



# Diocese of Broken Bay

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## Office of the Bishop

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26 August 2014

*For the information of clergy and parishes of the Diocese of Broken Bay*

### **PRAY FOR PEACE**

In a recent media statement (5 August), the Australian Catholic Bishops called on parishioners across the country to pray for peace and an end to the ongoing conflict and tragedy in the Middle East and Iraq.

In the words of Archbishop Denis Hart, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference:

*"We offer our constant prayers for the innocent victims of the current conflicts and for an end to the continuing loss of life.*

*Our Holy Father Pope Francis has appealed for an end to violence in the Middle East, the Australian Catholic Bishops support the Pope's call for peace between Israel and Palestine.*

*The Australian Catholic Bishops support our fellow bishops in New Zealand in drawing Pope Francis' attention to the request of Father Raed, the parish priest of Holy Family Parish in Gaza who said: "I launch a humble appeal to Pope Francis: may you convene a vigil of prayer and fasting for peace in the Holy Land, as you did for Syria. All the people who inhabit this land, the land of Jesus, are tired of living in fear and pain."*

*We support the New Zealand Catholic Bishops in their request to the Holy See for a global prayer vigil at this time."*

The Australian Catholic Bishops also expressed their support for the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch of Iraq, His Beatitude Louis Rafael Sako, and the International Pontifical Foundation Aid to the Church in Need, in their appeal for world-wide prayer for the people of Iraq.

The office of the Apostolic Nuncio, in a recent communication (7 August), conveyed the deep concern and call for prayer by the Holy Father for those suffering violent persecution in Iraq.

*"The Holy Father...makes the impassioned appeals of the local bishops his own, asking together with them on behalf of their sorely tried communities, that the whole Church and all the faithful raise up with one voice a ceaseless prayer, imploring the Holy Spirit to send the gift of peace."*

A copy of both statements can be found at [www.dbb.org.au/ecumenism-interfaith](http://www.dbb.org.au/ecumenism-interfaith)

As the Diocese of Broken Bay, we are united with the Holy Father and the Catholic Bishops of Australia in this stance of prayerful solidarity. As leaders of parish communities, let us continue to be proactive in calling our people to pray for peace.

May I also commend to you for use in your parish the attached three-step response in relation to the Gaza conflict that was endorsed at last week's meeting of the Diocesan Commission for Interfaith Relations. Using a similar three-step approach, a response to the Iraq crisis is also being prepared.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'VRC', with a long, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Fr Vincent R Casey  
Diocesan Administrator



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## The conflict in Gaza: a response

*Prepared by the Parish Support Unit and endorsed by the Diocesan Commission for Interfaith Relations of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay, August 2014. Enquiries: Teresa Pirola 9847 0428*

The picture of human suffering that has been emerging from the conflict in Gaza is truly heartbreaking. What can we do to help the situation? Three constructive suggestions follow.

### 1. Pray

- We can join with Pope Francis and the Australian Catholic Bishops in crying out to God, and to each other, that cycles of violence and war will give way to a lasting peace.

In the words of Archbishop Denis Hart: "We offer our constant prayers for the innocent victims of the current conflicts and for an end to the continuing loss of life."

See *Catholic Bishops' statement in full* at [www.dbb.org.au/ecumenism-interfaith](http://www.dbb.org.au/ecumenism-interfaith)

- A prayer is included below. Its closing lines are in Arabic and Hebrew.

### 2. Give material aid to assist those communities most drastically affected.

For example:

- The works of *Caritas Jerusalem* support Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. An emergency relief plan for Gaza for the next six months can be viewed at their website: [caritasjr.org](http://caritasjr.org).
- *Project Rozana*. This Australian-based initiative brings together people of different faiths and cultures to raise funds to support Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza by providing medical treatment and doctor-training at Israel's Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. This project is endorsed by the Palestinian Minister of Health. More: [www.projectrozana.org](http://www.projectrozana.org)

### 3. Speak and act with care

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we urge people to appreciate the extraordinary complexity of the issues at hand. Slogans and simplistic 'solutions' are not helpful to the peace cause. On this point we offer this document for your reflection:

*As long as you believe in a living God, you must have hope*

Issued by the International Council of Christians & Jews ([ICCJ.org](http://ICCJ.org)), 2013.

Also available at: [www.dbb.org.au/ecumenism-interfaith](http://www.dbb.org.au/ecumenism-interfaith)

Essentially this document is an appeal to religious groups and personnel to appreciate the complexity of the issues involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, in drawing on one's religious tradition, to speak/act with great care in the service of peace.

It underlines the importance of defining terms and avoiding one-dimensional rhetoric that demonises the 'other', promoting fear and insecurity which poisons the conversation space and ultimately undermines the peace process.

For instance, the ICCJ paper outlines the diverse understandings (and misunderstandings) associated with use of the terms 'Israel,' 'Holy Land,' 'Zionism,' and 'prophecy' (see pp.8-12).

The paper also urges against "a binary way of thinking that insists that people must be either 'pro-Palestinian' or 'pro-Israel'. We espouse a 'pro-people' vision that is both pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian, precisely because dialogue demands that multiple narratives be heard."

On a difficult and complicated subject, the ICCJ raises important points to stimulate our own reflections.

### **A prayer for peace**

*God of peace. Source of shalom, salaam.  
Knowing how so many innocents suffer, we cry out to you!  
Show us the right way to bring peace to our conflicted world.  
Spread your shelter of peace over the whole human family.  
Make us instruments of your peace.  
Where there is hatred let us sow love; where there is enmity, compassion.  
Teach us to listen and listen until the deepest fears of the 'other' are heard.  
May we never divide peoples by our prayers,  
but hold them together in our hearts.*

*Allahumma anta as-salam wa-minka as-salam. [Arabic]  
O God, you are peace and peace is from you.*

*Adon hashalom barchenu bashalom, amen. [Hebrew]  
Source of peace, bless us with peace, amen.*