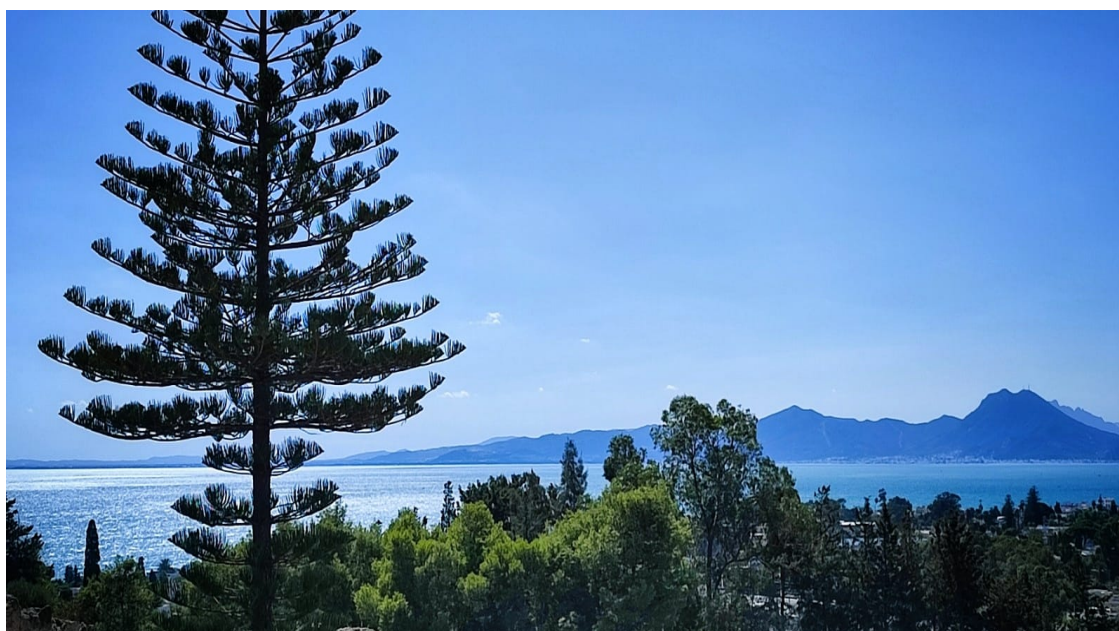


Like a tree planted by the waters...

Jeremiah 17:8

Pastoral Letter



+ Nicolas LHERNOULD
Archbishop of Tunis

September 16, 2025

*Blessed is the man
who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is the Lord.
He will be like a tree planted by the waters,
that sends out its roots toward the stream.
He does not fear when heat comes,
his leaves remain green.
In a year of drought, he is not anxious
and does not cease to bear fruit.*

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Dear Friends,

1. From March to June this year, I traveled throughout the country as part of pastoral visits to all the parishes and communities of the diocese. It was a beautiful and intense time during which I met with many people, discovered very rich realities, and experienced very diverse contexts. Since my arrival in June 2024, it was necessary for me to take time to rediscover Tunisia and our Church — not as I had known them during the twenty-five years I lived here before leaving for Algeria, but as they are today. These visits greatly contributed to this rediscovery. Thank you all for your warm welcome and for everything you did to help me experience, up close and alongside you, the reality of our shared life.

2. I would like to share some aspects of what I perceived during these visits and to suggest a few ways forward to encourage us to move ahead together. What I am sharing does not claim to be exhaustive, nor is it a detailed action plan. The “program” we must give ourselves collectively is to listen *together* to the Spirit, to welcome and live *together* what the Spirit shows us. This active listening to the Holy Spirit, which the Synod on Sodality has encouraged for the entire Church, is the responsibility of all. My role is to help make this possible, to ensure that everyone can contribute, so that we continue to grow *together* as disciples and to live *together* the mission God has entrusted to us: serving His relationship of love with the world and with Tunisia.

3. Since Pope Francis asked me to move to Algeria nearly six years ago, Tunisia has changed, and our Church has changed. During these visits, I tried to be attentive to these developments, to what makes each place and each community unique today. I also tried to pay attention to what unites us — our shared joys, expectations, challenges, and needs. Finally, I wanted to try, together with you, to discern the “calls of the country” as we can hear them through our daily life with the people: in our conversations with collaborators, neighbors, and friends, and in meetings with authorities and members of civil society.

