

Dear all,

Despite the crisis, fear, loss, miserable accommodations, daily worries, and the terrible reality of the unknown destiny that awaits us, we still witness the presence of God's embrace; truly an oasis of joy and sisterhood. On the 13th of September, two of our young sisters (Muntaha and Nidaa) made their final vows in St Joseph's Church. The celebration was wonderful and quiet, yet not without tears. We thank the Lord, and we thank our two brave sisters for their love for the Church and the congregation. All of this depends on your prayers, which strengthen us and deepen our love and hope every day.

Most of our sisters are still working at the camps everyday (8:30-1:00 and 17:00-20:00). They offer their services and solidarity, attend to the social, medical, and spiritual needs of the people and pray with them. Our sisters realize that women and children need special care in times like these, so they pay attention to them in a particular way.

There have been some initiatives to deal with housing problems, and as the school year starts, some houses and flats have been offered to the displaced people who had been staying in tents and at various schools. One school where 300 families were placed has been evacuated, and two others now also, one with thirty-five families and another with seventy-five. Still the needs are great, winter is coming soon, and the number of displaced people remains very high.

Everyday, many families leave Iraq, without having a specific place to go, to countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey to apply to the UN for immigration. Some have managed to travel directly to France. Of course, among these people are families of our sisters, a fact that causes additional pain as they see the members of their families scattered in different countries throughout the world.

In our convent in Ankawa/Erbil, the containers (temporary housings) are now set up, and on the 28th of September the sisters left the seminary and moved there. They are equipped to provide the sisters with a decent accommodation. Thus, we celebrated our being together for first time since we left Karakosh on the 6th of August – praying and eating together. It is wonderful to be together, sharing at the end of the day our difficulties, our problems, and also the wonderful initiatives and activities that bring joy to the hearts of all the children and adults we encounter.

Additionally, sisters thought of the orphans and children who have special needs. So, they decided to repair and expand the other convent we have in Ankawa (very close to Al-Bishara convent) to accommodate ten girls. The work is in process, and hopefully girls will move soon to the house where they can live peacefully with two of our sisters taking care of them.

We continue to thank you for your prayers and help. Your support is truly significant to us.

Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine of Siena –Iraq.