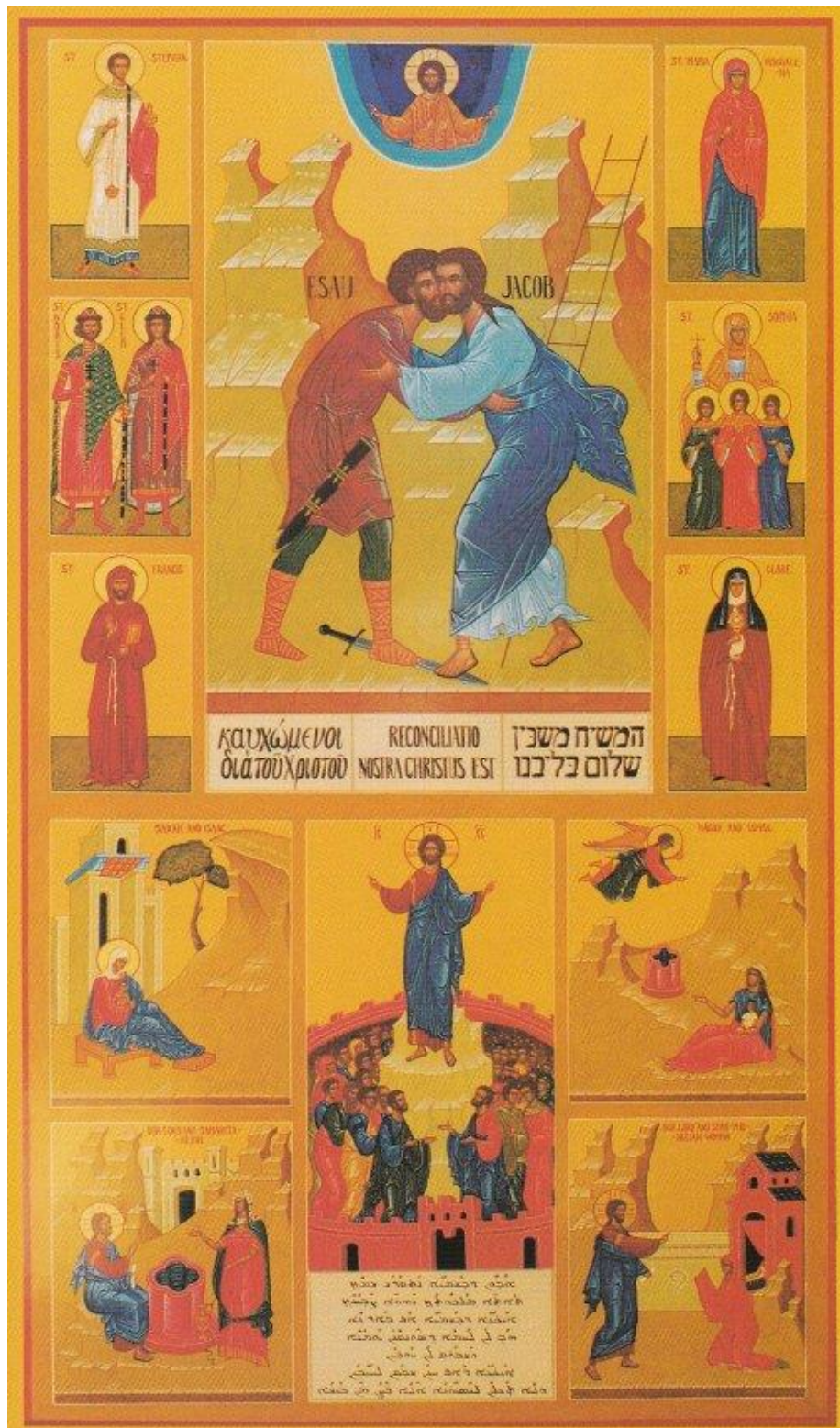


Peace Service

Give peace a chance.....let it begin with me



My peace I leave you, my peace I give you
Trouble not your hearts
My peace I leave you, my peace I give you
Be not afraid

Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa wrote this week of the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

The pain and dismay at what is happening is great. Once again we find ourselves in the midst of a political and military crisis. We have suddenly been catapulted into a sea of unprecedented violence. The hatred, which we have unfortunately already been experiencing for too long, will increase even more, and the ensuing spiral of violence will create more destruction. Everything seems to speak of death.