4. This letter is structured in three parts: in the first, I present some of the points that struck me during these visits. In the second, I share what I sense as a call from God for all of us — a call to live a “new rootedness”. In the third, I offer ten proposals to help us move forward in that direction. We will dedicate this pastoral year 2025–2026 to reviewing and, as much as possible, adjusting our life in light of these ten priorities. At the end of this letter, you will find a reading guide that can support this process. Each parish is invited to work on it between now and next spring, when diocesan meetings will take place. At that point, we will share what we have done, evaluate the path taken, and together discern the next steps forward.

5. This is about “building together”, drawing on our heritage, on the immense richness of what we are living today, and on the treasure of relationships and friendships we cultivate with the people around us — all while remaining attentive to the Lord, through His Word, through life, through events. “By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures” (Prov 24:3-4). This work is done all the better when we engage in it together, complementing one another’s talents, in the service of God’s project. Therefore, “since we live by the Spirit, let us be guided by the Spirit” (cf. Gal 5:25).

6. This approach responds to the invitation of Pope Leo to implement the conclusions of the Synod on Synodality: participation, discernment, and evaluation — all undertaken together. Until the beginning of 2027, all the Churches of the world, each according to its own reality and dynamism, are asked to discern how to put into practice the Synod’s recommendations. This will be followed in 2027–2028 by regional and continental stages, leading up to a new assembly in Rome in October 2028. The goal is not simply to apply methods or create structures, even if this may be partly necessary, but to continue “walking together,” with each person making an active contribution to the discernments and decisions needed for the life of our Church today — and to do so with a willingness to evaluate, step by step, the journey we are undertaking.

Some observations

7. The changes I have observed are numerous. I will highlight just six, those that most directly affect our Church and that have struck me the most.

8. The face of our Church has changed and continues to evolve. Even if it is difficult to measure precisely, we are still today around 30,000 members. Within our communities, the number of young people – especially students and migrants – is much lower than five years ago. The number of retired Europeans has increased significantly in some coastal cities. The average age of consecrated persons – priests, brothers, and sisters – has clearly dropped. Our Church is becoming “younger,” not so much in terms of the age of its members as in the length of their experience in Tunisia. This renewal is a blessing, but it also brings challenges: newcomers – priests, consecrated persons, lay people, catechumens – need time to discover, to integrate, to be formed, and to gradually offer the best of themselves. The presence and accompaniment of our elders – much fewer today – is a real loss for us.

9. Our Church is becoming younger. At the same time, the average length of stay in the country is decreasing. Departures and arrivals happen quickly. In one parish council of about twenty people that I met in May, only four were still present that following September. These comings and goings have also increased within religious and consecrated communities. The time seems largely past when missionaries arrived knowing they would probably spend their whole lives in the country. When one has the benefit of time, one invests more deliberately in the language, the culture, and relationships. When one knows the stay will be short, the experience can still be intense, but it is harder to commit to in-depth formation, to build lasting relationships, or to launch long-term projects. On the one hand, the foreign members of our communities stay for shorter periods; on the other hand, the brothers and sisters who are native to the country naturally project themselves over a longer horizon. This creates different needs for formation and accompaniment for both groups.

10. Our Church is marked by great diversity – of origins, languages, cultures – and this has grown even more pronounced. Today we number over eighty nationalities, coming from every continent. During his visit to Tunis on April 14, 1996 – nearly thirty years ago – Pope John Paul II already highlighted this: “A small flock, yes, but diverse in languages, cultures, and origins, you are a living image of the universal Church” (*Homily at the Cathedral of Tunis, n. 4*). Let us rejoice in this reality – a grace that many Churches around the world do not experience with such intensity! But it is also a challenge: the challenge of being Church together, of letting God build up the Body we form in all this diversity, just as Jesus did with his first disciples, just as the Holy Spirit did with the early Church in the time of the Acts of the Apostles. This was never self-evident in the first centuries of Christianity; we should not be surprised that it remains a challenge today. Yet it is a magnificent challenge, for it touches the very essence of the Church – her mission, her universality, her catholicity.

