



Your Holiness Pope Francis,

Your Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas,

I have come from the Holy City of Jerusalem to thank you for your exceptional invitation. The Holy City of Jerusalem is the beating heart of the Jewish People. In Hebrew, our ancient language, the word Jerusalem and the word for peace share the same root. And indeed peace is the vision of Jerusalem.

As it is said in the Book of Psalms:

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

“May those who love you be secure. 7 May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.” 8 For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, “Peace be within you.” 9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity.

During your historic visit to the Holy Land, you moved us with the warmth of your heart, the sincerity of your intentions, your modesty, and your kind ways. You touched the people’s hearts – regardless of their faith or nation. You emerged as a bridge-builder of brotherhood and peace. We are all in need of the inspiration which accompanies your character and your way.

Thank you.

Two peoples – Israelis and Palestinians – still are aching for peace. The tears of mothers over their children are still etched in our hearts. We must put an end to the cries, to the violence, to the conflict. We all need peace. Peace between equals.

Your invitation to us to join you in this momentous ceremony to call for peace, here in the Vatican garden, in the presence of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Druze leaders, graciously reflects your vision of the aspiration we all share: Peace.

On this moving occasion, brimming with hope and full of faith, let us all raise with you, Your Holiness, a call for peace between religions, between nations, between communities, and between fellow men and women. Let true peace become our legacy soon and swiftly.

Our Book of Books commands upon us the way of peace, demands of us to toil for its realization.

It is said in the book of Proverbs:

“Her ways are ways of grace, and all her paths are peace.”

So too must our ways be. Ways of grace and peace. It is not by chance that Rabbi Akiva captured the essence of our Torah in one sentence: “Love your neighbor like thyself.” We are all equal before the Lord. We are all part of the human family. For without peace, we are not complete, and we have yet to achieve the mission of humanity.

Peace does not come easy. We must toil with all our strengths to reach it. To reach it soon. Even if it requires sacrifice or compromise.

The Book of Psalms tells us:

“Whoever loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.”

This is to say, we are commanded to pursue after peace. All year. Every day. We greet each other with this blessing. Shalom. Salam. We must be worthy of the deep and demanding meaning of this blessing. Even when peace seems distant, we must pursue it to bring it closer.

And if we pursue peace with perseverance, with faith, we will reach it.

And it will endure through us, through all of us, of all faiths, of all nations, as it is written:

“They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

The soul is elated upon the reading of these verses of eternal vision. And we can – together and now, Israelis and Palestinians – convert our noble vision to a reality of welfare and prosperity. It is within our power to bring peace to our children. This is our duty, the holy mission of parents.

Let me end with a prayer:

He who makes peace in the heavens shall make peace upon us and upon all of Israel, and upon the entire world, and let us say Amen.