

World Council of Churches expresses grave concern over escalation of violence in Middle East

World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay, on behalf of the global fellowship, expressed grave concern regarding the recent escalation of violence in the Middle East following the first direct confrontation between Iran and Israel.

“We firmly believe that violence and warfare offer no sustainable solutions and only serve to further harm vulnerable communities and destabilize the region,” he said. “We reaffirm our conviction that safety and security are not singular achievements but collective realities that depend on the access of all people to justice, peace, and human dignity equally.”

Pillay described five calls to action. “We call on all governments and politicians concerned to serve the interests of peace, people, and planet instead of pride and retaliation,” he said in the first call to action. “The prevention of further escalation of violence in the region should be a matter of priority for all concerned.”

The second call is related to the responsibility of the United States and other nations. “We call on the United States and all other states with influence in the region to uphold their responsibilities and act as agents of goodwill,” he said. “It is essential that these nations use their



positions to foster dialogue and encourage solutions that respect the rights and dignity of all people involved.” Pillay also reiterated the WCC’s call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. “We urgently call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza,” he said. “A cessation of hostilities is the first necessary step toward healing and recovery, allowing for an urgent collaborative effort to restore life in the region and ensuring the safe return of all civilians to their homes.”

The fourth call is related to freeing detainees and hostages. “We call for the release of all Israeli hostages and Palestinian political prisoners detained for asserting their rights to be free from occupation, discrimination, and to live with dignity,” Pillay said. “Each human life counts and the freedom of these individuals underscores a commitment to human rights and justice.” We also call for the release of all bodies of the deceased to their families.”

The fifth call implores the United Nations to actively resume its role in convening and facilitating peaceful negotiations between all parties involved. “It is imperative that the United Nations also ensures that accountability is a cornerstone of these processes, promoting transparent and fair practices that lead to lasting peace,” Pillay said.

He concluded: “As followers of Christ, who calls us to be peacemakers, we are compelled to speak against the spiralling cycle of violence and to work tirelessly for a world where peace is rooted in justice.”

Source: World Council of Churches

The Shepherd’s Voice

Jesus, in today’s Gospel, says that He is the good shepherd the prophets had promised to Israel. He is the shepherd-prince, the new David—who frees people from bondage to sin and gathers them into one flock, the Church, under a new covenant, made in His blood (see Ezekiel 34:10–13, 23–31).



His flock includes other sheep, He says, far more than the dispersed children of Israel (see Isaiah 56:8; John 11:52). And He gave His Church the mission of shepherding all peoples to the Father.

In today’s First Reading, we see the beginnings of that mission in the testimony of Peter, whom the Lord appointed shepherd of His Church (see John 21:15–17).

Peter tells Israel’s leaders that the Psalm we sing today is a prophecy of their rejection and crucifixion of Christ. He tells the “builders” of Israel’s temple that God has made the stone they rejected the cornerstone of a new spiritual temple, the Church (see Mark 12:10–13; 1 Peter 2:4–7).

Through the ministry of the Church, the shepherd still speaks (see Luke 10:16), and forgives sins (see John 20:23), and makes His body and blood present, that all may know Him in the breaking of the bread (see Luke 24:35). It is a mission that will continue until all the world is one flock under the one shepherd.

In laying down His life and taking it up again, Jesus made it possible for us to know God as He did—as sons and daughters of the Father who loves us. As we hear in today’s Epistle, He calls us His children, as He called Israel His son when He led them out of Egypt and made His covenant with them (see Exodus 4:22–23; Revelation 21:7).

Today, let us listen for His voice as He speaks to us in the Scriptures, and vow again to be more faithful followers. And let us give thanks for the blessings He bestows from His altar.

Scott Hahn



English Martyrs
Vale of White Horse
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FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (WK 4)

Entrance Antiphon Ps 32:5-6

The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth; by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, alleluia.

First Reading: Acts of the Apostles 4:8-12

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 117

The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

Second Reading: First Letter of Saint John 3:1-2

Gospel Acclamation: Jn 10:14

Alleluia, alleluia!!

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord; I know my own sheep and my own know me.

Alleluia!

Gospel: John 10:11-18

Communion Antiphon: Lk 24:35

The Good Shepherd has risen, who laid down his life for his sheep and willingly died for his flock, alleluia.

SATURDAY 20th April of Easter

9:30am. Mass at English Martyrs, Didcot....

4:30pm Adoration & Confessions will take place prior to the Vigil Mass at St John’s Wallingford

5.00pm Vigil Mass St John’s

5.50pm Adoration before Vigil Mass at English Martyrs, Didcot...

6.30pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs, Didcot....

SUNDAY 21st AprilFourth Sunday of Easter

9:00am Mass English Martyrs, Didcot—

11:00noon Mass St John’s Wallingford..Mo Taylor ..Thanksgiving for help received

MONDAY 22nd April of EasterNO MASS

TUESDAY 23rd April of EasterSt George

12noon...Adoration before mass in St John’s Wallingford....

WEDNESDAY 24th April of Easter...St Fidelis of Sigmaringen

9:30am at English Martyrs, Didcot....

11a.m Requiem Mass in Didcot for Maria Graziella Lamerton RIP

THURSDAY 25th April of Easter.....St Mark

9:30am Mass at St John’s Wallingford....

FRIDAY 26th April of Easter....

9:30am at English Martyrs, Didcot.. Elizabeth Trainor RIP

SATURDAY 27th April of Easter

9:30am. Mass at English Martyrs, Didcot....

4:30pm Adoration & Confessions will take place prior to the Vigil Mass at St John’s Wallingford

5.00pm Vigil Mass St John’s

5.50pm Adoration before Vigil Mass at English Martyrs, Didcot...

6.30pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs, Didcot....

