

# VOICES FOR PEACE

IN THE HOLY LAND

A PARISH GUIDE

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[www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland\\_peace.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland_peace.shtml)

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PEACE**  
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## **Welcome.**

Jews, Christians and Muslims look to the Holy Land as a place of sacred events, holy sites and profound hopes. Yet the prevailing image of Israel and Palestine today is one of violence, injustice and deep suffering. In response, Catholics in the United States are joining their voices with those of people of other faiths who are calling for the United States to use its considerable influence to work for a just peace in the region, one that allows Israel and Palestine to exist as two secure and independent states in which human dignity is protected, peoples are reconciled and peace prevails.

This Parish Guide, developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), will help Catholic leaders in dioceses, parishes and schools to educate local Catholic communities about the present situation in the Holy Land, lead them to prayer for peace in the region, and inspire them to advocate for a just solution to the conflict. These resources can also help equip Catholic communities for interfaith advocacy with Jewish and Muslim communities through the additional resources available from the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East and the Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land.

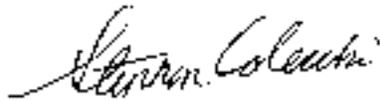
This Parish Guide is part of an effort to support peace in the Holy Land through four action areas:

- ♦ **prayer** for the Mother Church of Jerusalem and for peace;
- ♦ **pilgrimage** to the Holy Land;
- ♦ **persuasion** of political leaders to work for a just peace; and
- ♦ support for **projects** to strengthen the local Church and address humanitarian needs.

**We encourage you to use these resources to support efforts such as:**

- Social justice and adult education programs that foster learning, discussion, prayer and advocacy efforts on bringing peace to the Holy Land;
- High school religious education classes and youth ministry programs that invite teens to explore the current situation through the lens of Catholic social teaching;
- Whole community catechesis that invites intergenerational groups to learn about the Holy Land's importance to Catholics, its history and its current needs;
- Prayer experiences and liturgies that awaken concern for peace and human dignity in the Holy Land; and
- The use of bulletin announcements and newsletters to educate a broad audience on the crisis and its possible solutions.

Thank you for committing your hearts and minds and raising your voices for peace in the Holy Land.



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# Social Justice and Adult Education:

Tips for Weaving Concern about the Holy Land into Parish Programming

## **Offer a one-hour adult education session and discussion on the Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land.**

*Resources in this guide: Adult Discussion Session materials.*

## **Hold an interreligious prayer service for peace in the Holy Land.**

*Resources in this guide: Prayer Resources and Advocacy Resources materials.*

## **Create a bulletin board or tri-fold display educating people about the issue over a few weeks.**

Provide parishioners with handouts after Mass or during the parish coffee hour to foster discussion. Prepare members of your social justice committee or adult education committee ahead of time to answer questions or start informal discussion on the topic and what people can do to respond.

*Resources in this guide: Advocacy Resources and Bulletin Quotations. Further information is also available on the USCCB Israel-Palestine website: [www.usccb.org/holyland](http://www.usccb.org/holyland), the Catholics Confront Global Poverty website: [www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp\\_issues\\_peace.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp_issues_peace.shtml), and the CRS Action Center: [actioncenter.crs.org](http://actioncenter.crs.org).*

## **Invite a local or national speaker to present on the current crisis in Israel and Palestine.**

Contact the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI) ([www.nili-mideastpeace.org/](http://www.nili-mideastpeace.org/)), your CRS regional office (find it at [www.crs.org/united-states/](http://www.crs.org/united-states/)), your diocesan social action office, or your diocesan ecumenical/interreligious officer for suggestions on speakers who can explain avenues for peace in the region, such as the recommendations of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI) and the Geneva Initiative. Follow up the presentation with questions and answers. Leave time to explain the most recent legislative action that the USCCB and CRS are advocating, and provide ways for participants to respond.

*Resources in this guide: Advocacy Resources.*

## **Offer a half-day seminar for adults or teens on Catholic Social Teaching and Advocacy on Israel and Palestine.**

*Resources in this guide: Welcome to the Holy Land Exercises.*

## **Support your diocese’s interreligious dialogue on peace in the Holy Land.**

The National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI) is an effort of U.S. Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders—including the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops—to promote specific steps toward peace in the region. It is a model of interreligious dialogue, collegiality and common ground. Under the leadership of your bishop, your diocese may be participating in this process with local Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious leaders. Consult with your diocesan social action director or the diocesan ecumenical/interreligious officer to discuss how your parish can best support his process. *For more information, consult [www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/interreligious.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/interreligious.shtml) or [www.nili-mideastpeace.org](http://www.nili-mideastpeace.org), and see the resources on Catholic support for local interreligious initiatives (Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land) at [www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland\\_peace.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland_peace.shtml).*

## **Show a documentary about how Israelis and Palestinians are working together to bring peace to the region and hold a discussion afterward. Consider showing:**

- Encounter Point — [www.encounterpoint.com](http://www.encounterpoint.com)
- Promises — [www.pbs.org/pov/pov2001/promises/thefilm.html](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2001/promises/thefilm.html)

# Welcome to the Holy Land:

Exercises in Applying Catholic Social Teaching to the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict

## Introduction

Through reflections on holiness and on principles of Catholic social teaching, the following activities invite participants to explore how a region currently devastated by violent conflict can be transformed by efforts to build peace. Participants also explore how they can help through advocacy.

Altogether, the exercises and discussions take about three hours. They can be used for a half-day retreat on Catholic social teaching for groups of high school age through adults. Or they can be divided over several sessions or class periods.

## Materials and Handouts

- ◆ Prayer resource
- ◆ Catholic social teaching handouts
- ◆ Advocacy resources
- ◆ *Peace in the Holy Land: Investing in Youth Leaders* activity directions and handouts
- ◆ USCCB and CRS Advocacy materials on Israel and Palestine available at: [www.usccb.org/holyland](http://www.usccb.org/holyland).
- ◆ Poster board and markers
- ◆ Pens
- ◆ Flip chart paper and markers

## Opening Prayer (5 min)

Start with a brief prayer from the Prayer Resources section of this guide.

## Exploring Catholic Social Teaching (30 min)

In this exercise groups of participants learn about a particular facet of Catholic social teaching, share it with the large group and become experts who will apply this concept of Catholic social teaching in other exercises.

## Welcome to the Holy Land: Travel Posters and Discussion (30 min)

In this exercise participants discuss the concept of holiness and imagine how it might be manifest in a “holy land.” They create travel posters that reflect their work and their applications to Catholic social teaching.

### **Exploring the Holy Land, Israel and Palestine Today** (30 min)

This session provides an overview of the current conflict in the Holy Land and explains the U.S. Bishops’ call for peace in the region.

### **Peace in the Holy Land: Investing in Youth Leaders** (30 min)

Participants analyze how a CRS program that works with youth in Gaza helps to build peace in the region, and connect the effort to Catholic social teaching.

### **U.S. Catholics Can Help Make a Difference** (15 min)

Participants discuss the tools they need to advocate for a two-state solution.

### **Closing Prayer** (10 min)

Close with one of the prayers listed in the Prayer Resources section of this guide.

## Exploring Catholic Social Teaching (30min.)



*In this exercise, members of the group each learn one of the seven themes of Catholic social teaching and then teach the others about it. In subsequent exercises the participants will be asked to look at various situations through the lens of their particular theme of Catholic social teaching (CST) in order to help the entire group understand how it can be applied.*

- A. Provide each participant with one segment from the *Catholic social teaching* handout. Give each person time to read the paragraph and jot down an answer to the question that accompanies it.
- B. Group participants who have the same principle of Catholic social teaching and invite them to share their answers with each other.
- C. Each CST group reports back to the large group. Invite the groups to summarize their principle of CST and share one of the examples that they discussed regarding where this teaching would make an impact in the world and how.

**The CST Challenge** — *Inform the participants that they will be called upon to apply their particular principle of Catholic social teaching in the exercises that follow. Suggest that they hold on to their principle for further reference.*

# **Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching**



*Make several copies of the following pages and separate the various principles so that all the members of the group receive one theme.*

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## **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.



*Where have you seen this principle of Catholic social teaching put into practice? Write your answer on the back of this paper.*

---

## **Call to Family, Community, and Participation**

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society in economics and politics, in law and policy directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.



*Where have you seen this principle of Catholic social teaching put into practice? Write your answer on the back of this paper.*

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## Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.



*Where have you seen this principle of Catholic social teaching put into practice?  
Write your answer on the back of this paper.*

---

## Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.



*Where have you seen this principle of Catholic social teaching put into practice?  
Write your answer on the back of this paper.*

---

## The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected – the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.



*Where have you seen this principle of Catholic social teaching put into practice?  
Write your answer on the back of this paper.*

---

## Solidarity

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that "if you want peace, work for justice."<sup>1</sup> The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.



*Where have you seen this principle of Catholic social teaching put into practice?  
Write your answer on the back of this paper.*

---

## Care for God's Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.



*Where have you seen this principle of Catholic social teaching put into practice?  
Write your answer on the back of this paper.*

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Paul VI, For the Celebration of the Day of Peace (Rome: January 1, 1972).

Text is drawn from Sharing Catholic social teaching: Challenges and Directions (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998) and Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2003).

