Arbeed

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