

## Pope Francis announces global prayer vigil for peace on Sept. 7

By Kerri Lenartowick, CNA News, 1 September 2013



Pope Francis celebrates Palm Sunday Mass on March 24, 2013 in St. Peter's Square. Credit: Sabrina Fusco/CNA.

Departing from his typical reflections on the Sunday gospel, Pope Francis used his Angelus audience today to call for peace throughout the world, particularly in conflict-ridden Syria.

“I appeal strongly for peace, an appeal which arises from the deep within me,” he said to the crowds in St. Peter’s Square on Sept. 1.

“There are so many conflicts in this world which cause me great suffering and worry, but in these days my heart is deeply wounded in particular by what is happening in Syria and anguished by the dramatic developments which are looming,” continued the Pope.

“For this reason, brothers and sisters, I have decided to call for a vigil for the whole Church,” he announced.

It will be “a day of fasting and prayer for peace in Syria, in the Middle East, and throughout world.”

The vigil will take place on Sept. 7, the vigil of the birth of Mary, Queen of Peace. Those who can will gather in St. Peter’s Square from 7 p.m. until midnight: other local Churches are requested to join in the fasting and prayer by gathering together.

Pope Francis extended his invitation to “fellow Christians, followers of other religions and all men of good will, to participate, in whatever way they can, in this initiative.”

“Humanity needs to see these gestures of peace and to hear words of hope and peace!” said the Pope.

“All men and women of good will are bound by the task of pursuing peace,” he charged.

“I make a forceful and urgent call to the entire Catholic Church, and also to every Christian of other confessions, as well as to followers of every religion and to those brothers and sisters who do not believe: peace is a good which overcomes every barrier, because it belongs all of humanity!”

The Pope went on to lament the use of arms and its negative impact on civilians, the unarmed, and children, particularly recently in the “martyred country” of Syria.

“With all my strength, I ask each party in this conflict to listen to the voice of their own conscience, not to close themselves in solely on their own interests, but rather to look at each other as brothers and decisively and courageously to follow the path of encounter and negotiation, and so overcome blind conflict,” he said.

Pope Francis also asked the international community “to make every effort to promote clear proposals for peace in that country without further delay.”

He rejected the use of chemical weapons and requested that humanitarian workers “be granted access so as to provide the necessary aid.”

The Pope continued his insistent appeal for peace: “it is neither a culture of confrontation nor a culture of conflict which builds harmony within and between peoples, but rather a culture of encounter and a culture of dialogue; this is the only way to peace.”

Noting Mary’s universal motherly concern, Pope Francis said, “Let us ask Mary to help us to respond to violence, to conflict and to war, with the power of dialogue, reconciliation and love. She is our mother: may she help us to find peace; all of us are her children!”

As he has done on previous Sundays, Pope Francis led the crowds in invoking her intercession: “Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us!”