

From Your Pastor

Pray for Peace in the Holy Land

The Scripture Readings next Sunday will take us to Jerusalem. Our observance of Palm Sunday will have us celebrating again the Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. By next week's end we will have shared in the Lord's passion and death, awaiting his resurrection. Sadly, peace does not reign in Jerusalem today. In fact, peace has not been a true part of life there for a very long time.

The following is a statement of the Holy See on the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was made by Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, on November 8, 2007, just before the International Peace Conference in Annapolis. Let us pray for peace in Jerusalem and in the Holy Land.

"...At the heart of the matter remains the problem of injustice. To postpone endlessly the resolution of this conflict by a refusal to negotiate and to compromise reasonably, by indecision or by a willingness to maintain the status quo, is to perpetuate injustice. Whether such a mindset is deliberate or not does not alter the reality on the ground, namely, innocent people and entire families on all sides continue to suffer terribly and infrastructures are destroyed even before they are ready for use.

"The centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the continuing instability in the Middle East and its impact on the whole international community cannot be ignored. Solving it will greatly contribute to ending other questions in the region and to greater understanding among the peoples of the world.

"In this regard, the Holy See remains convinced that the two-state solution has the best chance to settle the crisis. Bringing this solution to reality is not the primary responsibility of the Quartet [the United Nations, the European Union, Russia, and the United States], but of the parties directly concerned and the neighboring countries who have immediate interests in the whole question. While the international community can only do so much in providing all the support needed to bring together those in conflict, it is indispensable that the parties must set aside the pretense of peacemaking and start full negotiations on the two-state solution. The Holy See earnestly hopes that the international conference planned for the end of this month may move the peace process towards this end, towards the

definition of a realistic accord that the parties will be determined to implement.

"We all know that this is much easier said than done. The accumulated acts of injustice and violence across decades have resulted in deeply rooted recriminations and rage among peoples in the area, fueling the vicious cycle of violent retaliations. In a state of constant alarm and permanent anguish, peoples resort to forming communities in mutual isolation. This state of things makes a lasting solution much more difficult to find, because it is antithetical to building relationships and mutual trust which are necessary in any peace process and peaceful coexistence.

"The Holy See encourages groups within both the Israeli and Palestinian civil societies which, sharing the same loss and fear, reach out to one another to offer and receive forgiveness and reconciliation. We appeal not only to authorities, but to the entire Israeli, Palestinian and neighboring peoples, to consider how much this disposition of mutual empathy can bridge their otherwise mutually exclusive and contradictory claims which have so far prevented talks to come to fruition. Let us learn from peoples who have succeeded in putting an end to their strife. Patient dialogue, persevering trust, the overcoming of religious and cultural prejudices, and a manifest desire of entire communities for peace have brought the restoration of harmony in many countries previously devastated by hatred and violence. For this reason, the Holy See remains convinced that the different religious confessions in the Holy Land can make a significant contribution to resolving the conflict.

"Finally, in the hope that the many problems of the region will at last be resolved by negotiation and dialogue, the Holy See further underlines that a lasting solution must include the status of the Holy City of Jerusalem. In light of the numerous incidents of violence and challenges to free movement posed by the Security Wall, the Holy See renews its support for 'internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the City of Jerusalem the freedom of religion and of conscience of its inhabitants, as well as permanent, free and unhindered access to the Holy Places by the faithful of all religions and nationalities' (A/RES/ES-10/2)."

God bless each of you.



Mrs. Fay