# Welcome to the Holy Land:

Travel Posters and Discussion (30 min)



## **Preparation**

*Post a map of Israel and Palestine on the wall or flip chart as you present the introduction to the program. You might want to have more than one presenter read parts of the following introduction.*

## **Facilitator**

Christians call Israel and Palestine the Holy Land because our most sacred stories happened there; it is the land where Jesus was born, and where he proclaimed the coming Reign of God. It is the place of his crucifixion and resurrection. Catholics consider this region of Israel and Palestine our spiritual homeland.

The Holy Land is also sacred to Jews and Muslims. We all share Abraham as a spiritual father, and his story is in this land. The history of the Jewish people unfolded here – from Abraham and Moses to King David and the prophets. Muslims consider Jerusalem to be the place where Muhammad was taken up to visit heaven in the 7 century AD.

So the Holy Land, as a place sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, is a sign to each of these Abrahamic faiths that God acts in human history.

But sadly the human part of our history falls short of our ideals, and it falls short of the world that God desires. Today the Holy Land is also a place of violent conflict. This conflict centers on many issues – identity, culture, access to water, land. Religion plays its part in the conflict as does the need for Israelis and Palestinians to live freely in the region without fear of terrorism or oppression.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has called upon Catholics in the United States to help restore Israel and Palestine as a land that bears witness to God's desire for peace. We are called to use our power as U.S. citizens to push for a two-state solution to the conflict with a secure Israel and a viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace.

Even though we are thousands of miles away from the Holy Land, we can do our part today by remembering the vision that unites Christians, Jews and Muslims in the Holy Land and by understanding what we can do to bring peace to this region.

So what goes into our vision of a truly Holy Land? We've begun to answer part of that question in our discussion of the principles of Catholic social teaching that we explored in the previous exercise. Another part of that vision relies on imagination, our ability to picture the ideal.

That's a skill that takes creativity. Reaching into the images we have received from our biblical heritage and our faith tradition can help. Paper and markers are also handy.

## Large Group Discussion

A. What images or words come to mind when you think of the word "holy?"

*Write group responses on flip chart paper. (5 min)*

B. So if a place were truly holy, a "holy land" so to speak, what would it be like? How would you know it's holy if you just wandered into the place? How would people treat one another?

*Write on a second piece of flip chart paper (5 min)*



*If you have a large group that doesn't like to offer answers aloud, try this tip. Give each person a piece of paper and have them fold it in half. On the top half ask them to write three words or images that come to mind when they think of the word "holy." Instruct the group members to crumple their papers into balls or fold them into airplanes and toss them across the room. Participants pick up a paper that is not theirs, open it and share the answer before them with the large group. Write the answers on the flip chart. Then have participants use the bottom half of the paper to answer the second question, and proceed as with the first.*

## Poster Activity (20 min)

Split the group into small groups of four to six people. Give each group poster board and markers to design "Welcome To the Holy Land" travel posters, advertising the sort of attractions, sites and qualities that a visitor would discover in a place that is truly holy, based on the large group discussion. Individuals should illustrate how their theme of Catholic social teaching (from the previous exercise) is present in this Holy Land.

*When the posters are finished, present them to the large group and hang them on the wall.*

# Exploring the Holy Land

Israel and Palestine Today (30 min)



*This exercise invites participants to learn more about the conflict in Israel and Palestine and apply Catholic social teaching to what they learn.*

## Large Group Discussion (10 min)

- Catholics revere the Holy Land because its history includes sacred history and the roots of Christian faith. Are Catholics also able to recognize that Israel and Palestine are deeply challenged by political and social issues in our time?
- What do you know about Israel and Palestine right now? Does the region match the ideal of the Holy Land you have put in your posters?
- Do you think it's possible to bring Israel and Palestine closer to the vision that you described? What would it take?

The Catholic Church believes that a new vision of the Holy Land is possible.

Pope Benedict XVI said:

*“Let us break the vicious circle of violence. Let there be lasting peace based on justice, let there be genuine reconciliation and healing. Let it be universally recognized that the State of Israel has the right to exist, and to enjoy peace and security within internationally agreed borders. Let it be likewise acknowledged that the Palestinian people have a right to a sovereign independent homeland, to live with dignity and to travel freely. Let the two-state solution become a reality, not remain a dream.”*

(Pope Benedict XVI during his pilgrimage last month to the Holy Land, May 2009)

Pope John Paul II said:

*“What a blessing it would be if this Holy Land, where God spoke and Jesus walked, could become a special place for encounter and prayer for peoples, if this Holy City of Jerusalem could be a sign and instrument of peace and reconciliation!”*

(Pope John Paul II, Address to the Diplomatic Corps, January 11, 1992)

Pope John Paul II said:

*“But let us pray also for the city of Jerusalem, that it may increasingly be a place for the encounter of religions and peoples; that it may truly be a place of peace.”*

(Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, October 12, 2005)

## **Overview of the Current Situation**

*To provide an overview of the current situation in Israel and Palestine, have the participants read through the Backgrounder Handout (quietly or aloud in small groups).*

## **Afterward**

- Do you have any questions about what is going on in Israel and Palestine right now?
- Why are the U.S. Catholic bishops getting involved? Why do they think that the United States could make a difference there?
- Let's hear from our CST voices – how does your piece of Catholic social teaching fit in here?

# **Peace in the Holy Land**

Investing in Youth Leaders (Small Group/Large Group Activity, 30 min.)



## **You will need:**

- “Investing in Youth Leaders” pages– one for each small group
- Pens for making notes
- Flip Chart Paper

*Use the introduction on the following page to give the entire group some background on the current violence in Gaza, which is in Palestine. Use a map to show where it is.*

## **Divide the large group into five small groups**

*Provide each group with a different segment of the CRS article in this guide, *Peace in the Holy Land: Investing in Youth Leaders*, by Kat Burnside. Give each group about 10 minutes to read the section aloud and write their collective answers to the accompanying questions.*

*Have the group briefly summarize their segment and share their answers with the large group – 20 min. As the groups share, capture on flip chart paper key words that they use to describe peacebuilding efforts, skills and techniques.*

*Afterward: Point out any ways these stories and comments resonated with their original travel poster visions of a holy land.*



## Facilitator Introduction

*Before beginning the following exercises, present to the large group this introduction to current violence in Palestine and how CRS is focusing its on-the-ground efforts to build peace with Palestinians.*

### Facilitator

There are signs of hope in the effort to bring peace to Israel and Palestine. For example, Catholic Relief Services has been part of efforts to foster peace through programs that teach peace and reconciliation techniques to Palestinian youth. But first it is helpful to have some background on the conflict in Gaza, where these youth live.

In the region of Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, Catholic Relief Services partners with community councils, high schools, youth organizations, universities and human rights organizations to help impoverished Palestinians. In addition to the strain of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, internal conflicts make efforts to build a lasting peace in the region even more complicated. *Hamas*, an armed Islamic movement that does not recognize Israel, and *Fatah*, a secular party that does, have been unsuccessful in their attempts to share power in Palestine. In June of 2007 *Hamas* fighters seized control of the Gaza strip from *Fatah*, significantly increasing the tension and hardship in the area.

In the face of such fragmentation and strain, CRS has been working with youth leaders to overcome their traumatic experiences and to develop a campaign that encourages peaceful conflict resolution among Palestinian young people.

One week after the June attack on Gaza, 60 university students attended a youth leadership summer camp in Gaza, sponsored by Catholic Relief Services and local church and community partners. Participants engaged in three days of group exercises designed to demonstrate the ideals of effective leadership, good governance, teamwork and social peace.

In the following exercises you will explore some of the ways their experience helps build peace in the Holy Land.

## Excerpt 1

### **University Students Enjoy Some Downtime at a CRS Youth Leadership Summer Camp in Gaza**

Twenty one-year-old Ala'a Abu Tailk of Gaza was among a group of 60 university students, men and women, who enrolled in a youth leadership summer camp in Gaza, sponsored by Catholic Relief Services and local church and community partners. Participants engaged in three days of group exercises designed to demonstrate the ideals of effective leadership, good governance, teamwork and social peace.

"The program helped me open my mind to new ways of working together, by making a network of associations," says Ala'a, who volunteers in many local civic organizations. A student of information technology, he plans to open his own business in Gaza after finishing his master's degree.

The leadership training camp was planned weeks in advance, but on the heels of the deadly and frightening fighting in Gaza, it also provided students an outlet to help cope with the trauma of extreme violence.

Students shared their experiences and frustrations in open group-therapy discussions. On the third day, they released tension through beach games like soccer, volleyball and badminton.

"In the beginning, I was very depressed and had hit rock bottom," admits Ala'a. "But now I think I can take small steps that will have a large impact on others."

"The crisis will last for years, but I hope the Palestinian people can move beyond it and heal our wounds by focusing on social change and tribunal conflict resolution."

### **Be prepared to report back to large group:**

- How does this CRS program contribute to peace in Palestine?
- What skills did the participants learn?
- What techniques helped them learn?
- How is your principle of Catholic social teaching applied here?

## Excerpt 2

### **CRS Programming in Gaza and the West Bank**

CRS' youth initiatives in Gaza and the West Bank, including the leadership camp, aim to engage young Palestinian men and women as a force of positive change in society. Decades of social fragmentation, continued violence, lack of economic opportunity and a weakened educational system have had a significant impact on younger generations.

“Some of the problems in present-day Palestinian society are caused by misdirected youth,” acknowledges Tom Garofalo, the former head of CRS' programs in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. “But young people make up more than 50 percent of the Palestinian population, and we have to invest in them as the leaders of the future.”

