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Diocese of Stockton joins Pope Benedict in praying for peace in the Middle East

Bishop Stephen Blaire urged the people of the Diocese of Stockton to pray for a peaceful negotiation to end the violence in the Middle East. Parishes joined Pope Benedict on Sunday, July 23 in a special day of prayer and penance “To implore from God the special gift of peace.”

The Pope’s message set out the hope, “...for an immediate cease-fire between the sides, for humanitarian corridors to be opened in order to bring help to suffering peoples, and for reasonable and responsible negotiations to put an end to objective situations of injustice that exist in the region...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.”

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has spoken out to “condemn the terror and provocative acts of Hamas and Hezbollah that precipitated the crisis.” The Bishops recognize that “Israel clearly has a right to defend itself.” However, “Israel’s response has been, in some instances, militarily disproportionate and indiscriminate.”

The USCCB “calls upon the United States to exert greater leadership with all parties to the conflict and to work more intensively and multilaterally to end the provocations and violence, to secure a ceasefire, to restrain Israel, to move toward negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians to bring about security for Israel and a viable state for the Palestinians, and to ensure the independence of Lebanon.”

For more information, go to the website of the US Catholic Bishops, www.USCCB.org