11. The “geography” of our Church has remained largely the same, and this should make us reflect. Our religious houses, with a few exceptions, are concentrated in the cities and along the coast. In the interior of the country, we have practically no more houses. This is a clear gap. Isolated Christians live far from our usual centers, expressing their need for greater closeness and accompaniment. In the interior of Tunisia, our points of contact with what Pope Francis loves to call the “peripheries” have become too few. And yet, from these regions, calls arise from people who knew some of our brothers and sisters who once lived among them, leaving behind a testimony that is still vividly remembered. The goal is not to reproduce the past but to hear these calls, knowing that it is a major and permanent priority of the Church to be attentive to the peripheries and to be humbly active there, witnessing God's closeness to all.

12. Our points of contact with society are still very much alive, but they are fewer in number. We are deeply involved in family life – especially interfaith (Christian-Muslim) families; in education, particularly through the nine schools we run; in the cultural world, thanks to our libraries and cultural centers; in charitable works, through Caritas and collaboration with various associations; in the professional world through the engagement of many lay people in the country's economy fabric. But close contact has become much rarer in villages,

neighborhoods, rural areas, and oases where we used to be much more present just twenty-five years ago. There is a real need to redeploy and reinvent these points of contact.

13. The need for a common project is felt throughout the diocese.

Each place, each person, each commitment has appeared to me like a pearl – precious and unique. Tunisia is beautiful! Our Church is beautiful! Let us give thanks to God for such a treasure! Despite uncertainties and fragilities, it is good to live here the joy of the Gospel – in the Church and in solidarity with the Tunisian people – to be “servants of hope” (the title of the joint pastoral letter of the bishops of North Africa in 2014), especially in this Jubilee year whose theme is precisely hope. Everywhere I heard the same longing: to see how these pearls might now form a beautiful jewel together. A desire to break down barriers, to have closer contact with society and with others in the Church. There is work to be done so that no pearl feels isolated – neither in the Church nor in society – so that we can “string these pearls” together, as one would make a bracelet, by acting more and more together, by drawing closer to one another, and closer also to the people around us.

Towards a new rootedness

14. Our Church needs a new rootedness. During these visits, the intuition I had expressed in the editorial of the *Flash*, our diocesan bulletin, in September 2024, has been confirmed. This rootedness is threefold: in God, in society, and “in one another.” This need is expressed differently in different places, but it is shared by all — and that is a very good thing. I have even heard from some of our Muslim friends, attentive to what we are living, this desire that we be even closer to society, in a spirit of collaboration and service. Let us welcome all this as a light from the Holy Spirit, as a criterion for reviewing our lives, and as a compass to guide our commitments.

15. Rootedness in God. I have sensed a great thirst for spiritual life, for a deepening of our encounter with God, who is “more inward to us than our innermost being and higher than the highest peak of our soul,” as

Saint Augustine says (*Confessions* III, 6, 11). This desire comes from God. Jesus says in the Gospel: “This is eternal life: that they may know you” (Jn 17:3). It is God himself who places in our hearts the psalmist’s cry: “My soul thirsts for you” (Ps 62:2). Without this rootedness in God — which must always come first — nothing is possible or lasting. Jesus says it clearly: only by remaining in Him can we bear fruit; apart from Him, we can do nothing (cf. Jn 15:4-5). When Jesus calls His disciples, the evangelist Mark specifies that it is first “to be with Him” (Mk 3:14) and then to send them “to proclaim the Good News.” Our first priority is to be “rooted and built up in Him” (Col 2:7), adjusting the means to make this possible. I have often heard expressed the need for deeper biblical formation, education in prayer and the interior life, spiritual accompaniment, and ongoing reflection on mission.

16. Rootedness in the Country. Here too, a deep longing is felt: to see how we might draw closer to the people and to society, finding ways to immerse ourselves more fully in the life of this land. It is a matter of “dwelling in the land” (cf. Ps 36:3), in the manner of Jesus, who came to “dwell among us” (Jn 1:14) to reveal to all the love and closeness of God. “Jesus is the model of this Gospel choice which brings us into the very heart of the people” (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, no. 269). It means living a real incarnation in today’s Tunisia — not superficially *or* “as strangers and guests” (cf. Eph 2:19) — but deeply and with perseverance. This involves learning about the culture, history, and Islam; learning the language for those who need it; and above all, being willing to discover what constitutes the other’s richness — what makes them live — so that we might marvel at it, value it, and let it nourish us as well: “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any virtue and if anything worthy of praise — think about these things” (Phil 4:8). True and profound encounters with others reveal, at the same time, the treasures that each of us carries. It is the experience of Elizabeth and Mary on the day of the Visitation (cf. Lk 1:39-56).

