



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
Dear brothers and sisters of many different faiths,

In recent days we have listened to the statements of various important institutions about the international scene regarding the withdrawal of their military presence from **Afghanistan**. We do not intend here to express an assessment of the appropriateness of the choice made at the time and of the results achieved by the twenty-year presence of a coalition of many foreign armies. Rather, we care about the fate of the people of that country who are called to give life to a new course in its history. We cannot ignore the risks represented by the intentions of revenge matured over the years and we are concerned about the protection of the most vulnerable categories of the Afghan society. The life of women as well as the right of children to a just education, free participation in public affairs and the guarantee of freedom of religion are major challenges for which we ask for God's protection.

Since October 27, 1986 at which time St. John Paul II wanted to gather in Assisi many representatives of different religions to unite all in imploring God for harmony and reconciliation, we have understood that peace is not obtained with the solemnity of declarations, but rather by accepting the gift of God and committing ourselves to letting that seed grow in everyone's life and in the hope of peoples. May God therefore accompany the new process of the life of the inhabitants of Afghanistan, arousing virtuous intentions of good in everyone. This is the prayer that I ask you to share on the 27th of this month in every home and in every community, in all languages and religious traditions of the world.

May the Lord give you peace

Assisi, April 2021

+ Domenico Sorrentino, Bishop