

**Homily for the 23rd Sunday of the Year - Cycle C
September 8, 2013**

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Springfield, Illinois

**† Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Although our liturgy today is for the 23rd Week in Ordinary Time, I note that today is the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In honor of Mary, the Queen of Peace, Pope Francis had proclaimed the vigil of her birthday yesterday to be a day of fasting and prayer for peace in Syria, in the entire Mideast region, and throughout the whole world. Speaking ahead of the traditional Angelus prayer with pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square this past Sunday, Pope Francis said, "Humanity needs to see gestures of peace, and to hear words of hope and of peace." He added, "Never has the use of violence brought peace in its wake. War begets war, violence begets violence."

Pope Francis also issued a forceful condemnation of the use of chemical weapons. "There is the judgment of God, and also the judgment of history, upon our actions - [judgments] from which there is no

escaping.” He called on all parties to conflicts to pursue negotiations, and urged the international community to take concrete steps to end conflicts, especially the war in Syria. “¹

As the G20 Summit convened at the Constantine Palace in Saint Petersburg, Russia, this past week on the 5th and 6th of September, Pope Francis sent a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin, in his capacity as host of the summit. Present for the G20 Summit were the heads of government or heads of state from 20 major economies, including President Barack Obama of the United States. Because of significance of the Holy Father’s plea for peace to these world leaders, I share the text of the letter with you as follows:

To His Excellency

Mr. Vladimir Putin

President of the Russian Federation

In the course of this year, you have the honor and the responsibility of presiding over the Group of the twenty largest economies in the world. . . . In today’s highly interdependent context, a global financial framework with its own just and clear rules is required in order to achieve a more equitable and fraternal world, in which it is possible to overcome hunger, ensure decent employment and housing for all, as well as essential healthcare. Your presidency of the G20 this year has committed itself to consolidating the reform of the international financial organizations and to achieving a consensus on financial standards suited to today’s

circumstances. However, the world economy will only develop if it allows a dignified way of life for all human beings, from the eldest to the unborn child, not just for citizens of the G20 member states but for every inhabitant of the earth, even those in extreme social situations or in the remotest places.

From this standpoint, it is clear that, for the world's peoples, armed conflicts are always a deliberate negation of international harmony, and create profound divisions and deep wounds which require many years to heal. Wars are a concrete refusal to pursue the great economic and social goals that the international community has set itself, as seen, for example, in the Millennium Development Goals. Unfortunately, the many armed conflicts which continue to afflict the world today present us daily with dramatic images of misery, hunger, illness and death. Without peace, there can be no form of economic development. Violence never begets peace, the necessary condition for development.

The meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the twenty most powerful economies, with two-thirds of the world's population and ninety per cent of global GDP, does not have international security as its principal purpose. Nevertheless, the meeting will surely not forget the situation in the Middle East and particularly in Syria. It is regrettable that, from the very beginning of the conflict in Syria, one-sided interests have prevailed and in fact hindered the search for a solution that would have avoided the senseless massacre now unfolding. The leaders of the G20 cannot remain indifferent to the dramatic situation of the beloved Syrian people which has lasted far too long, and even risks bringing greater suffering to a region bitterly tested by strife and needful of peace. To the leaders present, to each and every one, I make a heartfelt appeal for them to help find ways to overcome the conflicting positions and to lay aside the futile pursuit of a military solution. Rather, let there be a renewed

commitment to seek, with courage and determination, a peaceful solution through dialogue and negotiation of the parties, unanimously supported by the international community. Moreover, all governments have the moral duty to do everything possible to ensure humanitarian assistance to those suffering because of the conflict, both within and beyond the country's borders.

Mr. President, in the hope that these thoughts may be a valid spiritual contribution to your meeting, I pray for the successful outcome of the G20's work on this occasion. I invoke an abundance of blessings upon the Summit in Saint Petersburg, upon the participants and the citizens of the member states, and upon the work and efforts of the 2013 Russian Presidency of the G20.

While requesting your prayers, I take this opportunity to assure you, Mr. President, of my highest consideration.

From the Vatican, 4 September 2013

(Signed)

Francis²

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, President, USCCB, and Bishop Richard E. Pates, Chairman, USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace, also issued a statement about the planned military strike against Syria, saying, "the path of dialogue and negotiation between all components of Syrian society, with the support of the international community, is the only option to put an end to the conflict."³

The Pope and the American Bishops are cautioning against the mindset that war is the only way to resolve this conflict, and reminds us that one evil action against human life should not be countered with another action that will result in the loss of more life in Syria and possibly beyond.

As we prepare to receive the Prince of Peace into our Hearts in this Eucharist, may His Blessed Mother, Queen of Peace, guide our nation and our world into the ways of peace.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 1 September 2013.

² Text from the Vatican Radio website:
http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2013/09/05/pope_francis_writes_letter_to_president_putin_of_russia_ahead_of_g20/en1-725816

³ Statement of Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan and Bishop Richard E. Pates, 3 September 2013.