



My heart is close to you, to the Holy Land, to all the peoples who inhabit it, Israelis and Palestinians

01.03.2024 | Pope Francis

Vatican City, 2 February 2024 - Letter of the Holy Father to Jewish brothers and sisters in Israel.

Dear brothers and sisters,

We are experiencing a moment of great travail. Wars and divisions are increasing all over the world. We are truly, as I said some time ago, in the midst of a sort of "piecemeal world war", with serious consequences on the lives of many populations.

Unfortunately, even the Holy Land has not been spared this pain, and since October 7 it too has been cast into a spiral of unprecedented violence. My heart is torn at the sight of what is happening in the Holy Land, by the power of so much division and so much hatred.

The whole world looks on at what is happening in that land with apprehension and pain. These are feelings that express special closeness and affection for the peoples who inhabit the land which has witnessed the history of revelation.

Unfortunately, however, it must be noted that this war has also produced divisive attitudes in public opinion worldwide and divisive positions, sometimes taking the form of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. I can only reiterate what my predecessors have also clearly stated many times: the relationship that binds us to you is particular and singular, without ever obscuring, naturally, the relationship that the Church has with others and the commitment towards them too. The path that the Church has walked with you, the ancient people of the covenant, rejects every form of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, unequivocally condemning manifestations of hatred towards Jews and Judaism as a sin against God. Together with you, we, Catholics, are very concerned about the terrible increase in attacks against Jews around the world. We had hoped that "never again" would be a refrain heard by the new generations, yet now we see that the path ahead requires ever closer collaboration to eradicate these phenomena.

My heart is close to you, to the Holy Land, to all the peoples who inhabit it, Israelis and Palestinians, and I pray that the desire for peace may prevail in all. I want you to know that you are close to my heart and to the heart of the Church. In the light of the numerous communications that have been sent to me by various friends and Jewish organizations from all over the world and in the light of your own letter, which I greatly appreciate, I feel the desire to assure you of my closeness and affection. I embrace each of you, and especially those who are consumed by anguish, pain, fear and even anger. Words are so difficult to formulate in the face of a tragedy like the one that has occurred in recent months. Together with you, we mourn the dead, the wounded, the traumatized, begging God the Father to intervene and put an end to war and hatred, to these incessant cycles that endanger the entire world. In a special way we pray for the return of the hostages, rejoicing because of those who have already returned home, and praying that all the others will soon join them.

I would also like to add that we must never lose hope for a possible peace and that we must do

everything possible to promote it, rejecting every form of defeatism and mistrust. We must look to God, the only source of certain hope. As I said ten years ago: “History teaches that our own powers do not suffice. More than once we have been on the verge of peace, but the evil one, employing a variety of means, has succeeded in blocking it. That is why we are here, because we know and we believe that we need the help of God. We do not renounce our responsibilities, but we do call upon God in an act of supreme responsibility before our consciences and before our peoples. We have heard a summons, and we must respond. It is the summons to break the spiral of hatred and violence, and to break it by one word alone: the word “brother”. But to be able to utter this word we have to lift our eyes to heaven and acknowledge one another as children of one Father” (Vatican Garden, June 8, 2014).

In times of desolation, we have great difficulty seeing a future horizon where light replaces darkness, in which friendship replaces hatred, in which cooperation replaces war. However, we, as Jews and Catholics, are witnesses to precisely such a horizon. And we must act, starting first and foremost from the Holy Land, where together we want to work for peace and justice, doing everything possible to create relationships capable of opening new horizons of light for everyone, Israelis and Palestinians.

Together, Jews and Catholics, we must commit ourselves to this path of friendship, solidarity and cooperation in seeking ways to repair a destroyed world, working together in every part of the world, and especially in the Holy Land, to recover the ability to see in the face of every person the image of God, in which we were created.

We still have a lot to do together to ensure that the world we leave to those who come after us is a better one but I am sure that we will be able to continue to work together towards this goal.

I embrace you fraternally,

Francis

Source: [Vatican](#).