The work begins at the community level with programs that integrate school, family and civic participation. Mobilizing youth in their communities helps instill a sense of commitment toward social reform, and also builds awareness in the community of responsibilities toward younger generations.

“In order to secure positive change and progress towards peace, Palestinians need to rely on youth who are tolerant, committed to their communities, educated and highly aware,” stresses Garofalo.

### **Be prepared to report back to large group:**

- How does this CRS program contribute to peace in Palestine?
- What skills did the participants learn?
- What techniques helped them learn?
- How is your principle of Catholic social teaching applied here?

## Excerpt 3

### **They Treat Us Like Adults**

In the CRS Value Building Education program, skills such as public speaking, teamwork, problem solving and research are enhanced by activities that also teach teenagers about respect for religion, solidarity, responsibility and acceptance of people with needs.

“We recognize that education doesn’t only happen in the classroom, but also in visits to local institutions, social organizations and through community activities,” says Tom Garofalo, former head of CRS’ programs in Jerusalem.

Mouna Jaber, a 14-year-old student at St. Joseph’s School for Girls in Jerusalem, was struck by a visit to a local orphanage. “I was surprised to know that there are women, whom the kids call ‘Mother,’ who take care of these children as if they were their mothers,” she says.

“We played with the children there. We visited their rooms, which they call ‘houses,’ and they were happy to spend time with us. We felt that we were able to do something for them.”

Community outings also help promote a sense of social responsibility in young students and encourage active citizenship.

### **Be prepared to report back to large group:**

- How does this CRS program contribute to peace in Palestine?
- What skills did the participants learn?
- What techniques helped them learn?
- How is your principle of Catholic social teaching applied here?

## Excerpt 4

### **An Educational Outing to the Separation Wall in the West Bank Educates Youth Leaders About Their Community**

“I feel that we in Jerusalem are isolated in a certain area. We don’t know about the rest of the country,” says Mouna Jaber, a 14-year-old-student whose group went on a trip to see the separation wall in Qalqilya in the West Bank.

“When people or foreigners used to ask about our country, I didn’t know what to answer, but now my knowledge has improved.”

This new awareness has also helped boost Mouna’s confidence. “I feel like now I can take more responsibility. I’m more honest, and I’m not shy or scared to speak in front of people anymore.”

Of the teachers she adds, “They treat us like adults; they stopped treating us like little girls.”

### **Be prepared to report back to large group:**

- How does this CRS program contribute to peace in Palestine?
- What skills did the participants learn?
- What techniques helped them learn?
- How is your principle of Catholic social teaching applied here?

## Excerpt 5

### Building Community Leaders

Most summer camps for youth in the West Bank are for younger children, ages 4 to 12. Older youth sometimes volunteer as camp leaders, but by and large there are few summer activities available to Palestinian teenagers.

Zahi Khoury, 15, appreciates that the CRS Value Building Education camp he attends at the all-boys Terra Sancta School in Jerusalem offers interesting lectures suitable to his age group and education level. “It’s very different,” he says. “It teaches us how to communicate, how to talk with people.”

Joint activities involving schools in the West Bank are organized to educate students on issues relevant to the greater community. Students and parents work as groups to assess youth problems and needs. They then partner with peer groups in other schools to discuss their findings and seek solutions.

One activity, a media training, connects five students from different schools who work together and learn to express relevant youth issues on a mock television show.

“The joint activities with other schools are great, especially with the schools in the West Bank,” says Zahi. “The students there are the same as we are, and they are always happy and smiling.”

Of course, there are nonacademic activities too, like basketball, which CRS uses to attract enrollment in the summer months. Zahi is glad to play basketball again with the other boys, and even the experience on the court has improved his interpersonal skills.

“I used to use bad words when I talk, then I stopped,” says Zahi. “We used to hit each other when we play and when we fight. Now we don’t.” He pauses, “Actually sometimes we do, but it is much less than before.”

### Be prepared to report back to large group:

- How does this CRS program contribute to peace in Palestine?
- What skills did the participants learn?
- What techniques helped them learn?
- How is your principle of Catholic social teaching applied here?

# U.S. Catholics Can Help Make A Difference (15 min)



## Facilitator

When you help strengthen or encourage another person or group of people by your presence or your support, that is called solidarity. It is an important term in Catholic teaching on justice because it is a force that brings diverse people together to work for the common good. The Catholic Bishops have called upon Catholics in the United States to stand in solidarity with those working for peace in the Holy Land. They are calling upon Catholics to use their power as U.S. citizens to ask the U.S government to help secure a just peace in the region.

*Provide participants with the latest USCCB action alert on the conflict ([www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/israelpalestine.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/israelpalestine.shtml)) and give them a few minutes to read it over. Take a few moments to answer any questions participants might have. Then discuss either in the large group or in small groups.*

## Take an advocacy inventory asking for a show of hands:

- How many of you can read and write?
- How many of you can speak?
- How many of you live in a community where you have a constitutional right to assemble in groups, to read or produce a newspaper, to practice your religion?
- How many of you have representation in national government, people who are voted into office by the people in their community or region?
- How many of you have a computer or a library card?
- How many of you have an e-mail account?
- How many of you have a cell phone?

## Facilitator

These are the basic tools of advocacy – they make advocacy possible. If you are a U.S. citizen, your constitutional rights also protect you in this effort. Those rights and those tools give citizens a good deal of power to influence opinions and foster change locally and globally. Mainly it requires the will to use the tools to help people whose voices are not being heard. This is an example of solidarity.

## Discuss:

- What can people like us do to help transform the Holy Land?
- How are we connected to the issue?
- What power do we have?
- What do you need to do advocacy and where can you get it?

# Peace Pilgrimage To The Holy Land

An Intergenerational Learning Session

## Introduction

The *Peace Pilgrimage to the Holy Land* resource offers a variety of suggestions and activities for holding a three-hour, intergenerational religious education program on Israel and Palestine. By using the Catholic tradition of pilgrimage, participants can explore the call to peace in the region on many levels, inviting families, singles, seniors and youths to learn together and from one another. In addition to this “virtual” pilgrimage exercise, Catholic parishes and groups planning actual pilgrimages to the Holy Land are urged to use Pilgrimage Guidelines approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in consultation with Catholic Relief Services and others. See [www.usccb.org/holyland](http://www.usccb.org/holyland).



## How to Use this Resource

Parishes that already use intergenerational learning, also called whole community catechesis, as part of their regular religious education program will find here a number of suggestions that can be adapted to their current structure. A parish can also use this as a stand-alone event.

In general this approach benefits from a small team to coordinate the event. Tasks include: coordinating the potluck meal, advertising the event, selecting and inviting speakers and presenters, designing the pilgrimage stations, facilitating small group and large group discussion.

Community members who have been to the Holy Land and have pictures, postcards, souvenirs and stories to share would be ideal to invite to help plan and present. Social justice committee members who are working to engage the community on global justice should also be included. A lead catechist should be prepared to provide a general overview of learning objectives during large group discussions and to capture the insights and points of learning that the group shares throughout.

While the event can be adapted in several ways, this resource includes suggestions for

- An opening Prayer Service
- An overview of the topic in the large group
- Pot luck meal to build community
- Concurrent age-appropriate learning opportunities
- A virtual peace pilgrimage of the Holy Sites of Jerusalem
- Closing prayer and Closing Prayer Service
- Take home follow-up materials to encourage ongoing learning

## Room Set Up

This event works best if you have several rooms available to you. These include:

- ♦ A large central room for participants to share the pot luck meal and do large group and small group processing. Tables that can accommodate more than one family should be set up in such a way that all can see the main facilitator.
- ♦ A classroom or partitioned area where three pilgrimage stations can be set up ahead of time, including wall space for hanging pictures and information and table space for crafts and other activities.
- ♦ Separate rooms as necessary for concurrent presentations and discussions.

## Time required: about 3 hours, including potluck meal



Learning objectives: Learn why pilgrimage is important to Catholics, as well as Jews and Muslims. Use the image of pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Israel and Palestine to explore the common ground shared by Jews, Christians, and Muslims and the invitation to foster peace in a region marred by conflict.

- I. Introduction
- II. Opening Prayer – use the Prayer Service Resource – 15-20 minutes
- III. Catechesis on pilgrimage and Holy Land – perhaps the Welcome to the Holy Land Poster Activity.
- IV. Potluck meal – encourage people to bring Middle Eastern or biblical foods– 45 min to 1 hour
- V. Concurrent age-appropriate learning activities – 60 minutes.
- VI. Return to share what you learned in large group or small – Facilitator writes the group's comments on chart paper and posts them
- VII. Closing Prayer Service
- VIII. Each participant/family gets a packet of take-home materials
  - A. Latest Action Alert
  - B. Advocacy Resources on the Holy Land
  - C. Follow-up tips

# Opening Prayer Service



*In the room where the participants are gathering, create a prayer table that can serve as a focal point during the Peace Pilgrimage event. This table can include pictures of the Holy Land and symbols of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.*

## **A Note on Shared Prayer**

As Catholics, we are aware that prayer is a special gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Christian, who received the Holy Spirit, prays in union with Jesus and so glorifies the Father. Through prayer and worship the Christian truly participates in the divine life of the Trinity. Because Christian prayer is founded upon faith in Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, it would be inappropriate to invite those who are not baptized Christians to pray Christian prayers. However, since Christians share a common source of revelation with the Jewish people in the Hebrew Scriptures, Catholics and Jews can pray the Psalms together.

