

Archbishop Philip Wilson pleads for peace in Middle East and calls for prayer

The President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Archbishop Philip Wilson today issued a plea for peace in the Middle East conflict and called for sustained prayers from the Catholic community.

Archbishop Wilson joined with Pope Benedict XVI in calling for an immediate ceasefire as the first step towards reconciliation and lasting peace.

“Nobody underestimates the complexity and the difficulties in finding a solution for peace in the Holy Land, but there must be an end to the killing, including of civilians, before even the first steps towards reconciliation can be taken,” he said.

Archbishop Wilson noted an address from the Pope on July 23 in which he reaffirmed the “right of the Lebanese to the integrity and sovereignty of their country, the right of Israelis to live in peace in their state, and the right of Palestinians to a free and sovereign homeland”.

“I pray with Pope Benedict and with the whole Church, for the day of peace to come today and not tomorrow and that political leaders will work unceasingly to find paths towards peace,” Archbishop Wilson said.

“I also acknowledge with gratitude the work of humanitarian agencies in responding to this emergency in which hundreds of thousands of people have fled their homes, drinking water is cut off in many places and supplies of food and fuel are very low.”

Caritas Australia is raising funds to help respond to the crisis and its partners, Caritas Lebanon and Caritas Jerusalem, are supplying aid and every possible assistance to people in the affected areas.

Archbishop Wilson called for Catholics in Australia to continue to pray for peace.

“We can so often feel helpless in the face of such violence and seemingly intractable political problems, but our faith tells us that it is not God’s way to oppose violence with stronger violence.

“Once again, I return to the words of Pope Benedict who tells us: ‘What we can do is to give witness of love, witness of faith and, above all, to raise a cry to God – We can pray!’.”

“I know that there are many Australians who have families in both Lebanon and Israel. Let us hold them in our prayers as indeed we pray for all of those affected by this terrible conflict.”