Yet, in this time of sorrow and dismay, we do not want to remain helpless. We cannot let death and its sting (1 Cor 15:55) be the only word we hear.

That is why we feel the need to pray, to turn our hearts to God the Father. Only in this way we can draw the strength and serenity needed to endure these hard times, by turning to Him, in prayer and intercession, to implore and cry out to God amidst this anguish.

Greet with the Sign of the Cross

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

A word of Praise Psalm 29

O give the Lord, you sons of God,
give the Lord glory and power;
give the Lord the glory of his name.
Adore the Lord in his holy court.

The Lord's voice resounding on the waters,
the Lord on the immensity of waters;
the voice of the Lord, full of power,
the voice of the Lord, full of splendour.

The Lord's voice shattering the cedars,
the Lord shatters the cedars of Lebanon;
he makes Lebanon leap like a calf
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

(The Lord's voice flashes flames of fire.)

The Lord's voice shaking the wilderness,
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh;
the Lord's voice rending the oak tree
and stripping the forest bare.

The God of glory thunders.
In his temple they all cry: "Glory!"
The Lord sat enthroned over the flood;
the Lord sits as king for ever.

The Lord will give strength to his people,
the Lord will bless his people with peace.

Penitential rite

I confess to almighty God and to you my brothers and sisters that I have greatly sinned in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary, ever Virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord, our God.

Opening prayer

O God of all justice and peace, we cry out to you in the midst of the pain and trauma of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land.

We bring this situation before you Lord and ask for a swift end to violence. Our hearts are breaking for the children and families in Israel and the Occupied Territories who have and continue to experience the unspeakable horror of attacks and war all around them. We pray for peace and ask that you will guide the hearts and minds of those in leadership.

We especially pray for those children who have been physically and emotionally injured, and for those who have lost loved ones, that you will provide the right people with the right resources to help them, and that you will protect each person.

Lord, we ask for your wisdom for all those involved and for the wider international community.

Be with those who need you in these days of suffering; we pray for people of all faiths - Jews, Muslims and Christians and for all people of the land.

While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace, we also call to you to bring justice and equity to the peoples. Guide us into your kingdom where all people are treated with dignity and honour as your children - for to all of us you are our Heavenly Father. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

First reading Philippians 4:4-9

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Reflect whilst reading the Holy Land Prayer

This prayer was prayed by the Bishops of the Holy Land Co-ordination at their annual meeting held in the region in 2017.

O God of our ancestors,
you gave us the earth to make our home
so that all peoples may live together in harmony.
We have allowed our sad divisions to grow,
causing discord and fear of one another.

We have scarred the land through our pride.
May we learn from the past
and remember all those who have suffered,
all those who have lost their lives.

O God of today and every day,
you walk alongside us in our daily lives.
We seek a place to make our home,
where we can live in peace and fulfilment,
and our families grow in love and prosperity.

May we raise up new foundations,
reach out to our neighbours
and welcome the stranger in our midst.

O God, guide our steps
to a future beyond our hopes.

Solutions cannot just be drawn like lines on paper
but through the changing of hearts and minds.

Open our eyes to see
that while we suffer, we may also inflict suffering on others;
that in trying to protect ourselves
we may be leaving less space for trust.

God of mercy and compassion
we place in your hands
this land and all its people
guide and support all those
who seek to establish that justice
which alone ensures true and lasting peace.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen

First reading Matthew 5:38-48

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The Gospel of the Lord

Quiet reflection (Extract Nonviolence: a style of politics for peace - message for the 50th world day of peace from Pope Francis)

Jesus himself lived in violent times. Yet he taught that the true battlefield, where violence and peace meet, is the human heart: for “it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come” (Mk 7:21). But Christ’s message in this regard offers a radically positive approach. He unfailingly preached God’s unconditional love, which welcomes and forgives. He taught his disciples to love their enemies (cf. Mt 5:44) and to turn the other cheek (cf. Mt 5:39). When he stopped her accusers from stoning the woman caught in adultery (cf. Jn 8:1-11), and when, on the night before he died, he told Peter to put away his sword (cf. Mt26:52), Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence. He walked that path to the very end, to the cross, whereby he became our peace and put an end to hostility (cf. Eph 2:14-16). Whoever accepts the Good News of Jesus is able to acknowledge the violence within and be healed by God’s mercy, becoming in turn an instrument of reconciliation. In the words of Saint Francis of Assisi: “As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that you have greater peace in your hearts”.