The Book of Blessings contains special prayers for interreligious gatherings approved for Catholic use. Since neither Jews nor Christians recognize the Qur'an as revealed scripture, in common prayer they should not be asked to acknowledge the Qur'an as the "word of God." It is, however, advisable to have a Muslim scholar recite and explain the meaning of the Qur'an to an interreligious gathering.

## **Order for the Blessing of Pilgrims on Their Departure**

*When the group of pilgrims has gathered, Psalm 122 or some other suitable song may be sung.*

*After the singing, the celebrant or leader says:*

*[If the group is Christian/Catholic, the leader may begin with all making the sign of the cross; otherwise omit and begin with the Greeting.]*

## **Sign of the Cross**

**Prayer Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL:** Amen.

*The celebrant or leader greets those present in the following or suitable words, taken mainly from sacred Scripture.*

## **Greeting**

**Leader:** May God, our strength and salvation, be with you all.

**Response:** And also with you.

**Leader:** Brothers and sisters, as we set out, we should remind ourselves of the reasons for our resolve to go on this holy pilgrimage. The place we intend to visit is a monument to the devotion of the people of God. They have gone there in great numbers to be strengthened in the faith and to become more determined to devote themselves to the works of charity. We must also try to bring something to the faithful who live there: our example of faith, hope, and love. In this way both they and we will be enriched by the help we give each other.

## **Prayer of Invocation**

**Leader:** Let us pray.

**Leader:** Lord, may everything we do begin with your inspiration and continue with your help, so that our prayers and works may begin in you and by you be happily ended. Glory and praise to you forever and ever.

**ALL:** Amen.

## **Reading of the Word of God**

*[If the group is Christian/Catholic, the following reading may be used.]*

**Reader:** Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians (5:6-10).

So we are always courageous, although we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yet we are courageous, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord. Therefore, we aspire to please him, whether we are at home or away. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil.

*[If the group is an interreligious group, one of the following readings may be used:]*

Isaiah 2:2-5 – *Let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

Hebrews 10:19-25 – *Let us draw near in utter sincerity and absolute confidence.*

*One of the following responsorial psalms may be sung or said, or some other suitable song.*

Psalm 24

**Leader:** Lord this is the people that longs to see your face.

**ALL:** Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

**Leader:** The LORD'S are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

**ALL:** Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

**Leader:** Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD or who may stand in his holy place? He whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain.

**ALL:** Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

**Leader:** He shall receive a blessing from the LORD, a reward from God his savior. Such is the race that seeks for him, that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

**ALL:** Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

*Or you may use Psalm 27: 1, 4, 13-14*

(v. 4) One thing I seek: to dwell in the house of the LORD.

*As circumstances permit, the celebrant or leader may give those present a brief explanation of the biblical text, so that they may understand through faith the meaning of the celebration.*

### **Intercessions**

*The intercessions are then said. The celebrant or leader introduces them and an assisting minister or one or more readers may be used to announce the intentions.*

*[For use for Christian/Catholic groups.] The celebrant or leader says:*

**Leader:** God is the beginning and the end of life's pilgrimage. Let us call on him with confidence, saying:

**ALL:** Lord, be the companion of our journey.

**Reader:** Father all-holy, of old you made yourself the guide and the way for your people as they wandered in the desert; be our protection as we begin this journey, so that we may return home again in safety. (For this we pray:)

**ALL:** Lord, be the companion of our journey.

**Reader:** You have given us your only Son to be our way to you; make us follow him faithfully and unswervingly. (For this we pray:)

**ALL:** Lord, be the companion of our journey.

**Reader:** You guide your pilgrim Church on earth through the Holy Spirit; may we seek you in all things and walk always in the way of your commandments. (For this we pray:)

**ALL:** Lord, be the companion of our journey.

**Reader:** You lead us along right and peaceful paths; grant that we may one day see you face to face in heaven. (For this we pray:)

**ALL:** Lord, be the companion of our journey.

*[The following intercessions may be used for interreligious groups:]*

**Reader:** You have sent sages and prophets to show us how to seek and find you; may we persevere in our spiritual journey. (For this we pray:)

**ALL:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Reader:** You have given us the moral laws of nature as our guide; may we always recognize the sign of your presence along the way of our lives. (For this we pray:)

**ALL:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Reader:** You guide us along the way of peace and forgiveness; may we walk always in the way of your commands. (For this we pray:)

**ALL:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Reader:** You lead us along a safe path even in the valley of death and discouragement; grant that we may bear one another's burdens and bring freedom and justice to the oppressed. (For this we pray:)

**ALL:** Lord, hear our prayer.

### **Prayer of Blessing**

All powerful God,  
you always show mercy toward those who love you  
and you are never far away from those who seek you.  
Remain with your servants on this holy pilgrimage  
and guide their way in accord with your will.  
Shelter them with your protection by day,  
give them the light of your grace by night,  
and, as their companion on the journey,  
bring them to their destination in safety.  
\*We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

*\*[If the gathering is interreligious, omit "We ask this through Christ our Lord."]*

### **Concluding Rite**

**Leader:** May the Lord guide us and direct our journey in safety.

**ALL:** Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord be our companion along the way.

**ALL:** Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord grant that the journey we begin, relying on him, will end happily through his protection.

**ALL:** Amen.

## Opening Large Group Session



*Post a large map of Israel and Palestine on the wall or flip chart as you present the introduction to the program. You might want to have more than one presenter read parts of the following introduction.*

**Facilitator:** Christians call Israel and Palestine the Holy Land because our most sacred stories happened there; it is the land where Jesus was born, and where he proclaimed the coming Reign of God. It is the place of his crucifixion and resurrection. Catholics consider this region of Israel and Palestine our spiritual homeland.

Christians have been making religious pilgrimages to the Holy Land since the 4<sup>th</sup> century. That's when the Emperor Constantine and his mother Helen built several churches in Jerusalem that marked the sites of holy events in the life of Christ. A pilgrimage is more than a tour. It is a prayerful journey that helps travelers understand their faith better by visiting places where sacred events occurred. In the middle ages, Christians vowed to visit the Holy Land at least once in their lives, and they might save money their entire lives in order to afford to travel by foot or by cart from where they lived in Europe all the way to Palestine.

Has anyone in the group been on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land or elsewhere? *(Invite some stories of pilgrimage from the group. What spiritual insights were gained from these trips?)*

The Holy Land is also sacred to Jews and Muslims. We all share Abraham as “our father in faith,” and his story is in this land. The history of the Israelites unfolded here – from Abraham and Moses to King David and the prophets. The Muslims consider Jerusalem to be the place where Muhammad was taken up to visit heaven in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD.

So the Holy Land is more than a place; it is a sign of the presence and the action of God in human history.

But sadly the human part of our history falls short of our ideals, and it falls short of the world that God desires. Today the Holy Land is also a place of violent conflict, as Jews and Muslims fight over the right to live freely in the region without fear of terrorism or oppression.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has called upon Catholics in the United States to help restore Israel and Palestine to a land that is a sign of the presence and action of God in history. We are called to use our power as U.S. citizens to push for a two-state solution to the conflict with a secure Israel and a viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace.

Even though we are thousands of miles away from the Holy Land, we can do our part today by remembering the vision that unites Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land and by understanding what we can do to bring peace to this region.

Today we will be on a peace pilgrimage, a journey of prayer, learning, understanding and shared faith.

We are going to prepare by exploring the vision of what makes a place truly holy.

## Large Group Discussion

A. What images or words come to mind when you think of the word “holy?”

*Write group responses on flip chart paper. (5 min)*

B. So if a place were truly holy, a “holy land” so to speak, what would it be like?

– How would you know it is holy if you just wandered into the place? How would people treat one another?

*Write on a second piece of flip chart paper (5 min)*

## Optional Poster Activity (20 min)



Provide each table of participants with a sheet of flip chart paper, pencils and markers. Invite the tables to design “Welcome to the Holy Land” travel posters, advertising the sort of attractions, sites and qualities that a visitor would discover in a place that is truly holy, based on the large group discussion.

When the posters are finished, invite the groups to tape them on the wall. During the pot-luck dinner to follow, invite the participants to wander among the posters making note of similarities and differences in the Holy Land posters.

# Intergenerational Learning

## Potluck Dinner

### Suggestions

When the participants sign up for the Peace Pilgrimage invite them to sign up to bring an item that will feed roughly 10 to 12 people. It often helps to split participants up alphabetically, assigning main dishes, side dishes, salads, drinks and desserts according to last names.

Encourage participants to try their hand at making foods found in the bible or bringing Middle Eastern dishes such as rice, hummus, *baba ganouj*, kabobs, lamb dishes, baklava, pita bread, lentils, tea.

To conserve paper products, invite the participants to bring their own plates and cutlery; yet have some on hand for those who forget.

Consider creating place mats with information on Israel and Palestine.

During the meal play Middle Eastern music in the background. The Putumayo record label is a wonderful source for world music. Look up its Middle Eastern offerings at [www.putumayo.com](http://www.putumayo.com).



To help keep youngsters entertained throughout the program, keep a stack of coloring pages, word searches, and other fun sheets with a pilgrimage/ Holy Land theme on the table. Use Microsoft Word clip art to create coloring pages. You can customize your own puzzles online at [www.crosswordpuzzlegames.com](http://www.crosswordpuzzlegames.com) and at [www.edhelper.com](http://www.edhelper.com).

