



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Dear brothers and sisters of many different faiths,

During this Christmas season, as Christians we worship God who in his Son Jesus became incarnate by being born in the stable in Bethlehem. He is close to us in all of our sufferings. In our monthly prayer together, I would like to address the situation that has arisen in **Syria**, which needs to be accompanied and supported by our prayer. We care about the fate of the families of that great nation who hope for a future of peace and fraternity after years of war that has caused so much pain and suffering.

May the God whom we invoke under different names and in whom we place all our trust, be a consolation to all those who in recent years have lost a loved one to violence and who have suffered injustice, persecution, and oppression. May the God we invoke in so many different languages be a light to the minds and hearts of those who have taken the destiny of Syria into their own hands. May all vengeance and discrimination, all violence and oppression diminish so the spiral of brutality that has already claimed so many lives may be broken.

May the God whom we recognize as Lord of mercy and peace be near to all people who are now seeking peace. May the rights of the minorities, all ethnic groups in the country, women and the most fragile be guaranteed. We remember what Pope Francis and Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb signed in Abu Dhabi in February 2019: "Freedom is a right of every person: each individual enjoys the freedom of belief, thought, expression and action. The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings".

On December 27, therefore, I invite you to join spiritually in invoking God for peace in Syria thereby giving continuity to the inspiration of the historic meeting held in Assisi in 1986.

May the Lord give you peace

Assisi, December 2024

+ Domenico Sorrentino, Bishop