

Pastoral Letter

### **Day of Prayer and Reflection for Gaza on Sunday, 24 August 2025**

Dear brothers and sisters,

Ten weeks ago the Catholic Bishops of Ireland dedicated the month of June as a special time of prayer for peace and for solidarity with the suffering people of Gaza. This weekend I call on all parishes to once more set aside Sunday, 24 August as a day of prayer and reflection for Gaza and for a renewed commitment by the international community for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Sadly, since June, the situation in Gaza has become steadily worse. The people there continue to be cruelly crushed by hunger, violence, death and destruction. I join the heartfelt appeal of Pope Leo XIV this week for "a ceasefire, the release of hostages, and full respect for international humanitarian law." As the Holy Father said, "Every human being has an intrinsic dignity bestowed by God Himself."

I also echo the recent words of Cardinal Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Patriarch Theophilus III, who said on 22 July, Humanitarian aid is not only necessary, it is a matter of life and death. Refusing it is not a delay, but a sentence. Every hour without food, water, medicine and shelter causes deep harm."

The Irish Bishops made it clear in June that genocidal actions sanctioned by the government in Israel are resulting in the death of tens of thousands of non-combatants, many of them women and children. "This is unconscionable and disproportionate. It is immoral for world leaders to stand by inactively in the face of this outrageous tragedy for humanity."

We know that people in parishes across the country are deeply troubled by stark and horrific images from Gaza of starving children and helpless, hungry families. The cruel actions of Hamas in continuing to keep hostages, and the bodies of hostages, away from their families is also to be unreservedly condemned.

I encourage you to continue to show solidarity in whatever way you can: by lobbying your political representatives, supporting humanitarian aid and, above all, by continuing to pray for an end to the conflict and the resumption of peace, including the return of all hostages and prisoners. Pray also for our Christian brothers and sisters among the Palestinian populations in Gaza and on the West Bank who are witnessing daily to peace and non-violence, even in the midst of provocation and attacks.

As Cardinal Pizzaballa said:

"Christ is not absent from Gaza. He is there, crucified in the wounded, buried under rubble and

yet present in every act of mercy, every candle in the darkness, every hand extended to the suffering.”

Please join in 24 hours of prayer and reflection in your parishes and homes on **Sunday, 24 August.**

Light a candle in your family home or local parish church; attend Mass, spend time before the Blessed Sacrament; pray the Rosary; make some small personal penance or sacrifice, and on that day let the light of hope radiate out from the island of Ireland for peace, for Gaza and for the future of its people.

Yours sincerely in Christ,  
Eamon Martin  
Archbishop of Armagh  
Apostolic Administrator of Dromore