## Ideas for Concurrent Sessions



*For this section of the program, dedicate 40 minutes to an hour to holding several sessions that teach more specifically about Israel and Palestine. This is where youths and adults can explore the current conflict in the Holy Land and learn about the U.S. Bishops' call to help foster peace there. Meanwhile, others can learn more about the tradition of pilgrimage and about the ways Christians, Jews and Muslims view this region as sacred. If you have a whole community catechesis team, you can offer sessions geared toward specific age groups. Or you can offer a variety of activities and invite participants to pick and choose what they would like to attend. The resources in this session can be adapted as you see fit.*

### **All Ages** (including preschool)



**Holy Sites of Jerusalem** – Use these resources to design interactive pilgrimage stations that teach about three sites in Jerusalem that are considered holy by Jews, Christians and Muslims respectively: The Western or “Wailing” Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the Dome of the Rock. Resources in this guide include information, craft and activity ideas that work for a variety of ages from pre-school up.

**One-mile Prayer Walk** – A pilgrimage is a long journey, historically done on foot, so including some time during this event to walk and pray would be very appropriate. There are 5,280 feet in a mile. Measure out the length of a stretch of hallway or the length of a circuit around the church, parish hall, gymnasium, parking lot or field. Figure out how many circuits would equal a mile. Provide participants with a short prayer to pray as they walk each circuit.

**Labyrinth** – If your parish has a labyrinth on the grounds, include this as an activity. In the middle ages, people who couldn't afford a trip to the Holy Land might visit other holy sites closer to home (e.g. at Chartres). Labyrinths were originally meant as a symbolic pilgrimage with Jerusalem as the center.

**Stations of the Cross** – Walking the Stations of the Cross is another way to capture the feel of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which might include walking the Via Dolorosa, a street in Jerusalem believed to be the path that Jesus walked to his crucifixion. The street is lined with the 14 Stations of the Cross, the last five of which are contained in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, believed to be located on the site of Jesus' death and resurrection.

**Indulgences** – An indulgence may also be granted on some occasions on a pilgrimage by the local bishop. (Contact your local bishop)



## Older Youth and Adults

**Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land Discussion** – Use the Advocacy Resources and Discussion Session in this guide to hold a session on the bishops’ call for peace in the Holy Land.

**Video Segments** – Show segments from the video “Encounter Point,” which features Israeli and Palestinian families who have joined together in the Bereaved Families Forum to tell their stories as a way to foster peace in region.

**Parish Witness** – Include a talk by a parishioner or local community member who has been to the Holy Land and can speak to issues of peace, reconciliation and political action.

**PeaceMaker Video Game** – This downloadable interactive computer simulation game challenges players to broker a two-state solution in Israel and Palestine. Drawn from years of news footage of events that have occurred in the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, this experience really brings to life the various pressures, interest groups and conditions that either lead to or away from peace in the Holy Land. The game costs about \$20 to download from [www.peacemakergame.com/](http://www.peacemakergame.com/). You might make it available on a lap top computer and invite small groups to sign up to play it for 15 minutes at a time. This isn’t enough time to play the whole game, though it quickly illustrates the difficulty of making effective, peaceful choices.

**Advocacy Table** – Provide participants a chance to write to their legislators about the need for a two-state solution to bring peace to the Holy Land. Stock the table with USCCB and CRS backgrounders, action alert and sample letter language, writing paper, pens and addresses. Staff the table with a volunteer who can answer questions and who will stamp and mail the letters when the event is over.

**Encourage people to sign up for CRS’ Advocacy Network on-line at [actioncenter.crs.org](http://actioncenter.crs.org), the USCCB Advocacy Network at [www.usccb.org/sdwp/takeaction.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/takeaction.shtml), and the Catholics Confront Global Poverty initiative to find out how we can promote peace at [www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp\\_issues\\_peace.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp_issues_peace.shtml).**

# Peace Pilgrimage to the Holy Land



## **Three Holy Sites of Jerusalem: A Virtual Peace Pilgrimage**

*These three pilgrimage stations should have the look and feel of a hands-on museum exhibit, which visitors can explore at their own pace. Include activities that appeal to all ages, from the very young through adult. If some members of your congregation have visited these sites, ask them to contribute post cards, tour books and souvenirs for visitors to review. Provide some library books that visitors can browse through. Additionally, general information about the site, as well as photos from the internet, can be printed and posted for visitors to review.*

# Peace Pilgrimage Site 1

## The Western (Wailing) Wall — Instructions



*The Western Wall is held by Jews to be a remnant of the Holy Temple, and as such is a place where the spirit of God, Ruah, resides. At this peace pilgrimage site, visitors will explore the power of prayer for peace, following in the footsteps of Pope John Paul II who visited the site in 2000 and Pope Benedict XVI in 2009.*

### Suggestions for Station

- ◆ Post the overview of the site, provided with this resource.
- ◆ Design this site to include a blank wall, partition or table set on its side to serve as the “Wailing Wall.” You might cover it with brown craft paper illustrated with large stones and vegetation to resemble the actual wall.
- ◆ At the actual site in Jerusalem, people often write prayers on pieces of paper and stuff them in the cracks between the bricks in the wall. At the peace pilgrimage site, you might provide paper bricks on which people can write their personal prayers for mercy and for peace. These could be posted on the wall. Or you could provide sticky notes that can be posted on the wall. Include on the wall the prayer that Pope John Paul II left at the Western Wall when he visited in 2000:
  - ◆ “God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your name to the nations, we are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant.”
- ◆ Include a binder with sheets of paper for a visitor’s journal. Invite visitors to describe a time in their lives when they experienced the divine mercy of God. Invite young children to draw pictures of ways that God shows mercy and forgiveness or ways that people can show mercy and forgiveness to each other.
- ◆ Bible Study: The Western Wall is also a place of study. Provide a space where visitors can do a short bible study on Scriptures that speak of the Temple. These might include:
  - ◆ 1 Kings 5:15-26. Provide reflection questions on how Solomon secured peace while building his temple. What gift of God aided him? What practical tactics did he use? How might these gifts and strategies speak to the current call for peace in Israel and Palestine?
  - ◆ Psalm 27. What images describe God in this Psalm? What brings peace to the psalmist? The psalmist says, “Wait for the Lord, be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” Reflect on a time when you sought the Lord and had to wait. What was that experience like? What gave you hope? How did the Lord respond to your need?

# Peace Pilgrimage Site 1

## The Western (Wailing) Wall — Overview

*I bow low toward your holy temple; I praise your name for your fidelity and love. For you have exalted over all your name and your promise.*

(Psalm 138:2)

The Western Wall is held by Jews to be a remnant of the Holy Temple, and as such is a place where the spirit of God, Ruah, resides. Because of its nearness to the Holy of Holies on the nearby Temple Mount, it is a place of pilgrimage for Jews, who gather here to express gratitude to God and to pray for divine mercy.

The Western Wall is a site of great loss. The first Temple, built by Solomon in the 10th century BC, was destroyed by the Babylonians 400 years later. Another Temple was built in 516 BC, by the returning exiles. Around 19 BC King Herod built a splendid edifice called “The Second Temple.” The Western Wall, called the Wailing Wall because of the practice of mourning the destruction of the second Temple, was part of Herod’s Temple which was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

At the same time, the Wall is also a place of intense prayer and of study. Visitors are known to write prayer requests on small pieces of paper and tuck them into the cracks between the stones.

## **When Pope John Paul II visited the Western Wall in 2000 this is the prayer he left at the site:**

*“God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your name to the nations, we are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant.”*

## **As you visit this virtual pilgrimage site depicting the Western Wall prayerfully consider:**

- What does the practice of Jewish pilgrimage to the Western Wall teach about hope?
- What does it teach about the place of prayer in adversity?
- In what ways might the Western Wall be a sign of peace?

## Peace Pilgrimage Site 2

### The Church of the Holy Sepulcher — Instructions



*This basilica is located on the site where Christians believe Jesus was crucified and entombed. Visitors to this station will explore how our belief in the resurrection of Jesus empowers us to be peacemakers.*

- ◆ Post the overview to the site provided with this resource. You might want to enlarge it so it can be easily read from a distance.
- ◆ Provide a binder with several removable pages that instruct visitors to write a paragraph about a time where they “died” to a facet of their life that was damaging and “rose again” to something life giving and peaceful. Have participants place their stories, which can be anonymous or not as they choose, in the binder for others to read and reflect on. Encourage younger children to add pictures of their vision of peace.
- ◆ Set out some bibles that are marked with the various Scriptural accounts of the passion of Christ. Provide discussion questions that visitors can use for a small bible study.
- ◆ Engraving Craft: Inside the church of the Holy Sepulcher is a humble wall filled with crosses that pilgrims of long ago carved into the stone. One source suggests that pilgrims would carve a cross for each member of their family, whom they held in their heart. As a craft activity, provide cardboard trays and pens or wooden styluses with which visitors can carve a cross for each family member.
- ◆ The Church of the Holy Sepulcher contains the last five Stations of the Cross, the first nine of which are found along the Via Dolorosa, the road that leads to the church. Hang photos or illustrations of the five stations in your pilgrimage site. Include questions for reflection that connect the walk of Jesus with the walk toward peace.

