

MICHAEL C. BARBER, S.J.
BISHOP OF OAKLAND



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February 19, 2015

His Holiness Tawadros II
Pope of Alexandria and
Patriarch of the See of St. Mark

Your Holiness,

I am writing on behalf of more than 500,000 Catholics of the Diocese of Oakland, to express our sincere condolences, solidarity and fraternal support for the loss of twenty one of our Coptic brothers in Libya.

It is with horror that we have received the news, and our hearts and prayers have been with you and the entire Coptic community since the first moment we learned of the tragedy.

As our beloved Pope Francis said: "The blood of our Christian brothers and sisters is a testimony which cries out to be heard. It makes no difference whether they be Catholics, Orthodox, Copts or Protestants. They are Christians! Their blood is one and the same..." These twenty one brothers of ours have completed in their own flesh the afflictions of Christ (cf. Col 1:24), and have been granted the "privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well" (Phil 1:29)

We believe that, if we generously accept and offer our sufferings in union with those of the Crucified Lord, we can make a major contribution in the struggle for the victory of good over the forces of evil, which in many ways still threatens human dignity today (cf. Saint John Paul II, discourse in Turin, April 13, 1980).

Be assured that the Catholic community of the Diocese of Oakland, clergy, religious and laity, stands with you one in faith and in solidarity in Christ for the protection of religious freedom and of practicing the faith.

Know that we are praying for the continued success of your ministry and for the protection of your people, and all our brothers and sisters in faith.

May our Lord, through the intercession of our Blessed Mother and Saint Mark bless you as well all those under your pastoral care.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Barber SJ".

The Most Reverend Michael C. Barber, SJ
Bishop of Oakland

CC: Fr. Bishoy Ray Ibrahim, St. Antonius Coptic Orthodox Church
Fr. Anthony Hanna, St. Mary & St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church
Fr. Antonios Baki, St. Mary & St. John Coptic Orthodox Church

For the greater glory of God