

9-21-2009

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Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem Visits Chapman Sept. 23

ORANGE, Calif., Sept. 15, 2009 -- Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1987-2008 – the highest ranking Roman Catholic cleric in the Holy Land and the first Palestinian-born cleric to hold that high position, will visit Chapman University on Wednesday, Sept. 23, and will celebrate Mass and present a public lecture.

Patriarch Sabbah and His Excellency Tod D. Brown, Roman Catholic Bishop of Orange, will join Father Rafael Luevano of Chapman's Religious Studies department in the celebration of the Mass at 11 a.m. in the Wallace All Faiths Chapel, Fish Interfaith Center. The Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre, an ancient order dating back to the Crusades era (<http://www.holysepulchre.net>), will also attend the liturgy, along with visiting priests and bishops. It promises to be a colorful spectacle as the Mass participants process into the Center in their full regalia.

The public and campus community, including non-Catholics, are cordially invited to attend this Mass – Father Luevano will do a special introduction for non-Catholics.

Immediately following Mass, Patriarch Sabbah will give a lecture in the Wallace All Faiths Chapel entitled "Jerusalem, City of Peace."

Patriarch Sabbah hails from Nazareth, an Arab city within the State of Israel. He attended seminary in Bethlehem and was ordained in 1955 for the Latin patriarchate of Jerusalem. He was a parish priest for a few years before being sent to the University of St. Joseph in Beirut to study the Arab language and literature. Shortly thereafter, he became director of schools for the Latin patriarchate. He held that position until the Arab-Israeli war in 1967 in which Israel military occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank, which had previously been under the administration of Jordan.

Sabbah then moved to the East African nation of Djibouti to teach Arabic and Islamic studies until 1973, when he began doctoral studies at the Sorbonne in France.

In 1980, he was named president of the University of Bethlehem, finding himself back where he started his journey toward priesthood. In 1987, Pope John Paul II picked Sabbah as the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, making him the first native Palestinian in that position. Sabbah replaced Archbishop Giacomo Beltritti, one of a long line of Italian clerics to oversee the Latin-rite Church in Jerusalem.

For more information, contact Father Rafael Luevano at luevano@chapman.edu or Don Will, director of Chapman's Peace Studies program, at will@chapman.edu.