

Gaza needs prayer and action now more than ever

Bishop Nicholas Hudson, Chair of the International Affairs department of the Bishops' Conference, has added his voice to those of Pope Leo, the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, and Caritas Internationalis on the situation in Gaza.

“The Latin and Greek Orthodox Patriarchs of Jerusalem issued a joint statement on Gaza on 26 August. They express profound respect for the clergy and nuns of the two Christian compounds in the neighbourhoods of Gaza City – the Latin parish of the Holy Family and the Greek Orthodox parish of St Porphyrius. For, in the face of forced displacement, they have chosen to remain and continue to care for the vulnerable, disabled, and all who shelter in their compounds, any attempt to flee south being ‘nothing less than a death sentence’. I would wish to amplify the Patriarchs’ denunciation of the Israeli government’s actions, of which they say, ‘This is not the right way. There is no reason to justify the deliberate and forcible mass displacement of civilians.’

“I am acutely concerned for Fr Gabriel Romanelli and the community of the Holy Family parish in Zeytoun. Fr Romanelli has worked tirelessly to protect the people sheltering in the parish – especially the children who, he says, are resigned to the horror of what is going on around them. He prays with them and seeks to distract them from the violence. He comforts all who shelter at Holy Family with the sacraments of the Church and the reassurance that Christ holds them and suffers with them. We need now to redouble our prayers for all who remain there.

“I add my voice to those of the Patriarchs in denouncing the Israeli government’s actions – that this approach is wrong; that it is impossible to justify the deliberate and forcible mass displacement of civilians. For, as the Patriarchs say, ‘There can be no future based on captivity, displacement of Palestinians or revenge.’

“No nation can find lasting security while denying justice and integral human rights to its neighbour. This war must end now. The hostages held by Hamas, living and dead, must be returned to their suffering families; and the two million Gazans, ravaged by hunger and bombardment, must receive the food and medical attention they desperately need.

“I commend the statement issued by Caritas Internationalis on 25 August that speaks plainly, from its work on the ground, of the realities of this conflict, describing what it sees in Gaza as ‘a deliberate assault on human dignity and the collapse of moral order, a failure of leadership, responsibility, and humanity itself.’

“I appeal to our Catholic community to pray at Mass and in our homes this weekend, 30-31 August, for an end to this war, and peace, with justice for both Palestinians and Israelis.”

Praying for Mary's Intercession for Peace in the Holy Land

Our Lady, Queen of Palestine, extend your hand over the Holy Land and over all who live there: Jews, Muslims, Druze and Christians, Palestinians, Israelis, migrant workers and refugees.

Our Lady, intercede for us all and especially for the Church, the Body of your Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord.

We have been sent to preach Good News to all in the land that is yours and His, the land of the patriarchs, kings, prophets, apostles and of the first community formed to walk in the way of your Son, the Mother Church of Jerusalem.

This mission needs the courage and the perseverance, the wisdom and the faith that were yours, pray for us.

On your knees He, who was your Lord and Master, learnt to speak and to pray, to act and to obey.

We ask you to teach us to speak and to pray, to act and to obey today in the land called to be holy.

In the midst of war and hatred, walls, occupation and discrimination, fear and rejection, instruct us how to be instruments of justice and peace, pardon and reconciliation.

We affirm with you that he is our peace.

Show us the way to incarnate in our life as Church both fidelity to your Son and an embracing love for all in this land, especially for those who are the poorest and the most excluded, the homeless, the refugees, the prisoners, those who are maltreated, oppressed and are victims of injustice.

Our Lady, Queen of Palestine, you are our mother, given to us by your Son on the Cross.

With you, we are called to be witnesses to the Resurrection that already heralds His Kingdom.

Modelling ourselves on you, we ask Him to anoint us as Spirit filled proclaimers of the Good News that He has vanquished death by His death on the Cross and has given life to those in the tombs.

May we, members of His Body the Church, be living signs that point to the Kingdom that is already among us.

Amen.

Mother Mary, Queen of Palestine, pray for us.

Father David Neuhaus, S.J.