

**10TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE DEVASTATING
ONGOING WAR IN SYRIA**

15TH MARCH 2011 – 2021

In our parish, we pray over these next three days - Saturday, Sunday and Monday Masses for Syria.

Wherever we are, we are invited to light a candle for Peace in Syria, and pause in silent prayer to God.

Whether we are on lunch break at work, or at home or at school, whether we are taking a walk, or gazing at a sunrise or sunset, we are invited to light a candle for Peace in Syria.

Fr Gerry Hefferan



PARISH OF ST. JOSEPH & ST. ANTHONY

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THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF DEVASTATING ONGOING WAR IN SYRIA - 15 MARCH 2011 - 2021

The war in Syria continues. Children are still dying.

Current Status - Reports & Articles

The [UNICEF Syria Situation Report for January 2021](#) states the case of children:

“Hostilities continued in 2021, resulting in the tragic death of at least 22 children in January, incidents involving explosive weapons and unexploded ordnance in Hama and near Tal Rifaat, in northern rural Aleppo. In addition, many more children have been injured due to 29 security related incidents in Tal Rifaat area alone, during the reporting month.”

“Tensions increased and resulted in a military confrontation between Syrian Arab Army and nonstate armed groups in Dara’a. Local partners reported that almost 85% of students (12,000) and 40% of teachers were absent in 43 schools in the three affected communities of Tafas, Mzerieb, and Yadodeh during the peak of the hostilities.”

On its [Syria webpage](#), UNICEF updates us on the crisis.

“Ten years of humanitarian crisis and hostilities has had a profound impact on the situation of children in Syria, across the region and beyond. Every Syrian child has been impacted by the violence, displacement, severed family ties and lack of access to vital services caused by massive physical devastation. The situation in northern Syria is particularly alarming. In the northwest, millions of children remain displaced, with many families having fled violence multiple times, some as many as seven times, in search of safety.”

“The Syrian crisis remains first and foremost a protection crisis. Grave violations of children’s rights – recruitment, abductions, killing and maiming continue unabated. Hyperinflation is having a devastating impact on families, with negative coping mechanisms on the rise. Parents are eating less so they can feed their children, sending them to work instead of to school, and girls and boys face the risk of early or forced marriage.”

“The education system, meanwhile, is overstretched, underfunded, and fragmented. By early 2021, one in three schools inside Syria could no longer be used because they were destroyed, damaged or are being used for military purposes. Nearly 2.45 million children in Syria are out of school, while those children who are able to attend classes often learn in overcrowded classrooms, and in buildings with insufficient water and sanitation facilities, electricity, heating or ventilation.”

Vatican News also covers the UNICEF report in the article [Syria: UNICEF highlights plight of children after a decade of conflict](#)

PRAYER

Pope Francis Prays

Pope Francis in September 2013 led an international [Vigil of Prayer for Peace](#) in our world. We joined in prayer for Syria and the many other conflict areas in the world.

Pope Francis shared with the human family:

'Is it possible to walk the path of peace?

Can we get out of this spiral of sorrow and death?

Can we learn once again to walk and live in the ways of peace?

Invoking the help of God,

under the maternal gaze of the Salus Populi Romani, Queen of Peace,

I say: Yes, it is possible for everyone!

From every corner of the world tonight, I would like to hear us cry out:

Yes, it is possible for everyone!

Or even better, I would like for each one of us, from the least to the greatest, including those called to govern nations, to respond: Yes, we want it!

My Christian faith urges me to look to the Cross.

How I wish that all men and women of good will would look to the Cross if only for a moment!

There, we can see God's reply:

violence is not answered with violence,

death is not answered with the language of death.

In the silence of the Cross, the uproar of weapons ceases

and the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue, and peace is spoken.

This evening, I ask the Lord that we Christians,

and our brothers and sisters of other religions,

and every man and woman of good will, cry out forcefully:

violence and war are never the way to peace!