17. Rootedness “in one another”. This means making a true body together, fostering fraternal relationships, breaking down the walls that divide us — whether geographical, cultural, or of any other kind. This need is not only felt from one part of the diocese to another but also within our particular communities, within our houses... No one is an island, nor should anyone feel like one. There is real work to be done in

mutual hospitality, connection, and acceptance of differences. Diversity can often cause fear: coming from very different horizons, we do not always share the same ways of speaking, thinking, praying, eating, managing, resting... The temptation can be strong to withdraw into ourselves, or into small groups where the similar only meet the similar. Such a reflex always ends up being stifling — both for ourselves and for others. On the contrary, we must welcome diversity as an opportunity to grow and to bear witness to the Gospel. “See how they love one another!” In the third century, Tertullian observed in Carthage the amazement of the Romans before the fraternal charity that Christians strove to live. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (Jn 13:35). Diversity, when lived positively, gives a powerful witness to the catholicity of the Church, to the joy of living as brothers and sisters of the One who, in His very person, makes “one new humanity” (cf. Eph 2:15).

18. These three dimensions of rootedness are inseparable. Intimacy with God, closeness to society, and fraternal life are the three pillars from which the life of our Church must unfold. This is true in every age. In each particular moment, we must adjust the means to live them out. Without intimacy with God, nothing is possible. Without closeness to society, there is no incarnation. Without fraternal life, there is no witness. I like to see in these three realities the “streams of God” spoken of in the psalm — both promise and means of renewed fruitfulness: “You visit the earth and water it, you enrich it abundantly; the streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it. You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops” (Ps 65:9-10). Our Church, “like a tree planted by the waters” (Jer 17:8), must stretch its roots toward these three streams — a tree that has already borne much fruit throughout nineteen centuries of history and is called to continue.

***P*aths for moving forward**

19. To progress toward this new rootedness, I would like to propose ten paths. These are not exhaustive. Some will seem more important than others depending on the context. Let us welcome them as shared criteria for reviewing our lives and as a collective encouragement to move forward.

20. [1] Go out to meet our isolated or distant brothers and sisters. It is clear that many of our brothers and sisters do not take part in the life of our communities — whether because they do not know where we gather, because of difficulties in getting around, or simply by personal choice. I encourage us, with gentleness and without coercion, to go out and meet them: to invite, to witness to the joy of being Church together... and also to find ways to help those who wish to come but cannot, whatever the reason. Let us not remain isolated within our own communities. Let us make it our mission to ensure that they are open and welcoming realities. This implies caring about hospitality, being attentive to those who are alone or sick, to newcomers in our cities and neighborhoods... All this must be organized and also carried in prayer. I invite each parish to implement this dynamic in the way that seems most appropriate locally — not as a service offered by a few, but as a joyful responsibility carried by all.

21. [2] Live encounters with one another through regular sharing of life. Do we really know each other? Well enough? During my visits, I joined several gatherings of members of the same parish community. Many who lived near each other, sometimes for a long time, realized they knew very little about one another and learned much during these meetings. These experiences were beautiful — and necessary more often. It is not just about getting to know each other (though that is very important), but about sharing our lives, our faith, and our experiences in this country. I strongly encourage this! We need to nourish ourselves from one another's experiences, to rejoice in what God does through each of us. Each parish should find a way to put this into practice so that it gradually becomes a habit. This experience could also be lived more frequently between parishes and communities. The Jubilee year helped to promote this; it would be good to continue beyond it — through

pilgrimages, excursions, inter-parish days, events bringing together young people, families, choirs, catechumens from different places... to enjoy not only the joy of meeting but also of sharing life with one another.

22. [3] Build fraternity starting from the Word of God, meditated in small groups that reflect our diversity. “Love one another deeply, from the heart. You have been born anew, not from perishable but from imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Pet 1:22b-23). Of course, it is good and legitimate to meet occasionally in homogeneous groups — by language, age, nationality — but not without creating occasions for diverse encounters. Our Church must not organize itself into separate groups but must dare to encounter one another in our differences more boldly than we do now. That is why I suggest that every parish set up small fraternal groups, made up of people of diverse origins, languages, and ages, to pray, share, and nourish themselves together from the Word of God — weekly, monthly... each place can decide the appropriate rhythm. What matters is regularity and that these groups encourage mixing. The basis could simply be the readings of the coming Sunday. Let us build fraternity by experiencing how much we need one another to welcome and live the Word.

