



Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land Resource Packet In Partnership with the National Interreligious Initiative for Peace in the Middle East

Introduction:

The Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land is part of an unprecedented interreligious initiative. This initiative engages Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders and communities in a coordinated effort to promote a just peace in the Middle East. No religious community alone can accomplish the goal of bringing peace with justice to the land that is holy to all of us. The Catholic Campaign also builds upon and complements the ongoing efforts of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to pursue a just peace.

The Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land calls on diocesan bishops and Catholic leaders to partner actively with local religious leaders in the Jewish, Muslim and other Christian traditions. The goal is to create a shared commitment to the broad outlines of a just resolution of the conflict and to raise a united voice with policy makers and the wider public.

Why a Catholic Campaign?

We launch this Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Middle East for at least three reasons. Our faith demands it. Our Church's leaders call us to it. Our Church is well situated to build bridges.

Our teaching calls us to be peacemakers (cf. Matthew 5:9). As the U.S. Bishops wrote in *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, "Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of

our faith. We are called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment, but by our Lord Jesus. The content and context of our peacemaking is set, not by some political agenda or ideological program, but by the teaching of his Church" (#333).

The leaders of our Church have repeatedly pointed out the importance of resolving the conflict in the Holy Land. Pope Benedict XVI, in his address on July 20, 2006, declared:

I appeal to Israeli and Palestinian leaders that, with the generous help of the international community, they may seek responsibly for that negotiated end to the conflict, which alone can ensure the peace to which their people aspire.

Finally, the Catholic Church can make a unique contribution to the peace process. Vatican Council II set us on a new course in our relationships with the Jewish and Muslim communities. In *Nostra Aetate*, the Church declared its "esteem" for Muslims and "the bond that spiritually ties" us to the Jewish people (# 3, 4). Many Catholic leaders have worked to build strong relationships with both Jews and Muslims, laying a foundation for the work of peace. At local dioceses across the country, the Catholic Church often has good relationships with Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders. These strong relationships can help us to convene others in pursuit of peace in the land we all call holy.

Why a Catholic Campaign now?

The year the campaign began, 2005, was a significant time to begin to pursue peace in the Middle East with renewed vigor. At the beginning of 2006, Pope Benedict XVI reminded Catholics of the “very tentative steps forward along the road to peace” in the Holy Land. The tragic events of 2006 and 2007 reinforced the importance of a renewed initiative for peace. War between Hezbollah and Israel in Lebanon, armed conflict with Hamas in Gaza, and fighting among Palestinian factions all pointed to the urgency for a resolution to the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick expressed our present hopes well when he stated, “We gather at a time of crisis in the Middle East. But times of crisis can also become opportunities for change.” The events and suffering in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Israel demonstrate once again that there is no such thing as a safe, stable status quo in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that there is no military solution to the conflicts. The only solution is a negotiated one based on U.N. Security Council Resolutions, realistic compromises, and monitored security arrangements with international guarantees.

What difference can a Catholic Campaign make?

The Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land aims to work in collaboration with religious leaders of the three traditions that are rooted in the Middle East. To that interreligious effort we bring our commitments to peace and to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. We also bring the experience and teachings of our Church, a Church committed to its roots in the Holy Land and with a significant national and global presence.

What does the Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Middle East ask of local dioceses?

The Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Middle East asks local bishops and diocesan leaders to convene or join local interreligious initiatives for peace modeled on the national initiative. The resources in this web-based packet provide guidance and background material for such efforts. We also ask local dioceses to organize letter writing campaigns and to respond to action alerts sent by the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. We ask you to share contact information with us so that we can engage you in these and similar activities at critical junctures in the peace process. Visit this website for materials and to sign up for alerts on the Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land:

www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland_peace.shtml.

Where can a local diocese get information and support?

