



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
Dear brothers and sisters of many different faiths

The recent news has given us distressing accounts of some dramatic attacks against places of worship during the time of prayer or against people serving the same faith communities. Likewise, in some countries there are instances of governmental and court acts in which they go so far as to inflict death in God's name.

In our prayer meeting on the 27th of each month, an echo of that remarkable insight of St. John Paul II to gather in Assisi so many representatives of different religions to pray for peace, we would like to address our plea to the one God of life that believers of all creeds may be open to the gift of peace that is not compatible with any act of violence. God's commandment is absolute: **do not kill**. Killing for the sake of faith contradicts faith and offends God himself. This principle is now firm in the consciousness of genuine believers of every religion and should close forever the sad page of the religious wars of the past. It is no longer tolerable that blood is still flowing for reasons of faith. Rightly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also established the right to freely profess one's religion.

Therefore, I invite you to embrace the suffering of those who are persecuted for allegedly religious reasons, thinking of those belonging to your own faith as well as others. Presently, just to name a few facing this condition are many Jewish communities around the world, Christians in different areas of Africa and Asia, some Muslim minorities such as the Ahmadis in Pakistan, the Yazidis in Iraq and in China's Xinjiang region, and the Baha'i in Iran.

May God transform the hearts of those who cause so much pain, protect the victims, and comfort the communities and families who have been so sorely tried.

May the Lord give you peace.

Assisi, January 2023

+ Domenico Sorrentino, Bishop