23. [4] Pray more in Arabic. In the diocese, Mass is regularly celebrated in French, English, Italian, occasionally in Spanish, Polish, German... and in Arabic. I have often heard the wish that Arabic be more present in our liturgies. Arabic is the language of Tunisia. Using it — even if it takes effort for those who are not Arabic speakers — is an essential way to carry the country more fully in our prayer and to help our brothers and sisters whose language is Arabic find their rightful place in our communities. I propose this principle: that in every Sunday Mass there be at least one element in Arabic — a song, a reading, a prayer intention, a part of the Eucharistic prayer, the Our Father... This requires some formation, not just for priests, and also appropriate resources. It would be good to create a diocesan hymnal in Arabic or “multilingual” form, where one can sing in different languages to the same melody. We must work toward the inculturation of our prayer, giving even more place to daily life than we do now. Universal prayers with no explicit reference to the life of the country would be incomplete — yet this is often the case. We need to improve this. Offering hospitality

to daily life in our prayer is essential if our Christian life is to become ever more incarnate.

24. [5] Place Jesus and “the least” at the center of our communities.

This is a Gospel law: a community is built up and radiates all the more when it strives to place Jesus and “the least,” with whom He chose to identify, at its center: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40). Luke’s Gospel gives a beautiful example (Lk 5:17-26): amid a disordered crowd, a “little one” of this world, carried on a stretcher, is lowered through the roof into the house. He finds himself at the center with Jesus, who forgives his sins and asks him to get up and walk. The crowd becomes one and gives glory to God: “All of them were astounded and glorified God, and they were filled with awe, saying, ‘We have seen remarkable things today’” (Lk 5:26). Those who are on the margins of the world are at the center with Jesus in the logic of the Kingdom. The Church serves the Kingdom of God all the more faithfully when it enters into this logic — by placing Jesus at the center, in His Word, in the Eucharist, and in the person of “the least.” This is not because the least are “better” than others, but because He Himself chose to identify with them in a privileged way. As we grow in this way of thinking, we realize that we are all “little ones,” and by letting God touch our littleness, we can grow as He desires. Each community should examine how it lives this reality and discern how to live it better. Who are the “least” whom God expects to be “at the center” with Him today? Avoiding any paternalistic attitude, let us be Church together according to the logic of the Kingdom. This requires a Gospel gaze on human fragility: “You taught your people that the righteous must be kind” (Wis 12:19). This truth must guide us in every encounter with human weakness. When we meet someone who suffers, “to be righteous” means seeing, like the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:25-37), how we might help to relieve this suffering. If we cannot, then we try to direct them to viable solutions — always respecting the law. Cardinal Duval, long-time Archbishop of Algiers, is reported to have said this wise phrase: “We must be upright, just, and good — always in that order.” To “be just” is also to sit with the person whenever possible and reflect with them — if they agree — on what is the compass of their life. Speaking with a brother or sister often helps to see more clearly, to avoid dangerous detours, to choose the path of good and follow it: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths,

where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls' ” (Jer 6:16).

25. [6] Create opportunities for encounters with Muslims. In the past, there used to be what were called “collective realities” in Tunis: evenings open to all — Christians and Muslims — who wished to address questions of common interest on social, cultural, or other themes, with a talk given by one of the participants followed by a debate and a meal. Such meetings deserve to be revived in Tunis or elsewhere. More broadly, let us seek to create “platforms of encounter,” allowing us to consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” (Heb 10:24). Many possibilities exist: book clubs, cultural outings, conferences, meals, film clubs, hikes, hospitality during feasts... “This dialogue of life is a place of exchange about society and its evolutions, about the world as it is and as it is becoming. We are engaged in societies that are changing. Let us help one another not to lose our identity but to maintain and promote, with joyful and confident hope, all the values of humanity that we hold in common” (CERNA, *Servants of Hope*, 3.3, December 1, 2014). Let us also look at how we can make better use of our houses. Too many of our spaces are underused, waiting for projects, new initiatives. Let us be creative and innovative — not seeking extraordinary things, but fostering this spirit of encounter.