For support from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, contact:
Dr. Stephen M. Colecchi, Director
Office of International Justice and Peace
Mr. John Carr, Executive Director
Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development
3211 Fourth Street NE
Washington, DC 20017-1194
Telephone: (202) 541-3196
Fax: (202) 541-3339
Email: scolecchi@usccb.org
Department Website: <http://www.usccb.org/jphd/>
Campaign Website:
www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland_peace.shtml

For support from the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East:
Mr. Ron Young, Consultant
National Interreligious Leadership Initiative
for Peace in the Middle East
16020 94th Avenue NW
Stanwood, WA 98290
Telephone/Fax: (360) 652-4285
E-Mail: usipcme@aol.com



Contents of the Web Based Resource Packet
http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland_peace.shtml

1. National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East

This two-page flyer describes the National Initiative; it serves as the model for similar local initiatives.

2. A Nationwide Network of Local Interreligious Initiatives Working for Peace in the Middle East

This two-page flyer describes how a Local Interreligious Initiative can be modeled on the National Initiative. The flyer ought to be shared with religious leaders early on. It is important that they discuss and adopt the “Principles of Cooperation” and the general framework of the statement, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace.” This flyer also answers the question: What can we do? It suggests specific “can do” activities, including: holding a press conference, writing an Op-Ed, meeting with members of Congress, and holding forums and other educational programs.

3. National Interreligious Leadership List

This one-page document lists the 35 religious leaders who affirmed the “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope” statement that was released on December 12, 2006. The Catholic leaders who signed for the U.S. bishops were: Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Cardinal William Keeler and Francis Cardinal George. It may be helpful to share this list with local religious leaders so that they can see the broad support the National Initiative enjoys.

4. Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope

On December 12, 2006, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope” was issued by 35 Jewish, Christian, and Muslim national religious leaders. The statement urges the United States government to make peace in the Middle East an urgent priority. The statement lists steps the United States, Israel, Palestine, and the Arab states can take to advance towards peace in the region.

5. Appeals to U.S. Leadership

In these appeals, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim national religious leaders urge the U.S. to exercise stronger leadership along the road to peace until the goal of a viable two-state solution is achieved.

6. Twelve Urgent Steps for Peace

This four-page resource, adopted on December 2, 2003, lays out a step-by-step framework for peace. Individual religious leaders may legitimately hold differing perspectives on one or another aspect of this document, but the basic framework of verifiable step-by-step commitments is important to adopt.

7. Sample Press Release

This Sample Press Release can be adapted by a Local Interreligious Initiative when they publicly join the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative and endorse its statements.

8. Guidelines for Supporting the National Interreligious Initiative

These guidelines are offered for speaking (or writing) in support of the statements of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative with members of Congress and/or representatives of the media.

9. Sample Op-Eds

These two sample Op-Eds originally appeared in *Tidings*, Southern California's Catholic Weekly, on January 5, 2007, and the *Seattle Times* on January 11, 2005. They serve as examples of the kind of Op-Eds that can be written locally.

10. Prayers for Peace in the Middle East

These prayers remind us of the importance of rooting our work in prayer and spirituality. All gatherings of Local Interreligious Initiatives should incorporate a spirit of prayer.

11. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Background Documents

These documents provide background on selected activities of the USCCB and an overview of the USCCB position on the Holy Land.

- a. Remarks by Cardinal William Keeler, National Press Club, January 12, 2005
- b. Statement read by Bishop William Skylstad to Presidents of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, January 11 and 13, 2005
- c. Remarks by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, National Press Club, December 2, 2003
- d. Statement on Israeli-Palestinian Violence by the USCCB Administrative Committee, March 13, 2002
- e. A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, June 15, 2001

12. National Interreligious Leadership Initiative Background Documents

a. Summary of the Geneva Accord

This is an Israeli-Palestinian Civil Society Initiative that serves as a model framework for peace. It is not necessary for participants to endorse all aspects of this framework. It is for background only.

b. The People's Voice Peace Initiative

This is another Civil Society Initiative that serves as a model framework for peace. It is not necessary for participants to endorse all aspects of this framework. It is for background only.



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000
Please feel free to copy and distribute