STATEMENT ON DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has designated Sunday 7 December 2014 to be a Day of Solidarity with the Christians of the Middle East.

As we approach the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas, we are aware that the situation for Christians and other minorities in the Middle East is deteriorating by the day, especially as the northern winter will set in soon. Communities that have been present in the region since the time of the apostles are being driven out in the midst of unspeakable atrocities. The present tragedy in the Middle East not only impacts upon the communities of the area, but has far-reaching implications for the peace and security of the world.

Therefore, we join in prayer together today as we seek the mercy of God for our persecuted brothers and sisters in the Middle East.

On 14 December 2014 a delegation of five Australian Bishops will visit refugees in Kurdistan, Iraq and Lebanon to offer spiritual support and humanitarian aid. The Diocese of Wollongong has made a financial offering and a retiring collection will be held today for any parishioners who may wish to make a financial offering to support the effort of alleviating the suffering of Christians, especially the many Iraqi refugees.

May we continue to keep the needs of our suffering Middle Eastern Christians in our prayers.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Almighty God and Creator, You are the Father of all people on the earth. Guide, I pray, all the nations and their leaders in the ways of justice and peace. Protect us from the evils of injustice, prejudice, exploitation, conflict and war. Help us to put away mistrust, bitterness and hatred. Teach us to cease the storing and using of implements of war. Lead us to find peace, respect and freedom. Unite us in the making and sharing of tools of peace against ignorance, poverty, disease and oppression. Grant that we may grow in harmony and friendship as brothers and sisters created in Your image, to Your honor and praise. Amen.

(St Ephraim of Syrian)

BISHOP PETER INGHAM

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