26. [7] Show creativity by listening to the expectations of the people. “How do you see us? What do you expect from us?” When I asked these questions, three themes came up often: youth, culture, and the environment. Some examples: “Could you develop co-working spaces for young people — friendly and connected?” - “If only a community could be present in our city and offer cultural activities for young people — sports, films, music!” - “What can we do together to work for and raise awareness about environmental protection?” Such calls must challenge us — not only because “everything human concerns us”, as Pope Paul VI said (*Ecclesiam suam*, no. 101, August 6, 1964), but also because they come from the people. What are the expectations we hear around us? How can we become more attentive and seek to offer a contribution? These appeals are also precious indications for possible new foundations, in the regions where we were recently present or elsewhere. If, in the coming years, we could refound one, two, or three religious houses in Tunisia where we are no longer present, it would be

wonderful. I am glad that some religious families are considering it. But this requires people — and projects that respond to the expectations and needs of the people today. This is a fundamental challenge for spiritual life and for witnessing to the Gospel: “Each Christian generation must, for its own part, discover anew the Face of Christ in a way that corresponds to the questions and needs of the men and women of its time,” wrote the bishops of North Africa in 1979 (CERNA, *Le sens de nos rencontres*, 3.2, May 4, 1979).

27. [8] Live — and help others live — the joy of giving. “There is more happiness in giving than in receiving” (Acts 20:35). Every person is called to this joy of giving. Everyone is capable of giving, filled with the desire to make a gift of themselves. Jesus teaches us the path to joy through self-giving, “so that His joy may be in us and that our joy may be complete” (cf. Jn 15:11). The mission consists in entrusting the Gospel, which invites us to this experience in particular. Helping each person to give of themselves so that they may know this joy — whose source is God Himself — is essential. This means accepting to put ourselves more often in the position of the one who receives, able to value the best in the other, to marvel at it, to support it. Paul expresses this beautifully to the Christians of Corinth: “Not that we lord it over your faith; rather, we work with you for your joy” (2 Cor 1:24a). Are our houses, our parishes, our works, and the way we live our partnerships sufficiently rooted in this logic? Do they foster the commitment of each person? How can we progress? Let us be facilitators and joyful witnesses of the offering that each person desires and is capable of making of themselves.

28. [9] Take the means to form ourselves: Christian formation, languages, customs and traditions, culture, Islamology... The Diocesan Study Center, the Conference of Major Superiors, the Diocesan Library, and other initiatives already offer much. We are working to develop them, to make them more accessible and coordinated. This is a vast project. A two-month initial formation session will be launched this autumn — a beautiful innovation responding to a long-expressed need. Without solid formation, initial and ongoing, there can be no true rootedness. “It is our duty to take the means to form ourselves in the faith, to grow as disciples and to be able, in all circumstances, to ‘give an account of the hope that is in us, with gentleness and reverence’ (cf. 1 Pet 3:15-16)” (CERNA, *Servants of Hope*, 2.3). It also means learning “to encounter others by adopting the right attitude, appreciating them, and

accepting them as traveling companions without inner resistance. More than that, it means learning to discover Jesus in the face of others, in their voices, in their requests” (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, no. 91). Let us review our current formation experiences, evaluate needs in each community, and adjust our means accordingly.

29. [10] Carry one another — and carry the country — in prayer. The Diocese of the Algerian Sahara has, for several years, had an inspiring initiative: the “prayer wheel.” Each day of the month, one reality of the diocese prays for the whole diocese, and the whole diocese carries that reality in prayer. We can easily implement this at the parish or diocesan level, by asking a small group to coordinate it and establish a calendar. This is a way of bringing ourselves closer to one another and closer to the country. Scripture invites this: “Encourage one another and build one another up, as you are doing... Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances... Pray also for us” (1 Thess 5:11.17-18.25). More broadly, “in societies where the call to prayer resounds five times a day, we too are called to offer praise to God with perseverance, as children of God. Through quiet, persevering prayer, in the midst of the humanity whose daily life we share, we make present and make known the priceless glory of the mystery of God among all nations: Christ among you, the hope of glory!” (CERNA, *Servants of Hope*, 3.6).

