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CNS documentary service

Invoking Peace in the Middle East

Pope Francis

Acknowledging that efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East “by our own powers and by the force of our arms” have failed, Pope Francis joined in prayer June 8 at the Vatican with Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The pope had invited the two leaders to the evening “invocation for peace” in the Vatican Gardens during his visit to the Holy Land two weeks earlier. It was believed to be the first time Christians, Muslims and Jews had prayed in each other’s presence at the Vatican. Pope Francis, who spoke first, said they were accompanied in their prayers for peace by “the prayers of countless people of different cultures, nations, languages and religions.” He focused especially on war’s effects on chil-

“Peacemaking calls for courage, much more so than warfare. It calls for the courage to say yes to encounter and no to conflict; yes to dialogue and no to violence.”

dren — “our children who are weary, worn out by conflicts and yearning for the dawn of peace, our children who plead with us to tear down the walls of enmity and to set out on the path of dialogue and peace, so that love and friendship will prevail.” Although the Middle East has been “on the verge of peace” more than once in the past, Pope Francis said, “the evil one, employing a variety of means, has succeeded in blocking it.” He asked God to “keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation” and said peacemaking “calls for courage, much more so than warfare.” Pope Francis spoke in Italian; a Vatican translation of his speech follows, copyright © 2014 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

I greet you with immense joy, and I wish to offer you and the eminent delegations accompanying you the same warm welcome you gave me during my recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

I am profoundly grateful to you for accepting my invitation to come here and to join in imploring from God the gift of peace. It is my hope that this meeting will be a path to seeking the things that unite so as to overcome the things that divide.

I also thank Your Holiness, my venerable brother Bartholomew, for joining me in welcoming these illustrious guests. Your presence here is a great gift, a much-appreciated sign of support and a testimony to the pilgrimage we Christians are making toward full unity.

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