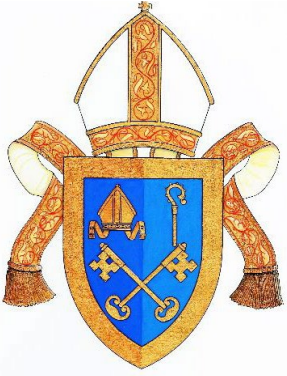


Diocese of Limerick



Letter to be read out at Masses this weekend, 2-3 August 2025

01.08.2025

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings from Rome where I am at the Jubilee Year pilgrimage with some 70 young people from the Diocese, the highlight being a Vigil ceremony and a Mass this weekend with over a million young adults present from all over the world. On Tuesday evening last, at the conclusion of the opening Mass presided over by an Archbishop, the Pope surprised us by coming into St. Peter's Square and offering a short few words of greeting. Addressing a packed St. Peter's Square, the Pope said: "We must cry out for peace in the world" and he then invited all the young people to join him in saying: "We want peace in the world!" which they did with great strength.

In recent weeks and days, especially, people have told me and written to me about how distressed they are in seeing the images of Gaza on our TV and social media screens. We become numb in our sense of helplessness before scenes that speak of "man's inhumanity to man". We feel bewildered when we see and hear about people crushed by hunger. Most upsetting of all is the horrible violence and death that children are experiencing and witnessing. "Is there anything we can do?" we ask, doubting we can do anything. We know it's not a question of money but rather it has to do with the conversion of the hearts of those who have the possibility to change the course of history. To lift the siege of war and starvation from 2 million people.

While we may feel helpless, and while so many are publicly voicing their concerns in person and through media, and must continue to do that, let us remember our powerful weapon and that is prayer. We can pray for all politicians and those striving to make a breakthrough in this tragically tangled story. We can pray for a softening of hearts where needed. We can pray for a deeper listening on the part of the powers that be to the voice of conscience that always speaks of peace. We can pray that, as we all do so, we unite to create a

wave of peace that somehow will wash over the evil.

So that our prayer may be powerful, let's decided to do this together, united in the name of Jesus among us as parish and diocesan communities. Even more, let's decide that along with our prayer, we will increase our acts of love throughout the day, putting on the "new self" as St. Paul calls it in the Second Reading today. And that includes "offering up" as we used to say, that is, uniting with Jesus' redemptive suffering any inconveniences, irritations or daily sufferings in our own life so that our daily life can become prayer to God.

We know God wants peace. He has created a world endowed with freedom. He needs people who choose to do the good and so help create pockets of fraternity and love in our world. Each of us can contribute to that. Even though we are limited, by uniting our small, finite efforts, to those of Jesus Christ who is the Infinite Son of God, our efforts can become a valuable contribution to a resolution in what seems a despairingly tragic situation.

Archbishop Eamon Martin has called on parishes to set aside Sunday, 24 August as a day of prayer and reflection for Gaza so let's join that 24 hours of prayer and reflection in our churches and homes. As Archbishop Eamon suggests, we can light a candle in our family home or local parish church; attend Mass, spend time before the Blessed Sacrament; pray the Rosary; make some small personal penance or sacrifice, and on that day "let the light of hope radiate out from the island of Ireland for peace, for Gaza and for the future of its people".

Let's also, in this Jubilee Year of Hope, commit to our own pilgrimage of hope for Gaza. Maybe revisiting a pilgrimage we've already done or embark on a new one and dedicate it to peace in Gaza.

Let's entrust all this to Our Lady who knew how to speed up time at the Wedding Feast of Cana. In doing so, of course, we pray also for peace in the many, many regions of conflict in our world – Ukraine, Syria, Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Yemen...

Remembering you all here in Rome as we express our closeness to Pope Leo at this Jubilee of Youth,

✠ **Brendan Leahy**

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