

PRAYER FOCUS FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER

Prayer for Peace in Our World

REFLECTION ONE

Remembering the century since the outbreak of World War One, and the wars that continue to this very day, Pope Francis made this heartfelt plea:

"Please stop, I ask you with all my heart, it's time to stop. Stop, please. Brothers and sisters, never war, never war!" The Pope continued. "I am thinking above all of children, who are deprived of the hope of a worthwhile life, of a future. Dead children, injured children, mutilated children, orphaned children; children whose toys are things left over from war, children who can't smile anymore..." (July 28, 2014)



Meanwhile, it is estimated that 203 million people have died in wars in the 20th century.

(Matthew White, Historical Atlas of the Twentieth Century, 2010)

- ❖ Each one of those people has a name, a family, a life story...So many lives lost and the bloodshed continues....
- ❖ We remember Jesus's words to us: ***Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.*** (Matthew, 5:9)
- ❖ We hear too the anguish of Jesus in his dream of peace: ***Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.*** (Luke 13. 34)

Pope Francis, spoke the following words in his meeting with the Presidents of Israel, Palestine and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on June 8, 2014.

"Peacemaking calls for **courage**, much more so than **warfare**. It calls for the **courage** to say YES to **encounter** and NO to **conflict**: YES to **dialogue** and NO to **violence**; YES to **negotiations** and NO to **hostilities**; YES to **respect for agreements** and NO to **acts of provocation**; YES to **sincerity** and NO to **duplicity**. All of this takes courage, it takes strength and tenacity".

He continued with this prayer and may we join with him during this month.

**Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace;
enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister.
Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us
to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace,
our trepidation into confident trust, and our quarrelling into forgiveness.
Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance
we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation.
In this way may peace triumph at last, and may the words 'division', 'hatred' and 'war'
be banished from the heart of every man and woman.**

REFLECTION TWO

As we take time to recall that it is one hundred years since the beginning of World War One, during which sixteen million persons died and twenty million were wounded, let us pray this month for **peace in our world**. Let us take hope that reconciliation is possible and that former enemies can become friends. These words, engraved in the ANZAC monument at Gallipoli by the Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1934, speak of this hope that goes beyond the enmity of war.



***Those heroes who shed their blood and lost their lives,
you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace.
There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie
side by side in this country of ours.
You, the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries wipe away your tears;
your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace.
After having lost their lives on this land they become our sons as well.***

However, in the world of 2014, with the increasing violence and warfare throughout the world, there is a different story, in places like Gaza, Israel, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Nigeria, Ukraine and the list goes on

Let our prayer for this month include this prayer of Pope Francis:

“Now, Lord, help us!
Grant us peace, teach us peace,
and guide us toward peace.
Open our eyes and our hearts
and grant us the courage to say:
'no more war!'
With war all is destroyed!
Instill in us the courage to perform
concrete actions to build peace....
Make us willing to listen to the cry of our citizens
who ask that our arms be transformed
into instruments of peace,
our fears to trust
and our tensions to forgiveness”.



(Sunday, 13 July, 2104, Pope Francis' prayer for peace in the Holy Land)