



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Dear brothers and sisters of many different faiths,

the current crisis in **Niger** rests on the background of long-standing problems of that region and its peoples, in which, as in other parts of Africa and the world, the colonial past has left a legacy of suffering, injustice and problems. This situation still weighs heavily, preventing the great natural resources of those places from being harnessed to their best advantage by and for the local people, while overt or creeping neo-colonial interests are still alive. May our prayer on August 27 be a plea to the God of peace that the challenges facing Niger in the name of justice, democracy and a fair distribution of goods be met with the tools of peaceful discussion, avoiding violence which, as always, risks causing bloodshed and further suffering, triggering difficult-to-control conflicts. In reality, the crisis in Niger poses very serious risks to the fate of the people themselves, to Africa and to the world as a whole, and it jolts everyone to take responsibility, to acknowledge past mistakes and to put the interests of the poorest people first and foremost. In the wake of the yearning for peace that prompted St. John Paul II to convene the great prayer of religions for peace in 1986, we pray that the international community will seek every avenue for a peaceful solution, prompt the nations involved to question themselves in order to recognize any mistakes made and work as best they can to foster freedom, justice and the well-being of the people. We pray that the opposing sides will find reasons for reconciliation and shared commitment to the Nigerian people, opening themselves to welcome the seed of peace that God Himself places in the heart of each person.

May the Lord give you peace

Assisi, August 2023

+ Domenico Sorrentino, Bishop