

25th March 2022

The Feast of the Annunciation of Our Blessed Lady.

On the Feast of the Annunciation this year, Pope Francis has written to all the Bishops of the Catholic Church asking them and through them to ask the people and clergy of the dioceses throughout the world, to join him in praying for Peace and in particular to join him in consecrating the Church and all the peoples of the world, especially Russia and Ukraine, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

In the following pages you will find the Pope's letter to the bishops and the Act of Consecration that he will use. I think you will find the Pope making the consecration at 6.30pm, Rome time, on the Vatican website. You will also find Bishop John making the Consecration on the diocesan website, but he will be making it from his chapel at home since he is isolating with Covid.

In the Good Shepherd Parish we will celebrate the Feast with Holy Mass at 10.00am. at Sacred Heart church, Colne, where we will also bless and dedicate our Our Lady of Walsingham shrine in the Annunciation Chapel. Sacred Heart Church will then remain open for private prayer with copies of the Act of Consecration available for private use. The church will remain open until we celebrate the Act of Consecration after the Angelus at 6.00pm and the church will then be closed at 6.30pm.

Please come along at any time during the day to make your own prayer for Peace and for Ukraine or to make the Act of Consecration.

God bless you all,
Fr. Peter



Dear Brother,

Nearly a month has passed since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine that is daily inflicting immense suffering upon its sorely tried people and threatening world peace. At this dark hour, the Church is urgently called to intercede before the Prince of Peace and to demonstrate her closeness to those directly affected by the conflict. I am grateful to the many people who have responded with great generosity to my appeals for prayer, fasting and charity.

Now, also in response to numerous requests by the People of God, I wish in a special way to entrust the nations at war to the Blessed Virgin Mary. As I announced yesterday at the conclusion of the Angelus prayer, on 25 March, the Solemnity of the Annunciation, I intend to carry out a solemn Act of Consecration of humanity, and Russia and Ukraine in particular, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Since it is fitting that we should invoke peace with hearts renewed by God's forgiveness, the Act of Consecration will take place in the context of a Celebration of Penance to be held in Saint Peter's Basilica at 5:00 p.m., Rome time. The Act itself will take place about 6:30 p.m.

This Act of Consecration is meant to be a gesture of the universal Church, which in this dramatic moment lifts up to God, through his Mother and ours, the cry of pain of all those who suffer and implore an end to the violence, and to entrust the future of our human family to the Queen of Peace. I ask you to join in this Act by inviting the priests, religious and faithful to assemble in their churches and places of prayer on 25 March, so that God's Holy People may raise a heartfelt and choral plea to Mary our Mother. I am sending you the text of the prayer of consecration, so that all of us can recite it throughout that day, in fraternal union.

I thank you for the attention you will give to this request and for your ready cooperation. With great affection, I bless you and the faithful entrusted to your pastoral care. May Jesus protect you and the Holy Virgin watch over you. I ask you, please, also to pray for me.

Fraternally,

Francois

From Saint John Lateran, 21 March 2022

Act of Consecration

*to the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Basilica of Saint Peter
25 March 2022*

O Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, in this time of trial we turn to you. As our Mother, you love us and know us: no concern of our hearts is hidden from you. Mother of mercy, how often we have experienced your watchful care and your peaceful presence! You never cease to guide us to Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Yet we have strayed from that path of peace. We have forgotten the lesson learned from the tragedies of the last century, the sacrifice of the millions who fell in two world wars. We have disregarded the commitments we made as a community of nations. We have betrayed peoples' dreams of peace and the hopes of the young. We grew sick with greed, we thought only of our own nations and their interests, we grew indifferent and caught up in our selfish needs and concerns. We chose to ignore God, to be satisfied with our illusions, to grow arrogant and aggressive, to suppress innocent lives and to stockpile weapons. We stopped being our neighbour's keepers and stewards of our common home. We have ravaged the garden of the earth with war and by our sins we have broken the heart of our heavenly Father, who desires us to be brothers and sisters. We grew indifferent to everyone and everything except ourselves. Now with shame we cry out: Forgive us, Lord!

Holy Mother, amid the misery of our sinfulness, amid our struggles and weaknesses, amid the mystery of iniquity that is evil and war, you remind us that God never abandons us, but continues to look upon us with love, ever ready to forgive us and raise us up to new life. He has given you to us and made your Immaculate Heart a refuge for the Church and for all humanity. By God's gracious will, you are ever with us; even in the most troubled moments of our history, you are there to guide us with tender love.

We now turn to you and knock at the door of your heart. We are your beloved children. In every age you make yourself known to us, calling us to conversion. At this dark hour, help us and grant us your comfort. Say to us once more: "Am I not here, I who am your Mother?" You are able to untie the knots of our hearts and of our times. In you we place our trust. We are confident that, especially in moments of trial, you will not be deaf to our supplication and will come to our aid.

That is what you did at Cana in Galilee, when you interceded with Jesus and he worked the first of his signs. To preserve the joy of the wedding feast, you said to him: "They have no wine" (*Jn* 2:3). Now, O Mother, repeat those words and that prayer, for in our own day we have run out of the wine of hope, joy has fled, fraternity has faded. We have forgotten our humanity and squandered the gift of peace. We opened our hearts to violence and destructiveness. How greatly we need your maternal help!

Therefore, O Mother, hear our prayer.

Star of the Sea, do not let us be shipwrecked in the tempest of war.

Ark of the New Covenant, inspire projects and paths of reconciliation.

Queen of Heaven, restore God's peace to the world.

Eliminate hatred and the thirst for revenge, and teach us forgiveness.

Free us from war, protect our world from the menace of nuclear weapons.
Queen of the Rosary, make us realize our need to pray and to love.
Queen of the Human Family, show people the path of fraternity.
Queen of Peace, obtain peace for our world.

O Mother, may your sorrowful plea stir our hardened hearts. May the tears you shed for us make this valley parched by our hatred blossom anew. Amid the thunder of weapons, may your prayer turn our thoughts to peace. May your maternal touch soothe those who suffer and flee from the rain of bombs. May your motherly embrace comfort those forced to leave their homes and their native land. May your Sorrowful Heart move us to compassion and inspire us to open our doors and to care for our brothers and sisters who are injured and cast aside.

Holy Mother of God, as you stood beneath the cross, Jesus, seeing the disciple at your side, said: "Behold your son" (*Jn 19:26*). In this way he entrusted each of us to you. To the disciple, and to each of us, he said: "Behold, your Mother" (v. 27). Mother Mary, we now desire to welcome you into our lives and our history. At this hour, a weary and distraught humanity stands with you beneath the cross, needing to entrust itself to you and, through you, to consecrate itself to Christ. The people of Ukraine and Russia, who venerate you with great love, now turn to you, even as your heart beats with compassion for them and for all those peoples decimated by war, hunger, injustice and poverty.

Therefore, Mother of God and our Mother, to your Immaculate Heart we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves, the Church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine. Accept this act that we carry out with confidence and love. Grant that war may end and peace spread throughout the world. The "Fiat" that arose from your heart opened the doors of history to the Prince of Peace. We trust that, through your heart, peace will dawn once more. To you we consecrate the future of the whole human family, the needs and expectations of every people, the anxieties and hopes of the world.

Through your intercession, may God's mercy be poured out on the earth and the gentle rhythm of peace return to mark our days. Our Lady of the "Fiat", on whom the Holy Spirit descended, restore among us the harmony that comes from God. May you, our "living fountain of hope", water the dryness of our hearts. In your womb Jesus took flesh; help us to foster the growth of communion. You once trod the streets of our world; lead us now on the paths of peace. Amen.