



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Dear brothers and sisters of many different faiths,

As the year draws to a close, in the twilight of the year, the bloodshed, pain and death caused by the wars being fought in so many parts of the world and especially in the **Middle East** is ongoing. The brutal and abominable violence of the October 7 terrorist attack has evoked a war that has involved more than two million civilians. Our thoughts are with the hostages who through no fault of their own are victims of this tragedy, along with their families and those who share their anxieties and pain, as well as with the other victims of the armed violence in Gaza, especially the children. It is estimated that more than 8,000 children have been killed in the bombings, and the number of orphans is countless.

Therefore, we plead with all those in power to release those who have been kidnapped and held captive and to end the bombings and all kinds of violence. An agreed upon truce or at least a cease-fire is the least the whole world expects and would demonstrate that there is a sincere pursuit of peace that excludes any recourse to both the war of terror and the terror of war. We join in begging God to move hearts to great solidarity to deal with the humanitarian catastrophe that demands all kinds of urgent relief.

May the God of peace to whom we turn in different languages and with different names and who cares for the fate of each of his sons and daughters, hear our plea and the cries of the victims. May the supplication that rises up to him on December 27 from the various places of prayer, from so many homes and from so many hearts sustain the hope of peace.

May the Lord give you peace

Assisi, December 2023

+ Domenico Sorrentino, Bishop