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President: Archbishop William Nolan

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We begin this new year praying for peace and justice. As we look around we see a world that is suffering under human mismanagement. We should not question our need to pray nor doubt the power of that prayer - for only God can help us.

The present economic crisis means that we are all having to tighten our belts financially. But though all of us are suffering we are not all suffering in the same way or to the same extent. Those who are better off may have to cut back on some of the luxuries or pleasures of life: a night out or a foreign holiday. But others are now struggling to afford food to feed their family or to pay for gas and electricity to heat their homes.

Meanwhile war in Europe continues. The prospect of peace in Ukraine is remote. Syria, Yemen, and Ethiopia are just some of the other long term conflicts where peace is a distant dream. There is no shortage of these conflicts, nor seemingly any shortage of arms to fuel them and keep them alive.

And refugees continue to arrive on our shores, despite the efforts of government to blockade the English Channel. In a world where, at over 100 million, there have never been so many forcibly displaced persons,<sup>1</sup> the root causes of migration have yet to be tackled.

Nor has the climate crisis gone away. People in Africa and elsewhere already suffer from the destruction of climate change caused by our environmental pollution. Yet we continue to pollute, and our promises of compensation for loss and damage remain but fine words.

We need to pray for peace and be active in supporting those in need. Pope Francis says we need to roll up our sleeves and put our faith into practice.<sup>2</sup> And many are doing just that.

It is encouraging to see so many parishes involved in supporting food banks for the hungry and in providing warm places for those shivering with cold. And it is commendable that many people pressure those in power to respect the human dignity of all in need: whether it's the poor in our own country, the refugees seeking shelter from oppression, or those in foreign lands whose climate we have destroyed.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR estimates that global forced displacement has reached 103 million at mid-2022.

[www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics](http://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics)

<sup>2</sup> "Where the poor are concerned, it is not talk that matters; what matters is rolling up our sleeves and putting our faith into practice through a direct involvement, one that cannot be delegated." Pope Francis's Message for the World Day of the Poor, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

Prayer is needed not just to soften the hearts of those in power, but to soften our own hearts also. For when we are worried about our personal financial wellbeing it can be hard to be concerned for others. And when conflicts persist for so long compassion fatigue can set in. Despite the problems that humanity has created and that weigh us down, there is so much goodness in the world, and so many good people showing concern and compassion for those in need.

May our prayer be that God will work with us and through us to bring about the peace and justice for which we all long.

With my prayers and best wishes for a peaceful and just world,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Nolan', written in a cursive style.

+William Nolan  
Archbishop of Glasgow  
President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland Justice and Peace Commission