

THE WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR PEACE  
"THIRST FOR PEACE: FAITHS AND CULTURES IN DIALOGUE"

*Assisi*  
*Tuesday, 20 September 2016*

Appeal

Men and women of various religions, we gather as pilgrims in the city of Saint Francis. Thirty years ago in 1986, religious representatives from all over the world met here at the invitation of Pope John Paul II. It was the first such solemn gathering that brought so many together, in order to affirm the indissoluble bond between the great good of peace and an authentic religious attitude. From that historic event, a long pilgrimage was begun which has touched many cities of the world, involving many believers in dialogue and in praying for peace. It has brought people together without denying their differences, giving life to real interreligious friendships and contributing to the resolution of more than a few conflicts. This is the spirit that animates us: to bring about encounters through dialogue, and to oppose every form of violence and abuse of religion which seeks to justify war and terrorism. And yet, in the years that have followed, numerous populations have nonetheless been painfully wounded by war. People do not always understand that war harms the world, leaving in its wake a legacy of sorrows and hate. In war, everyone loses, including the victors.

We have prayed to God, asking him to grant peace to the world. We recognize the need to pray constantly for peace, because prayer protects the world and enlightens it. God's name is peace. The one who calls upon God's name to justify terrorism, violence and war does not follow God's path. War in the name of religion becomes a war against religion itself. With firm resolve, therefore, we reiterate that violence and terrorism are opposed to an authentic religious spirit.

We have heard the voice of the poor, of children and the younger generations, of women and so many brothers and sisters who are suffering due to war. With them let us say with conviction: No to war! May the anguished cry of the many innocents not go unheeded. Let us urge leaders of nations to defuse the causes of war: the lust for power and money, the greed of arms' dealers, personal interests and vendettas for past wrongs. May there be a greater commitment to eradicating the underlying causes of conflicts: poverty, injustice and inequality, the exploitation of and contempt for human life.

May a new season finally begin, in which the globalized world can become a family of peoples. May we carry out our responsibility of building an authentic peace, attentive to the real needs of individuals and peoples, capable of preventing conflicts through a cooperation that triumphs over hate and overcomes barriers through encounter and dialogue. Nothing is lost when we effectively enter into dialogue. Nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer. Everyone can be an artisan of peace. Through this gathering in Assisi, we resolutely renew our commitment to be such artisans, by the help of God, together will all men and women of good will.