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Assisi 2016: Speech at Concluding Ceremony

Pope Francis

Violence in the name of God does not represent the true nature of religion and must be condemned by all faiths, Pope Francis said. "We never tire of repeating that the name of God cannot be used to justify violence. Peace alone, and not war, is holy!" the pope said Sept. 20 at the closing ceremony of an interreligious peace gathering in Assisi, Italy. The event came 30 years after St. John Paul II gathered world religious leaders in Assisi for a historic meeting to pray for peace. In his speech, the pope called on believers of every faith "to confront the great sickness of our time: indifference." He said, "It is a virus that paralyzes, rendering us lethargic and

"Together we want to give voice to all those who suffer, to all those who have no voice and are not heard."

insensitive, a disease that eats away at the very heart of religious fervor, giving rise to a new and deeply sad paganism: the paganism of indifference." Recalling the look on the faces of the refugees he met on the Greek island of Lesbos in April, the pope called on religious believers not to remain indifferent to the suffering of others but instead to be the voice of those unheard. "I am thinking of the families whose lives have been shattered; of the children who have known only violence in their lives; of the elderly forced to leave their homeland. All of them have a great thirst for peace," he said. "We do not want these tragedies to be forgotten." Pope Francis spoke in Italian; a Vatican translation of his speech follows, copyright © 2016 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

I greet you with great respect and affection, and I thank you for your presence here. We have come to Assisi as pilgrims in search of peace. We carry within us and place before God the hopes and sorrows of many persons and peoples. We thirst for peace. We desire to witness to peace. And above all, we need to pray for peace, because peace is God's gift, and it lies with us to plead for it, embrace it and build it every day with God's help.

"Blessed are the peacemakers" (Mt 5:9). Many of you have traveled a great distance to reach this holy place. You set out, and you come together in order to work for peace: These are not only physical movements but most of all movements of the soul, concrete

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