



The Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson
Archdiocese of Indianapolis
1400 N. Meridian Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367
317-236-1403

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

800 years ago, the Church entrusted the guardianship of the Holy Land to the Franciscans whose purpose is to support its people and maintain the holy sites. The Franciscans preserve the holy places and make it possible for Christians to remain in the land of Jesus.

In these days of escalating tensions and war in the Middle East, our attention is drawn to the instability in the region and the dangers experienced by the people living there. The following message from the Custos of the Holy Land describes the dire situation and the need for our participation in **The Pontifical Collection for the Holy Land**.

"The war, the violence and the insecurity have hit Gaza, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and Syria hard. To all this was added the long absence of pilgrims, which has aggravated a situation already complicated for many families who no longer have the means to support themselves.

Young people are finding it increasingly difficult to imagine a future here, in their land. Hope itself appears wounded, in Bethlehem, in Jerusalem, in the North of Israel, as well as in Lebanon and in Syria. In this context, the words of the Holy Father resonate strongly, who has called us back to the urgency of prayer and fasting for peace, asking with force for an end to the conflict in the Holy Land.

Good Friday, then, takes on an even deeper meaning for us. The Pontifical Collection Pro Terra Sancta is not just a gesture of solidarity: it is a concrete sign of communion with the Church of Jerusalem. Thanks to this Collection we can support schools, parishes, charitable works, social projects and emergency interventions, keeping the Christian presence alive in the Places of Redemption.

Today more than ever we are called to rebuild: not only buildings, but we are called to rebuild relations, trust, hope. And this passes above all through education, through the youth, through families, through the places where a culture of encounter and peace can be born."

May our prayers, sacrifices and financial offerings lead to peace for all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Charles C. Thompson*

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