### **The first nine of the traditional Stations of the Cross located along the Via Dolorosa are:**

1. Jesus is sentenced to death
2. Jesus is given the Cross
3. Jesus falls for the first time
4. Jesus meets His Mother
5. Simon of Cyrene helps carry the Cross
6. Veronica wipes Jesus’ face
7. Jesus falls for the second time
8. Jesus talks to the women of Jerusalem
9. Jesus falls for the third time

**The last five Stations of the Cross located within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher are:**

10. Jesus is stripped of His garments
11. Jesus is nailed to the Cross
12. Jesus dies on the Cross
13. Jesus is taken down from the Cross
14. Jesus is laid in the Sepulcher

## Peace Pilgrimage Site 2

### The Church of the Holy Sepulcher — Overview

*When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it (in) clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed. But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb.*

(Matt. 27:57-61, New American Bible)

Located within the old walled city of Jerusalem, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is believed to stand upon the site of Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified, and to be the location of the tomb or sepulcher where he was buried and from which he rose from the dead. This location has been venerated as the site of Jesus' death and resurrection from the earliest days of Christianity.

In the 4th century the Christian Emperor Constantine and his mother, Helen, built the first church at this location. Over the next two thousand years basilicas were built, destroyed, rebuilt, conquered and renovated on this site. Today several Christian denominations share custodianship of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, including the Eastern Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, and Roman Catholic Churches.

With so many groups assuming responsibility for Christianity's most holy site, conflict among the groups has flared over time. In the 19th century, a law called the *status quo* was passed, under the Ottoman Empire, requiring that no part of the areas held in common may be altered or rearranged without consent from all the communities. The site also has strict regulations governing the time and places of worship for each community in the common areas.

Interestingly, none of these Christian communities control the main door to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Since the 12th century this has been the responsibility of two neighboring Muslim families, who open and close the doors of the church to this very day. One family keeps the key and the other unlocks the door.

### **As you visit this virtual pilgrimage site depicting the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, prayerfully consider:**

- How do Jesus' death and resurrection call all Christians to unity?
- How does the death and resurrection of Jesus speak to the tensions that can develop over different understandings and interpretations of Scripture?
- How does our faith in Jesus empower us to be peace makers and to foster reconciliation in our own communities?

## Peace Pilgrimage Site 3

### The Dome of the Rock — Instructions



*Muslims revere this site as the location where Muhammad ascended to visit Heaven after being miraculously transported from Mecca to Jerusalem in one night. In this peace pilgrimage site visitors will reflect on the vision that God has shown us of a peaceful world.*

- ◆ Post the overview of this site, provided with this resource. Post photos of the site as well.
- ◆ Many stories are remembered at this site. Provide bibles and picture books that tell the various stories of Abraham and Isaac, the story of the *Lailat al Miraj* when Muhammad visited heaven, the story of Jacob's ladder.
- ◆ Mosaic Craft — The building of the Dome of the Rock contains many beautiful mosaics. As a craft project provide line drawings of some of the stories recalled at this site or symbols associated with this site, such as the Angel Gabriel. Provide cut up bits of paper in many colors and invite participants to create their own paper mosaic. Cutting old blurry photographs into small squares also provides a nice medium for paper mosaics, providing a shiny surface with many variations of color.
- ◆ Visitor's journal – Provide a binder with pages on which visitors are invited to describe their personal vision of what a “Salaam” world would look like (“Salaam” in Arabic and “Shalom” in Hebrew mean a universal peace, sacred peace with God, people and creation). Invite children to draw pictures of their vision of peace.

## Peace Pilgrimage Site 3

### The Dome of the Rock — Overview

*Glory to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless - in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things).*

(The Qur'an, Chapter 17, Sura al Isra), 17:1

The Dome of the Rock is one of the holiest sites in Islam. Built in the 7th century as a shrine for Muslim pilgrims, the building encases the rock where Muhammad is believed to have ascended to the heavens after his “night journey.”

According to the story Muhammad was resting in Mecca when the Angel Gabriel visited him, bringing a winged horse named Buraq. In one night, the horse flew Muhammad from Mecca to the “Farthest Mosque,” traditionally believed to be located on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. There Muhammad met other prophets and led them in prayer. From a rock on the Temple Mount, Muhammad then ascended to the heavens where he spoke with earlier prophets and with Allah. He was given the five prayers that Muslims say daily. Then he returned to earth.

Muslim children celebrate this story annually in a festival called the Lailat al Miraj. They go to mosques with their parents, are told the story of the night journey and then are served food and treats.

In Judaism the rock is believed to have been the site of the Holy of Holies in the Temple, as well as the place where Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son. The Temple Mount is the location of the second temple, which was destroyed by Rome in 70 AD. In Christianity, Emperor Constantine's mother, Helena, was said to have built a small church at the site in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

### **As you visit this virtual pilgrimage site, prayerfully consider:**

- ♦ Our vision of Heaven as a place of perfect peace.
- ♦ How does such a site invite people of differing beliefs and stories to share common ground?
- ♦ How does such a site contribute to a vision of peace in the Holy Land?

## Closing Prayer

*Distribute paper and pens*

- Invite participants to select a strip of paper and write a brief prayer that flows out of their thoughts and feelings from the session.
- Share prayers in the large group. After each prayer the group responds: *“Make us channels of your peace, O God.”*
- Either send the prayers home with the participants as a regular reminder to pray for the Holy Land in the days and weeks to come, or post them together on a bulletin board or wall where others will be reminded of the need for peace in the region.

# Closing Prayer Service

*Invite participants to gather again around the prayer table.*

## Order for the Blessing of Pilgrims after Their Return

*When the group of pilgrims have gathered, a suitable song may be sung, otherwise begin with the Greeting.*

*[If the group is Christian/Catholic, the group may begin with the sign of the cross.]*

**Leader:** In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

**ALL:** Amen.

### Greeting

**Leader:** May God, our hope and strength, fill you with peace and with joy. Glory to God now and forever.

**ALL:** Amen.

**Leader:** Our pilgrimage has been a privileged period of grace given us by God. We who have come to trust in this holy place are moved with a new resolve to be renewed in heart. As we return to our homes, let us live up to the vocation God has given us; to be a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people God claims for his own, so that we may everywhere proclaim the goodness of him who called us from darkness into his marvelous light.

### Reading of the Word of God

**Leader:** Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the first book of Chronicles: (29:9-19)

The people rejoiced over these free-will offerings, which had been contributed to the Lord wholeheartedly. King David also rejoiced greatly. Then David blessed the Lord, in the presence of the whole assembly, praying these words:

“Blessed may you be, O Lord, God of Israel our father, from eternity to eternity.

“Yours, O Lord, are grandeur and power, majesty, splendor, and glory.

For all in heaven and earth is yours; yours, Lord, is the sovereignty; you are exalted as head over all.

“Riches and honor are from you, and you have dominion over all. In your hand power and might; it is yours to give grandeur and strength to all.

Therefore, our God, we give you thanks and praise for the majesty of your name.”

“But who am I, and who are my people that we should have the means to contribute so freely? For everything is from you, and we only give you what we have received from you. For we stand before you as aliens: we are now your guests, like all our fathers. Our life on earth is like a shadow that does not abide. O Lord our God, all this wealth that you have brought together to build you a house in honor of your holy name comes from you and is entirely yours. I know, O my God, that you put hearts to the test and that you take pleasure in uprightness. With a sincere heart I have willingly given all these things, and now with joy I have seen your people here present also giving to you generously. O Lord, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, keep such thoughts in hearts and minds of your people forever, and direct their hearts toward you.”

*As circumstances permit, the following responsorial psalms may be said:*

**Leader:** How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord mighty God!

**ALL:** How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord mighty God!

**Leader:** My soul yearns and pines for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh cry out for the living God.

**ALL:** How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord mighty God!

**Leader:** Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest in which she puts her young – your altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God!

**ALL:** How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord mighty God!

**Leader:** Happy are they who dwell in your house! Continually they praise you. Happy are the men whose strength you are! Their hearts are set upon the pilgrimage!

**ALL:** How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord mighty God!

**Leader:** When they pass through the valley of the mastic trees, they make a spring of it; the early rain clothes it with generous growth. They go from strength to strength; and they shall see the God of gods in Zion.

**ALL:** How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord mighty God!

## INTERCESSIONS

*The celebrant or leader introduces the intercessions with these words:*

**Leader:** Look down from heaven, O Lord, and bless your people.

**ALL:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** Father all-holy, in the Passover exodus you prefigured the blessed road of your people toward salvation; grant that on all the paths we follow, we may remain wholeheartedly faithful to you. (For this we pray:)

**ALL:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** You have told us that here we have no lasting city; grant that we may always seek the city that is to come. (For this we pray:)

**ALL:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** You teach all faithful to perceive the signs of your presence along all the pathways of life. (For this we pray:)

**ALL:** Lord, hear our prayer.

## PRAYER OF BLESSING

**Leader:** Blessed are you, O God,  
Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ,  
From all races of the earth  
you have chosen a people dedicated to you,  
eager to do what is right.  
Your grace has moved the hearts of these, your friends,  
to love you more deeply and to serve you more generously.  
We ask you to bless them, so that they may tell your wonderful deeds  
and give proof of them in their lives.

*\*We ask this through Christ our Lord*

*\*[These parts should be omitted if the group is interreligious, with non-Christian participants.]*

**ALL:** Amen.

**Leader:** May God, the Lord of heaven and earth, who so graciously has accompanied you on this pilgrimage, continue to keep you under his protection.

