



AMERICAN NATIONAL
CATHOLIC CHURCH

Presiding Bishop's Statement in Support of Peace Talks in the Middle East

How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.

- Psalm 133: 1-2

Dear Brother and Sisters,

Peace!

I begin many of my letters and formal communications with the salutation of "Peace." I use it as an invitation for us to be free of anxiety and as a reminder to myself that as I write or speak, I do so with the hope that my words invite peace and not discord.

The word "peace" in Hebrew is pregnant with meaning. It is a statement about being "at peace" with oneself, a desire on the part of the person offering it for the other to be whole, to be complete, to be well, and—most fundamentally—it is a belief in our need for reconciliation with God.

Social psychology informs us that violence toward another person or group begins with "anti-locution," demeaning the "other" to make them less than human.

Jesus, three times in the Gospel of John, in his post-resurrection appearances to the disciples, counters this phenomenon by asking us, his followers, to face our fears of one another and unlock the doors of our minds and hearts to those whom we most fear (John 20:19).

The second time Jesus appears, he offers us peace as a source of strength, reminding us that God is close to the broken-hearted, and as a lingering sense of his presence with us until the end (John 20:26). The final appearance recorded in the Upper Room provides the foundation of inclusion, as a statement of the unity of purpose and mission which we are all called to pursue (John 20:21).

As Christians, we know that to be children of God calls us to be peacemakers. We in the American National Catholic Church join in prayer and action for all those working for peace in the Middle East. We celebrate and are in solidarity with all who are willing to walk in peace with each other.