

## Pope Francis: a prayer for peace



(Vatican Radio, 8 June 2014) Pope Francis delivered remarks to the Presidents of Palestine and Israel, Mahmoud Abbas and Shimon Peres, along with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, and delegations representing Jews, Christians Muslims, all of whom were gathered in the Vatican Sunday evening to pray for peace in the Middle East and throughout the world. Below, please find the full text of the Holy Father's prepared remarks.

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Distinguished Presidents,

I greet you with immense joy and I wish to offer you, and the eminent delegations accompanying you, the same warm welcome which you gave to me during my recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

I am profoundly grateful to you for accepting my invitation to come here and to join in imploring from God the gift of peace. It is my hope that this meeting will mark the beginning of a new journey

where we seek the things that unite, so as to overcome the things that divide.



I also thank Your Holiness, my venerable Brother Bartholomaios, for joining me in welcoming these illustrious guests. Your presence here is a great gift, a much-appreciated sign of support, and a testimony to the pilgrimage which we Christians are making towards full unity.

Your presence, dear Presidents, is a great sign of brotherhood which you offer as children of Abraham. It is also a concrete expression of trust in God, the Lord of history, who today looks upon all of us as brothers and who desires to guide us in his ways.

This meeting of prayer for peace in the Holy Land, in the Middle East and in the entire world is accompanied by the prayers of countless people of different cultures, nations, languages and religions: they have prayed for this meeting and even now they are united with us in the same supplication. It is a meeting which responds to the fervent desire of all who long for peace and dream of a world in which men and women can live as brothers and sisters and no longer as adversaries and enemies.

Dear Presidents, our world is a legacy bequeathed to us from past generations, but it is also on loan to us from our children: our children who are weary, worn out by conflicts and yearning for the dawn of peace, our children who plead with us to tear down the walls of enmity and to set out on the path of dialogue and peace, so that love and friendship will prevail.

Many, all too many, of those children have been innocent victims of war and violence, saplings cut down at the height of their promise. It is our duty to ensure that their sacrifice is not in vain. The memory of these children instills in us the courage of peace, the strength to persevere undaunted in dialogue, the patience to weave, day by day, an ever more robust fabric of respectful and peaceful coexistence, for the glory of God and the good of all.

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.

History teaches that our strength alone does not suffice. More than once we have been on the verge of peace, but the evil one, employing a variety of means, has succeeded in blocking it. That is why we are here, because we know and we believe that we need the help of God. We do not renounce our responsibilities, but we do call upon God in an act of supreme responsibility before our consciences and before our peoples. We have heard a summons, and we must respond. It is the summons to break the spiral of hatred and violence, and to break it by one word alone: the word "brother". But to be able to utter this word we have to lift our eyes to heaven and acknowledge one another as children of one Father.

To him, the Father, in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, I now turn, begging the intercession of the Virgin Mary, a daughter of the Holy Land and our Mother.

Lord God of peace, hear our prayer!

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; 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". Instil in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.

Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love, you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters. 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 quarreling 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. Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands. 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.

(From archive of Vatican Radio)