



Letter to the People of God

Of H.L. Mgr. Mario Grech

Bishop of Gozo

PRAYERS FOR PEACE IN SYRIA

While these days our ears receive pleasant Christmas music and singing, our eyes behold the blinking lights decorating the streets, and our noses appreciate the smell of good food, the people of Aleppo in Syria have their ears deafened by artillery fire, their eyes closed in expectation of falling bombs and their noses suffocated by the smell of death! The news and scenes we are receiving about the war in Syria are terrifying; but more frightening is the weakness of the international structures that are in place for the purpose of guaranteeing protection of human rights and peace – but, in regard to Syria, these seem to have lost their bite.

A few days ago, Pope Francis did something unusual: he wrote a personal letter to the President of Syria Bashar Al Assad beseeching him for cessation of the battle that is the cause of so much suffering and destruction of innocent lives. While condemning all forms of extremism and terrorism, the Pope appeals for civilians to be protected and for humanitarian assistance to be provided, because these people are starving.

What a strong contrast to our own reality, where we don't just have peace but there are some possessed by the magic of commerce and are in a position to waste and discard!

Therefore, while I augur that we all appreciate the festive and serene atmosphere we have in our country, I invite the People of God to practise solidarity with these our Syrian brethren by offering prayers for peace in Syria. For this purpose, I encourage the Christian communities to devote special prayers for a cease-fire in Syria in our churches from today to the first day of January, when the Church celebrates the Day of Peace. As the Pope wrote in his Message for the forthcoming Day of Peace, violence is overcome by desisting from being violent – “Let charity and non-violence be the way we treat each other in interpersonal relationships, both social and international”.

Given from the Bishop's Curia, Victoria, Gozo, today Friday 16th December 2016.

✠ **Mario Grech**
Bishop of Gozo

Prayer for Peace in Syria

Merciful God, listen to the moan of the Syrian People,
Give shelter to whoever is a victim of violence;
Console those who weep for their dead relatives;
Strengthen the will of the neighbouring countries to receive the refugees;
Change the heart of those who use destructive armaments;
And protect those working for peace.

God of hope, inspire governments
To choose peace instead of violence,
To seek ways of forgiveness for the enemies;
Enkindle in all the Church compassion for the Syrian People
And fill us with hope of a serene future
Built on justice for all humankind.
We pray this through Christ our Lord,
The Prince of Peace and Light of the World.

Amen.