

From Bishop Philip Huggins

Greetings anew!

We have some requests and information related to both tomorrow and Thursday: Our prayers for peace, our care for the grieving.

1) **Transfiguration and prayers for peace**

August 6 always focuses us on the radiant, enlightening Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor.

The artist Fra Angelico captures the wonder and beauty of the moment, anticipatory of Jesus Resurrection.

The feast of Transfiguration is also remembered as the anniversary of Hiroshima: the cruel and terrible light of the first nuclear bomb, dropped as people had breakfast and children prepared for school. The contrast in these different lights, on August 6, focuses our human choice.

The contrast is even more vivid this week for two reasons. We are remembering the 100th anniversary of [World War 1](#) beginning. The memory is in many of our churches and civic centres. Large plaques which recall the numbers of young people who left and never returned.

As someone who has worked a lot in rural Australia, it has always been poignant to see the large plaques, often with names of the same family, in small country towns.

I recall asking a full church, with many young people, in country NSW, about the origin of a simple, beautiful gold cross on the altar.

Slowly a very old man rose from his pew.

He said quietly: "My mother and father gave this cross to the Church when my brother did not return from France in World War 1."



Blessed Fra Angelico, Guido di Pietro (c. 1395 – February 18, 1455)

The Transfiguration in Cell 6 of the Convent of San Marco

Fresco

1.93m x 1.64m

Museo di San Marco, Florence

All immediately were drawn to the reality of these parents, their younger son, coming into this little Church to worship, seeing that cross and remembering the one who never grew old.



Painting by Margaret Ackland of World War 1 Soldiers



Christ Church Brunswick Plaque

The same is true for urban centres as for country towns. This huge plaque remembers those of Christ Church Brunswick.

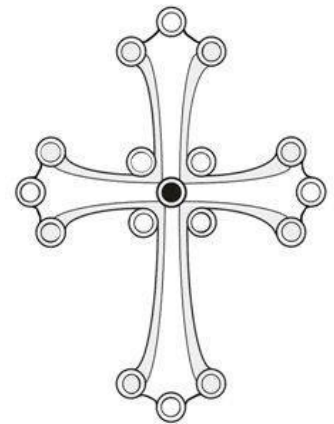
2) Global Day of Prayer for Peace in Iraq: August 6

The second reason we are especially moved to prayer this August 6, is because of the request from those in much more difficult places.

Our prayers are for ordinary people now amidst bombs, rockets and terrorists.

(i) From the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch

"Please stop, I ask you with all my heart, it's time to stop. Stop, please." Inspired by these words of Pope Francis (June 27, 2014), the international pontifical foundation Aid to the Church in Need, united with His Beatitude Louis Rafael Sako, the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch of Iraq, appeals to all persons of good will to join in a [Global Day of Prayer for Peace](#) to be held on August 6, 2014 — the Feast of the Transfiguration.



The feast of Transfiguration marks the moment when Jesus, on Mount Tabor, appears to three of his disciples in a state of glory, shortly before His ultimate trial on Calvary. This feast holds out a sign of hope for humanity: it is a source of courage when obstacles appear impossible to surmount; a sign that light is stronger than darkness; and testimony that death can turn into life.

Meant to be observed in churches and homes across the country, this Global Day of Prayer in the midst of so much suffering in Iraq—particularly for the ancient Christian community of Mosul—tells the world at large that as Christians have not forgotten and abandoned their suffering brothers and sisters.

Patriarch Sako has personally composed the Prayer for Peace:

*Lord,
The plight of our country
is deep and the suffering of Christians
is severe and frightening.
Therefore, we ask you Lord
to spare our lives, and to grant us patience,
and courage to continue our witness of Christian values
with trust and hope.
Lord, peace is the foundation of life;
Grant us the peace and stability that will enable us
to live with each other without fear and anxiety,
and with dignity and joy.
Glory be to you forever.*

The Patriarch also said: "Let us unite our voices and hearts before the Lord of peace. May the light of Tabor fill the hearts of all suffering people with consolation and hope. May the message of Tabor, through our prayers, inspire the leaders of Iraq to sacrifice personal interests for the common good and welfare."

(ii) Request of Archbishop Mor Malatius Malki:

With Fr Shenouda, I met late last week with His Eminence Archbishop Mor Malatius Malki who forwarded this request from the Syrian Orthodox Church here and from the Patriarch, Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox.

Bank details are available from my office and Fr Shenouda Mansour. Patriarch Ignatius letter is below.



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BY THE GRACE OF GOD

Ignatius Aphrem II
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church

No EI 26/14



24th July 2014

Apostolic benediction to our beloved Brother-in-Christ His Beatitude the Catholicos Mor Baselios Thomas I, and to all our beloved brothers in Christ Their Eminences the Metropolitans of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church.

The situation of our spiritual children in Mosul and Nineveh Plain is breaking our hearts; the horrific and unbearable atrocities committed against our people there, are well-known to all. We are confident that you share prayer and hope with us that God will restore justice to all those who are unjustly treated in this life. As Patriarch and Father of the Syriac people, we have intensified our efforts and adopted an intense program of meetings and gatherings with people of good will. We hope to gain their support in order to offer our people a dignified life in our forefathers' land.