**ALL:** Amen.

# Bulletin Quotations



The following statements can be used in parish bulletins or newsletters to help educate parishioners on the quest of peace in the Holy Land.

## Interreligious Statements

Our faith traditions teach that every person is created by the one God and deserving of respect. This common religious heritage – which we trace to Abraham – finds expression in a common commitment to peace with justice for all God’s children. ...

Despite tragic violence and discouraging developments, there are signs of hope. Majorities of both Israelis and Palestinians still support a two-state solution. Arab states have declared their commitment to peace in the Arab Peace Initiative. ... Official and informal negotiations have produced the outlines of concrete compromises for resolving the conflict, including the difficult issues of refugees and Jerusalem. Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders both here and in the region reject the killing of innocents, support a just peace, and believe sustained negotiations are the only path to peace. ...

The path to peace shuns violence and embraces dialogue. This path demands reciprocal steps that build confidence. This path can lead to a future of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace with security and dignity for both peoples and stability in the region.

...[T]he United States has a unique and indispensable role which gives our nation a special responsibility to pursue peace. Israeli-Palestinian peace must be an urgent priority for President Obama from the day he takes office. Achieving Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace will have positive reverberations in the region and around the world. Our nation and the world will be much safer with the achievement of the peace of Jerusalem.

We refuse, now and always, to give into cynicism or despair. We are people of hope. We call upon the members of our religious communities to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and to urge our political leaders to advance a two-state solution with vigor both now and in the early months of the new Administration. The time for peace is now.

Excerpts from the December 2008 statement “A Window of Hope for the Peace of Jerusalem: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders Call for Urgent U.S. Leadership” of the *National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI)*, which includes the participation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

## **Papal Statements**

“[T]he Israelis have a right to live in peace in their State; the Palestinians have a right to a free and sovereign home-land. When each of the peoples in the region sees that its expectations are taken into consideration and thus feels less threatened, then mutual trust will be strengthened.”

*(Pope Benedict XVI, January 8, 2007).*

“What a blessing it would be if this Holy Land, where God spoke and Jesus walked, could become a special place for encounter and prayer for peoples, if this Holy City of Jerusalem could be a sign and instrument of peace and reconciliation!”

*(Pope John Paul II, 1992).*

## **Statements from the Bishops of the United States**

“Once again the land that is holy to Jewish, Christian and Muslim believers is wracked by violence and fear. The tragic and terrifying cycle of provocation and response, of occupation and resistance, has erupted in another spasm of deadly violence. This cycle must be broken, especially before it continues to expand into a broader and deadlier conflict. The violence must stop and a ceasefire must be secured...”

“Our Conference calls upon the United States to exert greater leadership with all parties to the conflicts and to work more intensively and multilaterally to end the provocations and violence, to secure a ceasefire, to restrain Israel, to move toward negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians to bring about security for Israel and a viable state for the Palestinians ...

Our Conference appeals to all leaders in the region and to the leaders of our nation to make it clear that violence, from whatever side, for whatever purpose, cannot bring a lasting or just peace in the Land we call Holy. We join our prayers with those of our Holy Father who said about the current crisis: “Let us pray to Mary, Queen of Peace, to implore from God the fundamental gift of concord, bringing political leaders back to the path of reason, and opening new possibilities of dialogue and agreement.”

Excerpt from “Break the Cycle of Violence in the Holy Land” a 2006 statement of Bishop Thomas Wenski, Chairman, Committee on International Policy, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

# Prayer Resources

## Interreligious Prayers

These prayer services and individual prayers can be used to begin or end the programs outlined in the parish guide. Use the individual prayers to begin or end parish meetings, or run them in the parish bulletin or newsletter to encourage prayer for peace in the Holy Land.

Individual prayers in this resource were compiled by the *National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI)* and are used here with permission.

*Sustain together in undiminished hope, O God of hope,  
Those who continue to labor with undiminished determination  
To build peace in the land from which, of old,  
Out of brokenness, violence and destruction,  
Nevertheless hope emerged for so many of faith. . . .  
Bless all the spiritual seed of Abraham together  
With the light of your Presence.  
For in the light of your Presence  
We have found a way of justice and mercy  
And a vision of Peace.  
We praise you O God, Giver of Peace,  
Who commands us to Peace. Amen.*

Rabbi Herbert Bronstein  
Northshore Congregation Israel, Glencoe, IL

*God of mercy and compassion,  
Of grace and reconciliation,  
Pour your power upon all your children in the Middle East:  
Jews, Muslims and Christians,  
Palestinians and Israelis.  
Let hatred be turned into love, fear to trust, despair to hope,  
Oppression to freedom, occupation to liberation,  
That violent encounters may be replaced by loving embraces,  
And peace and justice could be experienced by all. Amen.*

The Reverend Said Ailabouni  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, IL

*Almighty God!  
After almost a century of mistrust and fratricide,  
You inspired Jews, Christians and Muslims  
To take the path of reconciliation in the Middle East.  
We ask for your forgiveness, O God,  
Yet we find it hard to forgive our past enemies.  
May Your Words touch those who still stray  
In the wilderness of vengeful violence,  
Forgetting your command to “forgive and overlook,  
Till God accomplish His Purpose;  
for God hath power over all things.” Amen.*

Abdelwahab Hechiche  
University of South Florida, Tampa, FL

*O God Source of Life, Creator of Peace. . .  
Help Your children, anguished and confused,  
To understand the futility of hatred and violence  
And grant them the ability to stretch across  
Political, religious and national boundaries  
So they may confront horror and fear  
By continuing together  
In the search for justice, peace and truth.  
With every fiber of our being  
We beg You, O God,  
To help us not to fail nor falter. Amen*

Rabbi H. Rolando Matalon  
Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, New York, NY

*Lord God, we turn to you in these trying hours when  
conflict is a daily reality for our sisters and brothers  
in Israel and Palestine. We promise you to work to our  
utmost for peace and reconciliation in the region. But we  
know we cannot do it alone. We very much need the strength  
of your presence in our midst if we are to overcome the  
obstacles before us. So our prayer at this moment is that  
you add your support to our efforts, that you show yourself  
as a tower of strength in those moments when the barriers  
seem impassable. Together we can become beacons of hope  
for just and peaceful societies in the land so very dear  
to the peoples of your covenant. Amen.*

Reverend John T. Pawlikowski, OSM  
Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, IL

*In the Name of God, The Everlasting Merciful, The Cherisher  
Of the Worlds and Worthy of all Praise,  
Our Lord: You have created us from a single (pair) of a male  
And a female and made us into Nations and Tribes that we may  
Know one another (not that we may despise each other) so  
Help us to love each other and take the hatred and anger from our  
Hearts so that the People of The Book (Christians, Jews and Muslims)  
In the Middle East may live in Peace and Justice. Amen*

Dawud Ahmad Assad  
Council of Mosques, USA, New York, NY

*In the name of God, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful:  
Guide us on the straight way, the way of those whom thou has blessed.  
Help us so that we do not transgress the bounds of what is right and  
lawful.  
Take us out of deep darkness into light.  
Make us not bear burdens which we have no strength to bear.  
Help us bring about mutual affection and understanding between us.  
Grant us Thy forgiveness and blessings, O Our Sustainer,  
for with Thee is all journeys' end. Amen.*

Mian Ashraf  
New England Islamic Center, Sharon, MA

*Two peoples, one land,  
Three faiths, one root,  
One earth, one mother,  
One sky, one beginning, one future, one destiny,  
One broken heart,  
One God.  
We pray to You:  
Grant us a vision of unity.  
May we see the many in the one and the one in the many.  
May you, Life of All the Worlds, Source of All Amazing Differences  
Help us to see clearly.  
Guide us gently and firmly toward each other,  
Toward peace. Amen.*

Rabbi Sheila Weinberg  
Jewish Community of Amherst, Amherst, MA

*O God of peace, you have established Jerusalem as the Lord's House and a place of peace, and you have called on all who live there to love you and prosper. Instill in her inhabitants - Jews, Christians and Muslims - a hunger for justice and dignity and a resolve to end the distrust that culminates in violence. Grant them the wisdom and patience to build a city where Israeli and Palestinian reside in safety, free from oppression and committed to the good of all. In this endeavor, make everyone of us agents of your peace, O God. Forgive us our indifference and stamp out the prejudices that lead to hatred. Fill us with the reconciling spirit of your presence. So may we join people of good will - in the Middle East and throughout the world - who raise before Jerusalem's gates their insistent Shalom and Salaam: "Peace be within your walls. . . .Peace be within you." Amen.*

The Reverends Harry and Judith Hoehler  
First Parish (Unitarian-Universalist), Weston, MA

# Prayer Resources

## Additional Prayer Suggestions

### Prayer of Saint Francis

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.*

### Prayer of Pope Benedict XVI

*O God of love, compassion, and healing,  
look on us, who gather today,  
in a world of incredible violence and pain.  
We ask you, in your compassion  
to bring healing to those who suffer from injuries and illness...  
God of peace, bring your peace to our violent world;  
peace in the hearts of all men and women and  
peace among the nations of the earth.  
Turn to your way of love  
those whose hearts and minds  
are consumed with hatred.  
God of understanding,  
overwhelmed by the magnitude of tragedy,  
we seek your light and guidance  
as we confront terrible events in our society.  
Comfort and console us, strengthen us in hope,  
and give us the wisdom and courage to work tirelessly  
for a world where true peace and love reign  
among nations and in the hearts of all.*

