
PRAYER AND ACTION FOR PEACE



On Sunday, October 7, our country officially entered the war against terrorism. This raises serious questions for us: What can I do, what can we do, what ought we do in such a situation?

PRAYING FOR PEACE

I am certain that as soon as war was declared everyone turned to prayer. I am deeply moved by such gestures. Only God can give us lasting Peace. I call on all my brothers and sisters to increase their prayers for peace, to pray alone, as a family, a parish, a community. I ask my brother priests to offer Mass for peace once a week, on ferial days, either the Mass for Peace or Mass in Time of War, as proposed by our holy liturgy. Just consider the power and daring of these prayers: [In the Roman Missal... New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1985, pp. 902-905]

« God of power and mercy, you destroy war and put down earthly pride, banish violence from our midst and wipe away our tears, that we may all deserve to be called your sons and daughters. »

« God our Father, maker and lover of peace, to know you is to live, and to serve you is to reign. All our faith is in your saving help; protect us from people of violence and keep us safe from weapons of hate. »

« God our Father, you reveal that those who work for peace will be called your sons. Help us work without ceasing for that justice which brings true and lasting peace. »

« Lord, you guide all creation with fatherly care. As you have given all people one common origin, bring them together peacefully into one family and keep them united in brotherly love. »

« God of perfect peace, violence and cruelty can have no part with you. May those who are at peace with one another hold fast to the good will that unites them; may those who are enemies forget their hatred and be healed. »

I especially asked the Blessed Sacrament Sisters to pray for peace in the world, and they agreed that every Saturday prayers will be offered for this intention. The usual 9 o'clock Mass will be offered for this intention, also.

I invite you to ask for the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To all of you who can, I ask that you offer five decades of the rosary for peace. In our diocese, in St-Martin-de-Restigouche Parish, Mary is invoked as Our Lady of Peace. I therefore asked the people of St-Martin to pray the rosary once a week for the gift of peace.

The Franciscans left their imprint in Southern Victoria: I have therefore asked the people there that Sunday Mass St. Francis' Prayer for Peace ("Lord, make me a channel of your peace") be recited at every Mass.

Everyone in the diocese will find the most suitable way of praying. May the Lord answer our prayer. « Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be called sons and daughters of God. »

GESTURES OF PEACE

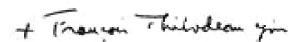
Here, too, we can find the best way of promoting peace: a friendly gesture, forgiveness, helping others, a gesture of respect, a friendly word. Such gestures help in creating a civilisation of peace.

On behalf of the Canadian Bishops and the Catholic Organisation of Development and Peace, I offer you a very special gesture, at this time in the history of humankind: aid to the seven million Afghan refugees. This is what Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte has to say, on the subject: « *More than four million people are living in appalling conditions in makeshift camps along the border, and at least three million more have fled their homes inside Afghanistan. This is becoming a tragedy of enormous proportions. It is one of the largest forced migrations in history, [...] These people are victims of circumstances beyond their control. And with winter approaching the situation is sure to get much worse. Help must be sent now.* » [Communique of Development and Peace, October 4, 2001]

Development and Peace has already started sending help to the refugees through Caritas International, the Catholic Church's official aid agency. As you are able to, please send your donations directly to Development and Peace, 10 St. Mary Street, Suite 420, Toronto, ON, M4Y 1P9.

BEING PEACEMAKERS

When Pope VI visited the United Nations in New York, October 4, 1965, he begged the members of the Organisation, « *Never again brother against brother; no more war! And these great words of President John Kennedy: 'Mankind will have to put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind.' No more war, no more war! It is peace that must guide the destiny of nations and of all humankind, and peace is not created only through political means and the balance of power and local interests. It is built on the spirit, the ideas, the works of peace. Will the world ever change its particularist and bellicose mentality which have so far moulded so much of its history? It is hard to believe, but it is easy to state unequivocally that we must resolutely set out a new history, a peaceful history, one which will be truly human, the very history that God has promised to all people of good will.* »



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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