

Invitation from Pope Francis: "I have decided to proclaim for the whole Church Sept. 7th, the vigil of the birth of Mary, Queen of Peace, a day of fasting and prayer for peace in Syria, the Middle East, and throughout the world, and I also invite each person, including our fellow Christians, followers of other religions and all people of good will, to participate, in whatever way they can, in this initiative."

"We will gather together in prayer, in a spirit of penitence, to ask from God this great gift [of peace] for the beloved Syrian nation and for all the situations of conflict and violence in the world"

There will be a gathering for prayer, fasting and penance in St Peter's Square in Rome between 19.00 - 24.00 on Saturday, 7 September 2013



Words of peace

I appeal strongly for peace, an appeal which arises from the deep within me. How much suffering, how much devastation, how much pain has the use of arms carried in its wake in that martyred country, especially among civilians and unarmed! I think of the many children who will not see the light of the future! With utmost firmness I condemn the use of chemical weapons: I tell you that those terrible images from recent days are burned into my mind and heart. There is a judgment of God and of history upon our actions which are inescapable! Never has the use of violence brought peace in its wake. War begets war, violence begets violence.

With all my strength, I ask each party in this conflict to listen to the voice of their own conscience, not to close themselves in solely on their own interests, but rather to look at each other as brothers and decisively and courageously to follow the path of encounter and negotiation, and so overcome blind conflict. With similar vigour I exhort the international community to make every effort to promote clear proposals for peace in that country without further delay, a peace based on dialogue and negotiation, or the good of the entire Syrian people.

Pope Francis, Angelus, St Peter's Square, 1 September 2013

Lord Jesus Christ, who are called the Prince of Peace, who are yourself our peace and reconciliation, who so often said, "Peace to you," grant us peace. Make all men and women witnesses of truth, justice, and brotherly love. Banish from their hearts whatever might endanger peace. Enlighten our rulers that they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace. May all peoples of the earth become as brothers and sisters. May longed-for peace blossom forth and reign always over us all.

Blessed John XXIII

Prayers

A Prayer for Reconciliation in Syria

God of history,
 Witness of the struggles within families;
 we pray for the divided family of Syria
 as brother fights against brother,
 and sister rejects sister.

We pray for those whose love of neighbour
 has been destroyed in the bitterness of
 enmity.
 May fear be submerged in compassion.
 May distrust be diluted by hope,
 as a vision of peace illuminates
 darkened minds and hate-filled hearts.
 We pray in the name of Christ,
 our source of light and love. Amen.

A Prayer for Peace in Syria

Spirit of wisdom and grace,
the power of truth and judgement;
we pray for all who are working for peace
in the tangled conflict of Syria today.
For international leaders holding a thread of
control,
for the politicians holding a thread of power,
for the religious leaders holding a thread of
authority,
for the fighters holding a thread of influence,
and the citizens clinging to a thread of hope.
Bring unity through the untangled order of
justice.
Bring reconciliation through truthful dialogue.
Bring new life through patient diplomacy,
determined mediation and courageous peace-
making.
We pray in the name of Christ,
our source of inspiration and confidence.
Amen.

A Prayer for the Victims of the Syrian conflict

We pray for those damaged by the
fighting in Syria.
To the wounded and injured:
Come Lord Jesus.
To the terrified who are living in shock:
Come Lord Jesus
To the hungry and homeless,
refugee and exile:
Come Lord Jesus
To those bringing humanitarian aid:
Give protection Lord Jesus
To those administering medical assistance:
Give protection Lord Jesus.
To those offering counsel and care:
Give protection Lord Jesus.
For all making the sacrifice of love:
Give the strength of your Spirit
and the joy of your comfort.
In the hope of Christ we pray. Amen.

Three prayers from Church of England website

Prayer for peace in Syria

God of Compassion,
Hear the cries of the people of Syria,
Bring healing to those suffering from
the violence,
Bring comfort to those mourning the dead,
Strengthen Syria's neighbours in their care and
welcome for refugees,
Convert the hearts of those who have
taken up arms,
And protect those committed to peace.

God of Hope,
Inspire leaders to choose peace over violence and
to seek reconciliation with enemies,
Inspire the Church around the world with
compassion for the people of Syria,
And give us hope for a future of peace built on
justice for all.

We ask this through Jesus Christ,
Prince of Peace and Light of the World,
Amen. *US Catholic Bishops' Conference*

Prayer for Syria and Middle East

We come to you, God Creator.
You are the source of life and beauty and power.
Your son Jesus is the way of faith and
hope and love.
Your Spirit is the fire of love, the fount of
wisdom, the bond of unity.
You call us at all times to be people of the
beatitudes,
Witnesses to the Gospel of peace and love and
forgiveness.
You call us at this time, when war and rumours of
war, weigh heavily on the peoples of Syria
Their lives are already broken by suffering
and violence.

We renew our acceptance of your call.

*We promise to work:
To bring the light of the Gospel to those living in
darkness,
To bring the hope of the Gospel to those living in
despair,
To bring the healing of the Gospel to the lonely,
the disadvantaged, the marginalized,
And to bring the peace of the Gospel to a divided
world.
Amen.*

Pax Christi Blessed are the Peacemakers

Blessed are you peacemakers,
who say no to war as a means
to peace.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
who offer hope and healing.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
who care and comfort.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
who help find answers.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
who welcome, encourage and inspire.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
who see the good in others.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
who never give up.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
who give and give and give.

(Fr Paul Milanowski - adapted)

Action ideas

- Consider setting aside time for prayer and fasting on 7 September to join in solidarity with Pope Francis and others around the world in praying for peace in Syria and the wider Middle East. You may want to make this a weekly commitment. Ensure that prayers for peace for Syria are included in your regular Mass in the weeks ahead.
- Sunday 8 September is the day of prayer against the arms trade - a trade that has contributed so much to the violence we now see in Syria. Use one of these prayers of intercession on 8 September

We pray for each of the women, children and men who have been killed or injured by weapons sold by companies more concerned with making money than with making peace in our troubled world. May we, who witness on our television screens glimpses of their suffering, demand that our government curb the arms trade. Lord hear us...

We pray for the people who finance, produce and sell weapons. May your compassion touch their hearts and minds and redirect their skills and talents to life-giving projects. Lord hear us...

- Join us in London on 9 September for a candle-lit vigil at the London Excel Centre where we will hold a vigil on the eve of the world's largest arms fair (DSEi). We will be joined by Bishop Thomas McMahon of Brentwood Diocese. Meet in Tidal Basin Road, Royal Victoria DLR at 6.30 and walk to Excel. The vigil will run from 7 - 8 pm and is part of a series of actions www.stopthearmsfair.org.uk
- Engage with your local member of parliament about the UK's involvement in the global arms trade. Talk with them about the need to develop creative and hope-giving policies that use imagination and courage and do not rely and fall back on force, violence and warfare as a means of solving problems

Prayer of St Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your Peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not
so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.