

October 8, 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

PRAY FOR PEACE

On the flight back to Rome from Korea, Pope Francis expressed deep sadness over all the conflicts in the world today. He told journalists on the papal plane, "Today we are in a world at war everywhere. A man said to me, 'Father, we are in World War III, but spread out in small pockets everywhere.' He was right." (*The Tablet*, August 21, 2014)

Then, on a visit to Italy's largest military cemetery located in Redipuglia to visit the graves of 100,000 soldiers killed during World War I (60,000 of them unidentified), Pope Francis call war "madness." "Even today, one can speak of a third war, one fought piecemeal with crimes, massacres, destruction." (*BBC News Europe*, September 13, 2014)

Pope Francis has decried on several occasions the idea of a war being fought in God's name. This is a pointed reference to Islamic terrorists who justify their militancy in the name of Allah. At a private meeting with Jewish leaders on September 17th, the Pope compared the current attacks against Christians to the suffering of the Jews in the past. "He said first it was your turn and now it is our turn." The Jewish delegation found it shocking that the world community would allow ISIS to exterminate the ancient Christian communities of Iraq and Syria. (*International Business Times*, September 22, 2014)

Pope Francis said that we should be frightened by the level of cruelty witnessed today. "Today, children do not count. Once they spoke about a conventional war, today that does not count. I'm not saying that conventional wars were good things, but today a bomb is sent and it kills the innocent, the guilty, children, women. They kill everybody. No! We must stop and think a little about the level of cruelty at which we have arrived. This should frighten us." (*The Tablet*, August 21, 2014).

The Pope's Prayer for Peace

"Lord, God of Peace, we have tried so many times and over so many years to resolve our conflicts by our own powers and by the force of our arms. How many moments of hostility and darkness have we experienced; how much blood has been shed; how many lives have been shattered; how many hopes have been buried ... But our efforts have been in vain.

Now Lord, come to our aid! Grant us peace, teach us peace, and guide our steps in the way of peace. Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say: "Never again war!" "With war everything is lost." Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.

Renew our hearts and minds, so that the word which always brings us together will be "brother", and our way of life will always be that of "Shalom, Peace, Salaam." Amen."