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His Excellency

Archbishop Francisco Montecillo Padilla

Nuncio Apostolico, Apostolic Nunciature in Kuwait

Yarmouk, Block 1, Street 2, Villa 1

P.O. Box 757, Al Yarmouk 72658, Kuwait

Your Excellency,

I am deeply saddened to hear the news of the demise of Most Rev. Camillo Ballin, Vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate of Northern Arabia on 12 April in Rome. I learn that although he was suffering from the serious illness of cancer, the death has happened in a sudden manner. Therefore, all those who know him and are close to him in one way or other are feeling great sorrow and a sense of great loss.

Bishop Camillo Ballin was the Chief Pastor of over two million catholic faithful in the countries of Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia which are parts of the Northern Vicariate, to which also belong about 400,000 faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church. As a Pastor, he was taking earnest efforts to provide pastoral care to all the faithful hailing from various countries of the world. He took special care to provide pastoral care to the oriental catholics from India belonging to the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches in their own ecclesial traditions. He was very particular to maintain discipline in the life of the catholics in his Vicariate, knowing well that indiscipline and infights within the communities would weaken the christian community as a whole.

It is to be noted that Bishop Ballin learnt Arabic to become one with the people in Arabian countries. Considering his proficiency in Arabic language and adaptation to the local cultures, the government of Bahrain gave him citizenship in that country. The only Bishop perhaps who obtained a similar recognition in Gulf Countries!

Bishop Ballin maintained a close relationship with the governmental authorities of the four countries of Northern Arabia and he succeeded to get the permission to construct a Cathedral church in Bahrain for the Vicariate of Northern Arabia. The construction of the church is almost in midway at this time of his death. The catholic faithful of Northern Arabia wholeheartedly supported Bishop Ballin and his cherished project of the Cathedral. They were expecting naturally that he would see the completion of the Cathedral.

I gratefully remember that in the last couple of years, Bishop Ballin was discussing with the Apostolic See the possibility of giving more pastoral powers to the Syro-Malabar Church towards the pastoral care of its own faithful. With his sudden demise, the Gulf countries are bidding farewell to an influential christian leader who stood for the Church and christian faith, and the catholic faithful a loving and caring Shepherd.

I share my sentiments of sorrow with the grief stricken people of God in Northern Arabia and express my prayerful condolences to Your Excellency, priests, religious and lay faithful of the Vicariate of Northern Arabia.

May the Merciful Lord grant the deceased bishop Camillo Ballin Eternal Rest!

Yours cordially in Christ,



George Cardinal Alencherry
Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church

Copies to:

1. His Eminence Pietro Cardinal Parolin, Secretary of State
2. His Eminence Leonardo Cardinal Sandri, Prefect, Congregation for the Oriental Churches
3. His Eminence Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, Prefect, Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith
4. His Excellency Most Rev. Paul Hinder, Apostolic Vicar, Southern Vicariate
5. Superior General, Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, Rome
6. Rev. Dr. Antony Lopez OFM Cap., Chancellor, Vicariate of Northern Arabia