Let everyone be moved to look into the depths of his or her conscience and listen to that word which says:

Leave behind the self-interest that hardens your heart,

overcome the indifference that makes your heart insensitive towards others,

conquer your deadly reasoning, and open yourself to dialogue and reconciliation.

Look upon your brother's sorrow – I think of the children:

look upon these... look at the sorrow of your brother,

stay your hand and do not add to it, rebuild the harmony that has been shattered;

and all this achieved not by conflict but by encounter!

May the noise of weapons cease!

War always marks the failure of peace, it is always a defeat for humanity.'

Welcoming New Families

From May 2016, 12,000 refugees from Syria and Iraq began arriving as a cohort and were settled on the Northside of Brisbane and in Logan.

Learning from them, we accompanied both countries in prayer.

We called on God for particular intentions.

Let us recall some of the prayer intentions.

Local Prayers for Syria

16th April 2018 our parish prayer was for children.

'O GOD, HEAR THE PRAYER OF CHILDREN FOR PEACE'

'We thank you, loving God, for the beauty you gave:

The beauty of music, of silence, of a stream running,

Of a bird nesting, of children laughing.

And we ask why do adults take such beauty away?

Why replace such wonder with fear and bombs and bullets.

We so much need you, O God, to inspire Peace again.

We join with the children of Syria to pray for peace.

Across many faiths we pray for peace:

For the children of Syria and with the children of Syria.

We pray for Peace.

Hear the plea of children of Syria and of the world praying together,

For beauty and peace and laughter once more.

Help our adults to work for Peace.

O God, hear the prayer of children for peace.

Amen.'

On November 8th, 2018 after receiving news of the discoveries of mass graves in Iraq and Syria, we prayed as a parish community.

'PRAYING FOR PEOPLE KILLED IN THE GENOCIDE IN IRAQ & SYRIA'

'We pray to You O God, as we place before You,

Those who were executed by ISIS in its reign of terror in Iraq and Syria.

We pray for them in this month of November.

We pray for the families still searching for the graves of their loved ones.

We pray for the search teams who have discovered 202 Mass Graves in Iraq so far.

We pray for those working to identify individual people

Whose remains are buried within 28 mass graves currently excavated.

We pray for those who were killed in Syria

And the grave sites still to be discovered,

We pray to You, O God, for the grieving families,

That they may be supported in their anguish, that they may know we have not forgotten them. Let us pray.'

On the 15th October 2019, with a focus on the desperate position of refugees in northern Syria, we responded in prayer

PLEA FOR PRAYER & WELCOME FOR IRAQ & SYRIA

“We Pray to God”

‘We pray to God for all refugees in Northeast Syria and their search for shelter and safety.

We pray that the international community protect them.

We pray to God for the Church in northern Iraq. Amen.’

AUSTRALIA & SYRIA

Australia - Bishop Vincent Long

Bishop Vincent Long, on behalf of the Catholic Church in Australia, replied in 2015 to the increase of an extra 12,000 refugees from Syria and Iraq in [For those who’ve come across the seas](#) :

“The Prime Minister’s announcement that Australia will be taking an extra 12,000 refugees from Syria and Iraq on a temporary basis is a generous response to the refugee crisis we have been watching on our television screens over the past few weeks.

The journey of a refugee is chaotic and risky. From the moment of departure, there is the risk of injury, starvation, separation, persecution, imprisonment and even death.

Such desperation and human misery invites us to respond with compassion, solidarity and generosity.’

Syria - Alan Kurdi

The dramatic change in Australian Government direction, to receive 12,000 refugees from Syria and Iraq, resulted from the world media coverage six years ago, of the Kurdi family from northern Syria.

Brothers Alan and Galip and their mother Rehanna drowned in 2015, while trying to find a new life.

Only the father, Abdullah survived.

The photo of Alan’s three-year old body, washed up on the Turkish coast, touched hearts around the world.

Last weekend, Pope Francis and Abdullah met in northern Iraq.