## Prayer for Interreligious Gatherings

*These prayers may be used to begin and conclude gatherings of Christians and those of other religious traditions.*

### **Prayers of Invocation**

- A. *Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation,  
whose goodness fills our hearts with joy.  
Blessed are you,  
who have brought us together this day  
to work in harmony and peace.  
Strengthen us with your grace and wisdom  
for you are God for ever and ever.*  
*R/. Amen.*
- B. *In you, Lord our God,  
all things have their beginning, continuation, and end.  
Grace us with your saving presence,  
aid us with your constant help  
and let us glorify you,  
now and forever.*  
*R/. Amen.*
- C. *Lord,  
may everything we do  
begin with your inspiration  
and continue with your help,  
so that all our prayers and works  
may begin in you  
and by you be happily ended.  
Glory and praise to you,  
for ever and ever.*  
*R/. Amen.*

### **Blessings**

- A. *May the God of every grace and blessing  
grant you joy and peace.  
May you rejoice in God's protection,  
now and for ever.*  
*R/. Amen.*

B. *May God strengthen you and bring your work to completion.  
May hope accompany your journey through the days to come.  
May God's abiding presence be with you all the days of your life.*

*R/. Amen.*

C. *May the Lord bless you and keep you.  
May his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.  
May he look upon you with kindness and grant you peace.*

*R/. Amen.*

(Taken from the Book of Blessings, 572 and 573)

# Advocacy Resources



*The resources in this section may be updated as new information is available. Check the Catholics Confront Global Poverty website, [www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp\\_issues\\_peace.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp_issues_peace.shtml) for the latest information.*

## **What Would a Just Peace in the Holy Land Look Like?**

Principles for a two-state solution have been outlined in numerous documents including the Road Map for Peace, statements by the USCCB and interreligious groups, and U.S. legislative proposals. The vision is of “the State of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.” The way forward includes

- Renouncing violence and terror;
- Maintaining an unwavering commitment to Israel’s security;
- Requiring the Palestinian Authority to recognize Israel, reject terrorism, and accept past agreements;
- Requiring both Israeli and Palestinian leaders to work for peace and to refrain from “any actions that would prejudice the outcome of final status negotiations”;
- Urging the U.S. “to pursue a robust diplomatic effort,” to make a two-state solution “a top priority” by engaging Israel and the Palestinian Authority in negotiations and to appoint a Special Envoy for Middle East Peace; and
- Welcoming the Arab League Peace Initiative and encouraging Arab states in the region to become involved in this intensified diplomatic effort.

**USCCB and CRS have called upon Catholics to add their voices to the cry for peace in the Holy Land. For the latest U.S. legislative action on Israel Palestine visit [www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/israelpalestine.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/israelpalestine.shtml).**

# Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land

*“What a blessing it would be if this Holy Land, where God spoke and Jesus walked, could become a special place for encounter and prayer for all peoples, if this Holy city of Jerusalem could be a sign and instrument of peace and reconciliation!”*

Pope John Paul II

*“But let us pray also for the city of Jerusalem, that it may increasingly be a place for the encounter of religions and peoples; that it may truly be a place of peace.”*

Pope Benedict XVI

What would it mean for the world if the region of Israel and Palestine were to become a sign of peaceful coexistence and mutuality? Forty years of war, occupation, terrorist attacks and partition have situated the Holy Land in a spiral of ever-deepening violence. Yet the vision of two secure and independent states – Israel and Palestine existing side by side – remains an immediate and urgent goal for Jews, Christians, and Muslims working for peace in the Middle East.

Since 2003, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has been part of the *National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East* (NILI), an unprecedented initiative of 35 U.S. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders urging the U.S. government to work to revive the peace process. As part of this multi-faith effort, the bishops launched the *Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land* to invite bishops and Catholic leaders to work with local religious leaders in Jewish, Muslim, and other Christian traditions. The goal is to create a shared commitment to the broad outlines of a just resolution of the conflict and to raise a united voice with policy makers and the wider public. The Campaign also invites Catholics and other people of good will to add their voices to the cry for a just peace in the Holy Land, a peace grounded in the dignity of the human person and built upon the common good.

“The United States has a unique and indispensable role gives our nation a special responsibility to pursue peace,” NILI members said in a December 2008 statement. “Achieving Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace will have positive reverberations in the region and around the world. Our nation and the world will be much safer with the achievement of the peace of Jerusalem.”

In addition to issuing a strategy for a just peace in the Holy Land, the group has met with public officials to urge renewed U.S. leadership on peace negotiations in the region.

# Addressing Violence, Injustice and Poverty

The Catholic Church in the United States has a long history of working to address the conflict in the Holy Land. The U.S. bishops have taken the position that in order to have peace in the region, Palestinian leaders must recognize Israel and clearly renounce acts of violence, take effective steps to stop it, and bring to justice those responsible. To call a suicide bomber a martyr is reprehensible, the bishops have said. At the same time they maintain that Israel's often-aggressive military response, its expansion of settlements, and its construction of a wall deep in Palestinian areas increase misery and tension that often breed violence.

In Israel, terrorist attacks on city buses and in shopping areas, crowded streets and universities have understandably created a strong demand for lasting security. In the Palestinian territories, Israeli military actions, curfews and closures have resulted in wide-scale joblessness, malnutrition and displacement, as well as escalating loss of life. According to Near East Consulting's *Palestinian Poverty Monitor*, more than half of Palestinians lived below the poverty line in 2008

Israel's construction of a barrier that encloses Palestinian villages, eliminating access to Israel and other Palestinian towns and villages, has made this situation even worse.

Despite the closures, CRS workers and partners continue to serve the region's most vulnerable people. CRS has been working in the Holy Land for more than 60 years and has long partnered with community organizations of various faiths to address immediate human suffering, support human development, and foster peace and reconciliation. Since 1961, CRS has focused its efforts in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which contain some of the region's most vulnerable people, many of whom have been refugees for approximately 60 years. The escalation of violence has required CRS to increase significantly emergency assistance programs.

In addition, helping young people to develop skills in leadership and reconciliation is another focus of CRS programming in Palestine, where youths make up more than 50 percent of the population. CRS, local churches, and community partners sponsor youth leadership summer camps for university students, who participate in exercises designed to demonstrate the ideals of effective leadership, good governance, teamwork and social peace. CRS' youth initiatives in Gaza and the West Bank aim to engage young Palestinian men and women as a force of positive change in society.

"In order to secure positive change and progress towards peace, Palestinians need to rely on youth who are tolerant, committed to their communities, educated and highly aware," stresses Tom Garofalo, former head of CRS' programs in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.

# An Adult Discussion Session

## Materials You Will Need



- Advocacy Resources, copies for all
- Copies of Opening Prayer
- The latest Action Alert from USCCB on Israel and Palestine (see [www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp\\_issues\\_peace.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp_issues_peace.shtml) for the most current advocacy efforts)
- Several cut-out images of Israel-Palestine; i.e. newspaper headlines and photos; magazine or internet pictures of the region's people; postcards of religious sites. (One per person, but have extras for variety.)
- Pre-cut sheets of paper – 1/3 of standard sheet per person
- Tape or glue sticks
- Pens

## Welcome the Participants

### Opening Prayer

*Use one of the prayers in the Prayer Resources section*

### Introductory Activity (10 min)

*Spread out images on a table. Invite the participants to select one that resonates with them. (They will use it in the closing prayer, as well.) One-on-one or in small groups: Introduce yourself and share why you chose that particular image. What personal stories or feelings does it call to mind?*

### Questions for Discussion (45 min)

*Directions: Invite the group to take a few minutes to read over the “Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land” and “Addressing violence, injustice and poverty” pages. Then discuss the following questions in small groups. Designate facilitators so that the conversation moves forward smoothly.*

1. In their statements the U.S. bishops have repeatedly called for a *just peace* in the region. What does this phrase mean to you? What would a just peace look like in the Middle East?
2. Several points have been outlined for moving forward toward peace in the Holy Land. Of those mentioned, which is most challenging? Which resonates most?

3. Organizations such as Catholic Relief Services (CRS) work with the poorest people in a region. How does the church's call for a "preferential option for the poor" fit within the discussion of the Israel-Palestine conflict?
4. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services have called upon Catholics in the U.S. to bring the power of their citizenship to bear upon the issue of Israel and Palestine. (*Share the latest action alert from USCCB and CRS' initiative, Catholics Confront Global Poverty.*) What power does the United States have in such conflicts? What are the various ways that U.S. citizens can affect an issue so far away? What is your comfort level with such civic action?

*(Facilitator's note: In addition to contacting legislators, civic actions include writing letters to the editor, sponsoring speakers and discussions at churches or school, forming local legislative networks to respond to legislation as it develops, sponsoring house gatherings and prayer services around the issue.)*

## **Closing Prayer** (10 min)

*Distribute paper and pens*

- Invite participants to select a strip of paper and write a brief prayer that flows out of their thoughts and feelings from the session. Attach the prayer to the image distributed at the beginning of the session.
- Share prayers in the large group. After each prayer the group responds: "*Make us channels of your peace, O God.*"
- Either send the prayers home with the participants as a regular reminder to pray for the Holy Land in the days and weeks to come. Or post them together on a bulletin board or wall where others will be reminded of the need for peace in the region.