We deem it right to dedicate the Holy Qurobo (divine liturgy) on Sunday August 3rd, 2014 in all our Syrian orthodox parishes throughout the world for the sake of peace in Iraq and everywhere. The church collection on that day shall be donated for the assistance of the displaced families from Mosul. It can be sent to the Patriarchate, or directly deposited in the Bank Account of St. Ephrem Patriarchal Development Committee (number and address details included).

Finally, we offer our apostolic benediction to all members of our Syrian Orthodox Church, clergy and laity, asking the Lord to pour His blessings on them and protect them from danger and all evil. May the grace of God be with you all. We extend our Apostolic Blessings. ܡܬܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܬܝܘܫ ܡܠܟܝ

3) Peace-making in Australia

Sunday I chaired a meeting of Jews, Christians and Muslims hosted at the Islamic Council of Victoria.

We were listening to a report back from a group of 12 from the three Abrahamic faiths after their [May journey to Jerusalem](#).

We wondered how the meeting would go, given the tensions of the past week, including Israel / Gaza and Iraq.

Thankfully, the civility and common sense of ordinary people of faith shone through.

The bond that plainly has evolved amongst the Jerusalem group was quite inspirational.

Carefully planning; care with trust-building; attentive listening to each other's narrative; praying alongside each other in poignant moments and in sacred settings, eating and journeying together created an attractive, quite delightful bond amongst them. We could see in them both the task and the possibility for people of faith in Australia. Even though none of us would underestimate the threat posed by divisive and extremist elements at this time.

Prayerful, moderate voices are needed more than ever. Simply pointing out that there are people of good character in all religious traditions is a start.

One initiative which commended itself was that we all light a candle for peace each Friday.

Friday is significant to Muslims for their prayers, for Jewish people entering Shabbat and for Christians as Good Friday is recalled.

The human family is full of tears, yearning for peace. We are one community, gifted with life on our tiny blue/white planet which spins in the incomprehensible vastness of God's created universe, the end of which is still to be found!

All these remembrances in our prayers this week – World War 1, Hiroshima, the current places of violent conflict – are of “us” against “us”. One family seeks peace.

Hence, in the faith proclaimed at the Easter Vigil”, in the light of Christ” so beautifully vivid at the Transfiguration, **let us light a candle for peace** as we make our prayers.

4) Act for Peace Appeals:

Gaza Update from Alistair Gee



Thanks to the generosity of Australian churches and our other supporters, we have raised and sent \$30,000 to our partners in Gaza, the refugee agency of the Middle East Council of Churches. We hope to raise and send much more, so please help if you can. As mentioned on our website, the suffering and need is enormous and our partners are doing an extraordinary job providing emergency assistance. Over 245,000 people have been displaced and all 1.7m residents in the Gaza Strip have been affected by the destruction of electricity, water and sewerage infrastructure.

You may have seen on the news about some schools which are seeking to provide some sanctuary, though which have been bombed. Churches are also housing many homeless and displaced people. Please join us in praying for the safety of those in these churches and in all places.

One of the health workers with our partner in Gaza recently kept saying to us, in dismay at what was happening around her, 'we are human, we are human'. This seems to sum up the tragic situation well – not enough people on any side see this as a situation about people – children, mothers, grandfathers...they see it primarily about states and ethnicities. We want to help put more of a human face to what is going on and call for responses which put people, civilians, first. By 7 August, we will be launching a campaign called 'We Are Human', details of which will be at www.actforpeace.org.au. We would love all to take part.

6) Request from our Prime Minister: MH17 National Day of Mourning: Thursday 7 August

Our Prime Minister has asked that we ring all Cathedral and Church bells Thursday 12 noon (AEST) 10am in WA and 11.30am in SA. The letter from the PM's office is below:



NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING AND NATIONAL MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE VICTIMS OF FLIGHT MH17

The Commonwealth Government has declared Thursday 7 August 2014 to be a National Day of Mourning to honour the innocent victims of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17.

On this day, flags on all Commonwealth Government buildings, here and overseas, will be flown at half-mast.

The Government has arranged for a National Memorial Service to take place at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, at 10.30 am on Thursday 7 August 2014.

The National Memorial Service is interdenominational.

The National Memorial Service will honour those who have lost their lives and seek to support those who have been bereaved.

Members of the public are invited to attend.

Ushers will be on hand one hour before the commencement of the Service and seating will be allocated as individuals arrive.

Arrangements have also been made for the outside broadcast of the National Memorial Service in anticipation of large crowds wanting to support the families of those lost on MH17.

If you wish to attend the National Memorial Service, please contact a Ceremonial and Protocol Officer – Phone: (02) 6271 5991 or (02) 6271 5209 or MemorialService@pmc.gov.au up until 12 noon on Wednesday 6 August 2014. Any updates to arrangements will be posted on the Prime Minister's website at pm.gov.au.

A Prayer:

O Lord Jesus Christ,

May the tears shed in your earthly life

Be balm for all who weep,

And may the prayers of your pilgrimage

Give strength to all who suffer; for your mercy's sake.

Amen