



*Office of the President*

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Most Reverend William S. Skylstad, D.D.  
Bishop of Spokane

July 20, 2006

Dear Brother Bishops,

The Holy Father has declared July 23 to be a day dedicated to prayers and penance for people of all religious faiths "to implore God for the precious gift of peace." In a brief statement issued by the Vatican press office on July 20, Pope Benedict XVI urged prayers for "an immediate cease-fire between the (warring) sides," the establishment of "a humanitarian corridor in order to bring aid to the suffering people," and the start of "reasonable and responsible negotiations so as to end the objective situations of injustice existing in that region." See attached.

I share this information with you in hopes that you will find a way to share it with the priests and people of your (arch)dioceses. Also, I wanted you to be aware that both the Holy See and our Conference have spoken out on the current crisis in the Middle East and you can find those statements on the USCCB website.

Fraternally yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend William S. Skylstad  
Bishop of Spokane  
President

Enclosure

## **DAY OF PRAYER AND PENANCE FOR PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST**

VATICAN CITY, JUL 20, 2006 (VIS) - Faced with worsening situation in the Middle East, the Holy See Press Office has been directed to communicate the following:

"The Holy Father is following with great concern the destinies of all the peoples involved and has proclaimed this Sunday, July 23, as a special day of prayer and penance, inviting the pastors and faithful of all the particular Churches, and all believers of the world, to implore from God the precious gift of peace.

"In particular, the Supreme Pontiff hopes that prayers will be raised to the Lord for an immediate cease-fire between the sides, for humanitarian corridors to be opened in order to bring help to the suffering peoples, and for reasonable and responsible negotiations to begin to put an end to objective situations of injustice that exist in that region; as already indicated by Pope Benedict XVI at the Angelus last Sunday, July 16.

"In reality, the Lebanese have the right to see the integrity and sovereignty of their country respected, the Israelis the right to live in peace in their State, and the Palestinians have the right to have their own free and sovereign homeland.

"At this sorrowful moment, His Holiness also makes an appeal to charitable organizations to help all the people struck by this pitiless conflict."

**OP/MIDDLE EAST/... VIS 060720 (230)**