

Christmas Message to the Carmelite Family

Dear brothers and sisters in the Carmelite Family,

This year we approach Christmas with a full appreciation of the fervent Advent prayer in which we have all shared, pleading with the Lord to come and save us.

On a recent visit to our brothers in Ukraine, what I could sense of the people's prayer for an end to the war moved me deeply. Our two communities of friars are far

away from the war zone. Thank God in both Włodzimierz and Sądziadowice they have not been in danger from the war that is being waged in the east of the country. Nonetheless it is clear that they continue to play an important role in accompanying and in praying with the people of their areas, many of whom have lost members of their family in the defence of their country while others pray that their relatives who are still involved in the war will return home safely.



One can only ask, Why is this happening? Why are we witnessing such levels of violence against men, women and children in Ukraine, in Palestine, in Israel and in many other places that we do not even hear about any more? Can we who believe in the Incarnation of Christ Our Lord, whom we proclaim as the Prince of Peace, do anything more than we are doing to put an end to war and change the minds and hearts of those who promote war and violence? Is it possible to see a day when we can treat one another as brothers and sisters and live in peace with one another across the globe? The words of the canticle that we recite often in the Divine Office come to mind:

*He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords in ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.
O house Jacob, come,
let us walk in the light of the Lord.
(Is 2,4-5)*

I thank God for the safety and security in which so many of us will celebrate this Christmas and I pray with all of you for that same safety and security to reach the many millions who have already been displaced from their homes and the many who live with the constant threat of war.

May the light of God, shining on the face of Jesus, seen and cherished by Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, fill your hearts and your homes this Christmas, and may that same light reach into those dark places where plans are being made for war, so that minds and hearts might be changed, and peace may be the destiny of all those whom the Lord loves.

May you all enjoy a Christmas of joy and love in your homes and in your hearts.

Thank you.

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Prior General*