



Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Franciscan Peace in a time of War

*Love, Pardon, Joy, Hope, and Serenity.*¹ These are our rule. How do we hold them up against violence and retribution? I know we are all praying in response to the situation in the Middle East. I attached a prayer I wrote recently for a council meeting. Feedback welcome. There are two more attachments to this message: 1. A PDF copy of this bulletin. 2. A reflection on Peace by Gilbert Donahue, OFS. Our current theme is *Listen, Discern, and Go Forth*:

Listen:

- I’ve attached a reflection on *Peace* by Gilbert Donahue, OFS, JPIC animator for St. Margaret of Cortona Region.
- Cardinal Pizzaballa, The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, wrote a compelling [letter to his diocese](#) about the war in the Middle East. This message was referenced by the US Bishops in their statement. [Link to the letter: https://www.lpj.org/posts/letter-to-the-entire-diocese.html](#)
- Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, representing the Holy See, [issued a statement](#) during the Open Debate in the United Nations Security Council on “The Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question.” [Link to the full statement: https://holyseemission.org/contents//statements/65416078bffd6.php](#). Archbishop Garcia is the Permanent Observer for the Holy See at the UN. You can learn quite a lot about the Observer Mission by signing up for their newsletter at this link: [https://holyseemission.org/index.php.](#)



Discern:

Statements have rightly been called insufficient, but we need to remember, the Church hierarchy has a teaching role. Official statements help to clarify its position. The laity is to implement, to “renew the temporal order... infuse a Christian spirit.”² So for us, statements by the hierarchy are useful guides for public action, which we are to take “without waiting for orders and directives.”³ This relationship was described by Pope Paul VI in *Popularum Progressio* in 1967, and is reflected directly in our Rule, and our General Constitutions:

“Secular Franciscans are called to make their own contribution, inspired by the person and message of Saint Francis of Assisi, towards a civilization in which the dignity of the human person, shared responsibility, and love may be living realities”⁴

Go Forth:

We have one mission, to be the face of Christ to all we meet, and in every situation. But we have many ministries. We take action according to our gifts and temperaments. We are to act courageously for justice, and always in the context of *loving dialogue*. We listen to and try to understand those who disagree. We model this. It is how we speak with detractors at public events, or coworkers, or family

¹ OFS Rule, P. 19

² *Popularum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples) Pope Paul VI. 1967 P.81

³ Ibid

⁴ General Constitutions 18,1 See Gaudium et Spes 31 ff.



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members at a holiday gathering or a fraternity meeting. It is how we shape our letters to the editor, or to politicians. It is how we interact on social media. It is what we bring to the table as OFS members. When any person has interacted in disagreement with a secular Franciscan, that person should walk away feeling respected and heard, and hopefully with a willingness for more conversation. Whatever we do for Justice and peace and the integrity of creation is beautiful, useful, and good. *How* we do it is central. It is who we are.

One thing many of us can do about the war is to donate:

- [Catholic Relief Services](#) coordinates with [Caritas Jerusalem](#) to provide relief on the ground in Israel, also Gaza and West Bank. CRS <https://support.crs.org/donate/holy-land-conflict>
- [Pro Terra Sancta](#) (of the *Ibreviary App*.) This NGO is affiliated with Franciscans who keep the Holy sites. They have health centers in Gaza and in the West Bank, and they have a donate button on the app, and the link is here: <https://www.proterrasancta.org/en/campaign/holy-land-in-support-of-the-neediest-victims-of-war/>.
- [Churches for Middle East Peace](#) (The US Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services are members of this group.) <https://cmep.org/>

Other Issues and resources:

- The mass shooting in Lewiston, Maine was not far down the road from where we live. We lost a parishioner, Stephen Vozzella. Our fraternity minister, Sandra Thompson, lost a friend and coworker, Lucy Violette. Thanks for the prayers. I can't think of anything to add to an excellent letter that appeared in the Troubadour, a publication of the St. Mary of the Angels region, in the summer of 2022, available on line at: https://www.ourladyoftheangelsregion.org/e-Troubadou-SUMMER_2022.pdf. It was written after Uvalde and many other shootings, but the situation is the same.
- The COP28 (annual climate meeting) is this month. Pope Francis is to attend in person. The Holy Father, and Our sister Mother Earth are counting on us to meet the challenge of the environmental crisis. The Catholic Climate Covenant sponsored a series of discussions this summer entitled: *Laudato Si' and the U.S. Catholic Church*. Their recordings and presentations are at this link: <https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/laudato-si-and-us-catholic-church-recordings>. I attended most of these sessions. They provided a refreshing view of Catholic environmental action, and of where many of the youth are in our church. I also attended a hybrid (virtual for me) conference in Washington DC last month, on the theme *Preserving God's Planet Together*. I have since heard from other members who were present. Carolyn Townes, OFS was a presenter. Michelle Dunn, OFS, Executive Director of the Franciscan Action Network, facilitated. [The recorded sessions are at this link:](#) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMQsMEJ4gxU&ab_channel=FranciscanActionNetwork. As with the Covenant's sessions, there were many young adults present. As hybrid gatherings improve, we can open more of our activities to remote participation.