



e-Newsletter

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"Syria, the cradle of civilization and the gateway to history."

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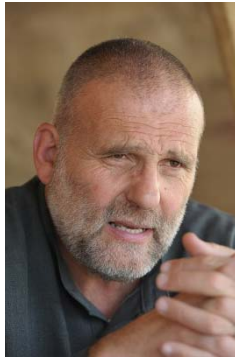
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The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Syria

Dear Friends:



I am very glad that Fr Paolo Dall'Oglio, S.J. from Deir Mar Musa in Syria has accepted my invitation to Detroit. He will be speaking to us on February 26 about the important subject of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Syria. For details about his lecture in Detroit please click [here](#).

I found that the best way to introduce to you Fr. Paolo and the Monastery of Deir Mar Musa is to use the following excerpts from an article by John Haughey, S.J. that appeared in 20006 in America Magazine:

"Part of the story I am about to tell is about a man, Paolo Dall'Oglio, an Italian Jesuit in his early 50's who felt called to work with Muslims in his early 20's. The other part of the story is about a place: Mar Musa, a centuries old monastery in the Syrian desert that had been abandoned for at least 200 years. In his imagination Fr. Paolo saw it as a place where Jesus' love for Muslims could be embodied. The best evidence that his calling was not an illusion is that it has become just this. He created the formula or maybe it would be better described as something he conceived in prayer. It would have a contemplative life lived by vowed religious, men and women, whose hospitality and generosity to do the manual work hospitality requires to be in service and love for the Muslim world.

I don't know why Paolo decided in 1983 to climb up to an abandoned monastery in the middle of the Syrian desert to make his annual retreat. It was built in the 6th century, frescoed in the 11th century and abandoned in the 19th century and re-occupied in the late 20th century. It was there in this mile high ruin that he was led during his retreat to root his dream, hope, vision, urge, call that had been with him from his novice retreat. Impractical is not a word he knows in any of his languages which include Italian, Arabic, English, Latin, French. He reopened this place, having received title to it in 1991 from the Catholic Antiochian bishop of Nabk, a town about five miles from the monastery.



The vision of this man who is more like a tsunami than any other mortal I have known is not limited by a place nor by contemplative prayer. He and his companions have already begun to develop a complement to their ranks and to the implementation of the vision of the place. They call it "Friends of Mar Musa."

Hope many of you can join us on February 26th.

Dr. Naji Arwashan
Honorary Consul General

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