"Like a tree planted by the waters"

30. It is not about doing things in haste, but about walking step by step, respecting God's timing. Each parish may choose, from among the ten proposed paths, those that seem most relevant in light of its current life. Let us care for the foundations together; let us work on the roots. Like a tree planted by the waters, “let us stretch our roots toward the stream” (Jer 17:8): toward the life in God, life with society, and life with one another. Intimacy with God, closeness to society, and fraternal life are the current toward which we must extend our roots — so that we may continue to grow as followers of Jesus, within the Church, and in companionship with the people of Tunisia.

31. I would like to conclude with a story that illustrates how we are called to walk. On December 3, 2014, I was in Sfax. I accompanied Father Yvon, who, as he did every Tuesday, visited the Errahma Center, where children with developmental disorders are welcomed. One little boy was fully focused on a plastic tray, carefully threading beads in neat rows. Sometimes he picked the wrong color, gently placed the bead back on the table, and chose another... Bead by bead, a beautiful pattern began to appear, filling him with pride and bringing joy to his teacher. His example moved me deeply, reminding me of my own daily life: when tasks are many, when they become heavy, when time or solutions are lacking, the right approach is the gentle patience that this little boy embodied so well. To welcome each person as a bead, to take time with them, to highlight their value, to help ensure that all the beads form a harmonious whole. To appreciate their diversity, to recognize their complementarity, to know how to wait, to bring them gradually closer together so that they create a beautiful image together—the image of Someone... That day, I felt more handicapped than that little boy as I thought of the many times when I acted differently... I thanked God for making me grow through him. The Spirit speaks to us through the wisdom of the poor and the little ones. May their example encourage and inspire us to move forward.

+ Nicolas, September 16, 2025
Solemnity of Saint Cyprian

A reading guide

INTRODUCTION [nn. 1-6]

- What struck us during the pastoral visit to our parish?
- What did we take away from it? What have we put into practice since that visit?
- “Building together”: how do we welcome this invitation?

SOME OBSERVATIONS [nn. 7-13]

- Do these observations surprise us? Do they challenge us?
- At what level do we feel concerned by these developments?
- What other significant changes do we notice where we live?

TOWARDS A NEW ROOTEDNESS [nn. 14-18]

- Do we feel rooted — in God, in this country, in one another?
- What can we do to become more deeply rooted today in these three dimensions?
- What would be the priority actions for this in our parish?

PATHWAYS FOR MOVING FORWARD [nn. 19-29]

[1] Reach out to our brothers and sisters who are isolated or distant (n. 20)

- Are we already doing this? In what ways?
- How can we organize ourselves as a community to do this?

[2] Live encounters with our brothers and sisters through regular sharing of life (n. 21)

- Are we already doing this? In what ways?
- What do we decide in order to live this sharing regularly?

[3] Build fraternity starting from the Word of God, meditated in small groups that reflect our diversity (n. 22)

- What divisions do we notice in our community?
- What do we decide to implement this proposed experience?

[4] Pray more in Arabic (n. 23)

- What place does the Arabic language have in the prayer life of our parish?
- What decisions can we make to strengthen that place?

[5] Place Jesus and the least at the center of our communities (n. 24)

- What are the main human vulnerabilities around us?
- What can we do to put the proposed approach into action?

[6] Develop opportunities for encounters with Muslims (n. 25)

- What opportunities for encounter with Muslims do we already have?
- What can we create to expand this experience?

[7] Show creativity by listening to people's expectations (n. 26)

- Youth, culture, environment: do we perceive these same calls?
- What other calls do we hear? What ideas do we have to respond?

[8] Live — and help others live — the joy of self-giving (n. 27)

- Self-giving: how do we live it? Do we help others to live it?
- Does our parish encourage commitment? How can we improve?

[9] Take the means to form ourselves (n. 28)

- What means are we currently using for formation?
- What training needs do we feel most strongly?

[10] Carry one another and the country in prayer (n. 29)

- Could we try the “prayer wheel” in our parish?
- What does living in Tunisia teach us about prayer?

“LIKE A TREE PLANTED BY THE WATERS” [nn. 30-31]

- What points do we consider most important for us in this letter? If we had to take just one first resolution — individually or as a community — what would it be?
- Have we already experienced that “the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the wisdom of the poor and the little ones”? Do we have a story to share in this regard?

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COVER ILLUSTRATION:

Bay of Carthage, from Byrsa Hill
Picture by Olivia OLIVO