On the 4th anniversary of the war, on the Australian Bishops Media Blog, we remembered as sisters and brothers, why as Australians, we need to care for, and advocate for, genuine peace in Syria.

[Why the Syrian Crisis Matters to Australia](#)

During the war the Catholic Leader has informed us about the plight of Syrians, for example, these articles in February 2015.

[Islamic State captures Christian communities in Syria](#)

[Terror Escalates for Syria's Christians](#)

['Islamic State' begins executing seized Christians](#)

In May 2014 an article appeared about the efforts of the Vatican and charity organisations to coordinate their help to the Syrian people.

[Charities serving in Syria to meet at the Vatican](#)

PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE BY CARITAS AROUND THE WORLD

"Syria's humanitarian crisis is the biggest emergency for Caritas right now. The vicious conflict has forced 6 million Syrians out of their homes – 2 million of them into other countries – and has left more than 230 000 people dead.

Pope Francis is closely engaged with the crisis and is calling constantly for an end to the fighting. He has highlighted the assistance Caritas has given to Syrians regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation as the best way to contribute towards peace.

Caritas gives them clothes, blankets and food parcels. If they are too sick or too poor to reach one of Caritas' medical centres, a doctor visits them. It helps them find shelter, warmth and schooling for their children. Counsellors offer support to cope with depression and bereavement.

Despite the enormous difficulties and dangers, Caritas Syria continues to work inside the country. It provides emergency assistance from its centres, which are sometimes on the frontline."

<https://www.caritas.org/what-we-do/conflicts-and-disasters/syria/>

INTERNATIONAL PRAYER VIGILS

One of the prayer vigils this March is being organised in Scotland. They describe the people of Syria in their Vigil explanation.

“Monday 15th March marks the tenth year of the conflict in Syria. The people of Syria continue to face great instability, with around 80% of the population currently estimated to be living in poverty. Food insecurity and human rights violations are issues of great concern. This leaves us in no doubt of the ongoing pain and suffering experienced by men, women and children caught up in the conflict. Many Syrians have been displaced to neighbouring countries and have sought refuge across the world.

Please join Christians across Scotland in an online Vigil for Syria as a public expression of solidarity with Syrians affected by the conflict both in Syria and those living here in Scotland and other countries. We will hear from a Syrian pastor and bear witness to the long years of the conflict, taking time to hold silence by the lighting of ten candles and to pray, reflect and respond in the shared space together.”

The Vigil is organised by *“Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh City Mission and Mustard Seed Edinburgh and will feature a time of prayer.”*

[Online Vigil for Syria registration - Brisbane time 03.00 - 3.40, 16 March 2021](#)

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whether we are taking a walk, or gazing at a sunrise or sunset,

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At our [**LIGHT-A-CANDLE**](#) website.

YEAR OF ST JOSEPH

Fr Ibrahim Asabagh OFM, parish priest of the Latin Parish Aleppo, Syria

From 8th December to 8th December 2021, the Catholic Church around the world celebrates the Year of St Joseph.

Fr. Ibrahim Alsabagh, connects the Year of St Joseph with the plight of Syria. He is parish priest of the Latin parish of Aleppo in northern Syria. He finds inspiration in the example of St Joseph. [Aleppo parish priest: Like St. Joseph, the Church close to suffering Christians – St. Francis Church – Latin Parish – Aleppo](#)

THE LAST SUPPER ICON GIFTED BY MURHAF

As we prepare for the 10th anniversary of the ongoing tragedy of the Syrian war on March 15th, with the continuing loss of human life, we pray in solidarity with all who seek genuine peace in Syria.

Syrian iconographer Murhaf Obeid gifted his very impressive spiritual icon 'The Last Supper' to the community in 2020.

We remember Jesus the night before he died.

Let us gaze upon the icon.



Peter Bugden on May 8th from the Catholic Leader told the story:

[Iconographer fled war torn Syria and embraced by Brisbane parish gifts Last Supper icon as thanks](#)