

Your Most Reverend Eminence, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri,
Prefect of the Congregation for Oriental Churches,

The Lord give you His
peace!

Thank you for being here with us today to preside this Eucharist and to bless this place that truly constitutes one of the most important historical sites in Jordan, from the religious as well as from the artistic point of view. The vision of the entire Holy Land that God himself wanted to offer to Moses during the last moments of his life is the most effective sign of the particular closeness and friendship between God and the prophet. The same Christian presence and the ancient monuments that have arisen here show the desire to perpetuate and relive such an experience, which is being offered to diverse cultures and religions.

The witness of the interest that Mount Nebo has been able to arouse in our times has included the visits and the profound archaeological investigations carried out by our *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* of Jerusalem, as well as the constant attention of the Custody of the Holy Land for the maintenance and development of this site, from the very beginning when it was acquired, through the courage and determination of brother Jerome Mihaic, more than eighty years ago. It has been since some years ago that a stable community resides in our small monastery adjacent to the Sanctuary. In this way the Sanctuary has become a place of life, prayer and welcoming of pilgrims and visitors.

The building that protects the ruins, and that we have inaugurated yesterday and are going to bless today as a Sanctuary in which we celebrate and conserve the sacred mysteries, is not the first building that has been constructed in this place. It naturally has a double function: first and foremost it is a place of prayer both for pilgrims as well as for the local Christian community. At the same time it is being offered as a place for visits to all, since one can admire the extraordinary workmanship and beauty of its floor mosaics. We know that the way of beauty is the way through which the Lord speaks to us and draws us to Himself, since He is the highest and eternal Beauty.

The works of construction have gone through a long series of difficulties, especially following the sudden loss of Father Michele Piccirillo, which occurred exactly eight years ago, and which we would like to recall in this Eucharist in a special way together with the memory of brother Jerome Mihaic. With the grace of God and the help of a good number of friends we have at last been able to arrive to celebrate this present moment of joy.

Your Eminence, I thank you once more with all my heart for having accepted the invitation to come up with us today on this mountain, in order to preside the Eucharist and to bless this place, in which we hope that many others will be able to open their hearts to the voice of the Spirit and experiment once again the grace and mercy of God and the promise of an eternal and blessed life, in communion with God.