SUNDAY 28th AprilFifth Sunday of Easter

9:00am Mass English Martyrs, Didcot—

11:00noon Mass St John’s Wallingford



In your prayers, please remember: Jenny Evans, Mary Guinan, Ann Tomline, Joan Walker, Joan Russell, Joan Turner, Nina Oakes, Jacob Oakes, Pat McLoughlin, Barry Molloy, David Woodley, Ann Furlong and all the sick and housebound of our churches.



Missio and APF Red Boxes

The APF in England and Wales works with the Mill Hill Missionary Society – the only major missionary society formed in England. Mill Hill missionaries go to the most remote places in the world to show the love of Christ to those in need, both spiritually and materially.

There are Red Boxes in over 200,000 homes. They have helped raise millions of pounds for the missionary Church. Thank you so much for being part of this great movement of faith in action. Kindly return the Red Boxes or hand them to the welcomers when you come for mass.



A Day of Recollection at Littlemore

Come join us for a special day of renewal, recollection and quiet meditation at Littlemore, Saturday May 11am, from 10am to 4pm. If you have questions or you need more information, kindly speak with Chris Stemp. This recollection is fresh after some years. Please read the posters as you come into the church and book a date to ease planning.



GiftAid Envelops Still Available

The new Gift Aid envelope boxes for the coming tax year are now available and ready for collection at the entrance of Church. A huge thank you to all those who have returned their Gift Aid Declaration Forms. If you know a parishioner and wish to collect theirs to pass on, kindly help. If you are a taxpayer and you give to the Church, we applaud you. You can claim back 25p every time on every £1 you give when you sign the giftaid form. You have nothing to lose. Please collect a form for yourself and a friend. You can reach the parish Finance Administrator via email if you need clarifications...accounts.didwal@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk.



In 1964, Pope Paul VI, launched Vocations Sunday

In 1964, Pope Paul VI, launched Vocations Sunday, which we celebrate on the fourth Sunday of Easter, also called Good Shepherd Sunday. This year it is on the 21 April 2024, which marks the 61st Anniversary of World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

As Catholics and people of God we all know that God is calling us and has a plan for each of us. He called each of us by name through our Baptism to holiness. He continues to call and cry out to us each day to be his disciples, some to the married life, some to the priesthood, some to religious life or to live as kind single people. Everybody is called! What is God calling you to?

Along with the whole Church, let us pray for vocations today. Let us take time to stir the hearts and minds of the people around us to think about the topic of Vocation. The National Office for Vocation (NOV) invites you to talk and encourage children, young people, grandchildren, students, family members to respond generously to the calling of the Lord

Let Us Celebrate Pentecost Sunday

Last year, we celebrated Pentecost Sunday in a unique and special way. Please mark May 19th for a repeat of last year's celebrations. Consider to dress up in national costumes, come with national symbols, flags, scarf, shared meals and loads of exciting things for young people and children. If you have fresh ideas send an email to the office or speak with Father Dominic.

St John the Evangelist Church Wallingford is 100 Years.

Our Parish church in Wallingford, St John the Evangelist is 100 years old standing. This is about us, the faith and the community, the celebrations of the sacraments, vocations to the married life and the priesthood. Well done to everyone, living and dead. To celebrate this remarkable achievement, a team will be working out activities. Watch out in the newsletter. If you have suggestions on how to celebrate this centenary, send an email to the office, speak with Sue Hunt, Annemarie Bromley, Brian Doyle, Camila King.

Year of Encounter

With a UK general election due sometime this year, politicians will be looking for our votes. We have a responsibility as Catholics to make sure that parties commit to tackling issues such as poverty and injustice. Raising our voices and contacting parliamentary candidates as a parish community will send a strong signal to those standing for election in our local constituencies. A Year of Encounter is a joint initiative between CAFOD and St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP), equipping Catholics to ask key questions of local candidates at the key moments. Please see cafod.org.uk/encounter for more information, including online sessions on Thursday 25th April and Saturday 4th May to learn more.

Closer to Christ Campaign Update



We have now secured **£51,983** in pledges from 16 families, approximately 10% of our congregation! Here in the Parish of English Martyrs and St. John the Evangelist, our aim is to raise **£90,000** in pledges to fund our priests, from those in formation to those in retirement and to provide our local parish community with the necessary resources needed to thrive.

Our thanks go out to those who have returned their forms already. All pledges are still welcome, it can be for any length of time (once-off, 3years, 5years) and be for any amount. A pledge form is available overleaf.

Results to date

✓ **£90,000**

Goal

£ **£51,983**

Pledged to Date

📦 **16**

Pledges Received

👉 **£3,058**

Average Pledge

📖 **88%**

Pledges Eligible for Gift Aid

Ensuring success in our parish

There are approximately 180 households in our parish. If the timing is right for you, please consider a contribution at a level that is fitting for you and your family. In order to achieve our goal, we need:

- ❖ 5 families to give **£50 per month** for 5 years = **£15,000**
- ❖ 5 families to give **£40 per month** for 5 years = **£12,000**
- ❖ 10 families to give **£30 per month** for 5 years = **£18,000**

This would result in:

20 families contributing **£35,000** over 5 years

Overleaf, you will find a pledge form which allows you to choose the:

- ❖ **Duration of your pledge** (e.g. one-off, 3 year, 5 years)
- ❖ **Method of giving** (e.g. direct debit, cheque or bank transfer)

Your decision today can help ensure our parish can thrive and our clergy are provided with adequate support for years to come. Please note your payments can start at any time, this pledge simply acts as a promise.

Your participation matters – every gift counts, no matter how big or small!



Once you have completed your pledge form please bring it to Mass with you or post it to:

Closer to Christ Campaign Office
St Edmund House
Bishop Crispian Way
Portsmouth
PO1 3QA