To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence. As my predecessor Benedict XVI observed, that teaching “is realistic because it takes into account that in the world there is too much violence, too much injustice, and therefore that this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with more love, with more goodness. This ‘more’ comes from God”. He went on to stress that: “For Christians, nonviolence is not merely tactical behaviour but a person’s way of being, the attitude of one who is so convinced of God’s love and power that he or she is not afraid to tackle evil with the weapons of love and truth alone. Love of one’s enemy constitutes the nucleus of the ‘Christian revolution’”. The Gospel command to love your enemies (cf. Lk 6:27) “is rightly considered the magna carta of Christian nonviolence. It does not consist in succumbing to evil..., but in

responding to evil with good (cf. Rom 12:17-21), and thereby breaking the chain of injustice”.

“All of us want peace. Many people build it day by day through small gestures and acts; many of them are suffering, yet patiently persevere in their efforts to be peacemakers”. In 2017, may we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words and deeds, and to becoming nonviolent people and to building nonviolent communities that care for our common home. “Nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer. Everyone can be an artisan of peace”.

Intercessions

Father of mercies, we intercede for the 1.1 million people in northern Gaza who have been warned by Israel to flee imminent bombardment. Please help them to take their families where they can be safe and access food, water, medical care and other vital provisions despite the total blockade on the region. We also pray for Israeli hostages, other victims of Hamas attacks and all who are suffering.

Lord we pray R/ Bring your peace and end this conflict.

Sovereign God, we pray for political, military and religious leaders involved in this conflict to show genuine willingness to work towards a better future for all Palestinians, Jews and others living in the region. We long for dignity, mercy, justice, peace and love to triumph so please grant wisdom and courage to those with authority across the world working to end this war. For Christ's sake. Amen.

Lord we pray R/ Bring your peace and end this conflict.

God of truth, we pray Hamas to be brought to justice. We pray for an end of terrorism and terrorist groups across the world. In your name. Amen.

Lord we pray R/ Bring your peace and end this conflict.

Lord, we remember Jewish people in the UK and elsewhere who are experiencing an upsurge of antisemitic incidents, resulting in schools being closed to protect children. Please help the police and community groups to bring offenders to justice and protect and reassure Jewish people. In Your mercy. Amen.

Lord we pray R/ Bring your peace and end this conflict.

We pray that the church might be a beacon of hope for the people around through their testimony in words and actions.

Lord we pray R/ Bring your peace and end this conflict.

We pray that the Lord will comfort those who have lost loved ones, or who are waiting to hear about missing family and friends.

Lord we pray R/ Bring your peace and end this conflict.

We pray also that the international community will work towards lasting peace in the Holy Land.

Lord we pray R/ Bring your peace and end this conflict.

Almighty God, we continue to bring before you the war in Ukraine, now 600 days old. As fresh Russian military offensives are launched in the south-eastern Donetsk region please grant success to those trying to bring about peace talks. Help those engaged in humanitarian efforts to help the tens of thousands who are refugees, dispossessed, wounded and vulnerable in other ways.

Lord we pray R/ Bring your peace and end this conflict.

We pray for our own intentions Let us pray to the Lord: **R/**

Hail Mary

In a moment of silence, let us place before the Lord our own thirst for peace

Father, as the Spirit descended like a dove on Jesus, your Son, at his baptism, so grant that the same Dove of Peace may open up paths to a just peace for all today. To you we make these our prayers, in the words that you gave us. **Our Father**

Sign of Peace

Transfer of Blessed Sacrament to the Altar

Concluding prayer

Pour on us, O Lord, the Spirit of your love, and in your kindness make those you have nourished by this one heavenly Bread one in mind and heart. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

The Blessing

A Blessing for Peace John O'Donohue Benedictus

As the fever of the day calms toward twilight
May all that is strained in us come to ease.
We pray for all who suffered violence today,
May an unexpected serenity surprise them.
For those who risk their lives each day for peace,
May their hearts glimpse providence at the heart of history.
That those who make riches from war might hear in their dreams the cries of the
lost.
That we might see through our fear of each other
A new vision to heal...
That those who enjoy the privilege of peace
Might not forget their tormented brothers and sisters.
That the wolf might lie down with the lamb,
That our swords be beaten into plowshares
And no hurt or harm be done anywhere along the holy mountain.

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. Amen.