

**GREETING AND WELCOME  
BY ADAM CARDINAL MAIDA  
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR PEACE  
SS. PETER AND PAUL CHURCH, DETROIT  
JANUARY 24, 2002**

My fellow Religious Leaders and Members of the Various Faith Communities of Metro Detroit, Leaders of the Business and Civic Community, and Friends All:

I thank you for accepting my invitation to gather here at SS. Peter and Paul Church for this special service being held in solidarity with a similar gathering which took place earlier today in Assisi, Italy, at the initiative of Pope John Paul II. Recognizing that the journey itself is significant, formative, and symbolic, these leaders of different faiths journeyed as pilgrims to the city of St. Francis. As believers, we know very well that the means and path to our goal are just as critical as the point of arrival. In fact, in our diverse faith traditions, faith is often described as a journey, a stepping forward into the unknown, trusting in the call of God who draws us closer to Him and one another.

Although our journey here in Metro Detroit is more symbolic, nonetheless, it is still very real. In the midst of winter cold and inclement conditions, each comes from a different place in our metro area and from a very different religious experience. On this day and at this hour, we choose to be present together to raise our voices in prayer, to give testimony to our common commitment to peace and to

sign a declaration of intention to work together for greater peace here in Metro Detroit and, indeed, throughout the world.

While there are many differences between and among us, nonetheless, we share a common hunger and thirst for things of the spirit. We have all been deeply touched by the painful tragedy of September 11, and as we continue to grieve for those who have died and mourn with their families and loved ones, we also recognize the power of religion as a force for good. We believe in its potential as a means for changing people's minds and hearts so that history will never repeat another event like September 11.

We know very well the drama of sin and grace that unfolds in the hearts and minds of each of us – in every choice that we make, in every word that we say, in every step that we take. Even as we recognize righteous anger and discuss the moral propriety of a military response, we also pray for the forgiveness of those who have unleashed evil and violence. Even as we have seen the face of evil, we also have witnessed the even stronger power of goodness, truth, beauty, and oneness. In rescue workers and preachers, in and among people of all backgrounds, we have discovered surprising energy, compassion, healing, and hope, gifts of God that have become manifest as people of goodwill have joined hands and hearts in working for peace and justice and started to rebuild our nation.

In this ongoing process, we have clearly seen the formative and irreplaceable role played by people of faith-filled commitments.

As the Pope said so simply but forcefully in his message for New Year's Day 2002, *"It is a profanation of religion to declare oneself a terrorist in the name of God, to do violence to others in His name. Terrorist violence is a contradiction of faith in God, the Creator of man who cares for man and loves him."* Together, as religious leaders, we remind our congregations that in the face of war and violence, there is truly only one genuine alternative – to bear witness to the power of pardon to create the new order of peace based on justice and forgiveness.

The peace for which we pray this day is not merely the silence of guns and the absence of war; as the Christian and Hebrew Scriptures put it, peace is truly "the work of justice." By justice, we mean respect for the dignity of every person, regardless of race, ethnic, religious, or cultural background. As the Pope reminds us, *"There can be no peace without justice, but at the same time, there can be no justice without forgiveness."* And so, we pray that our merciful and all-provident God might touch all hearts hardened by sin and anger, and thus, bring forth good fruit of peace from what otherwise might seem to be barren soil.

Our very gathering today is a sign of our commitment to be people of pardon and peace in the way that we relate to one another – in our places of religious worship and in the workplace, in government, and in our families, neighborhoods

and schools. With all humility and sincerity, we recognize and confess our own sins and failures, asking God's mercy that we ourselves might turn away from any form of prejudice, anger, or fear. Instead, we pledge to live and work together for the well-being of all as our brothers and sisters, especially those who are most vulnerable.

In just a few moments, we will be hearing testimonials to peace from various faith traditions, and then, we will have the privilege of witnessing prayers of one another for peace. Finally, we religious leaders will then sign a common commitment to peace even as children of different religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds distribute olive branches – signs of peace – to the entire congregation.

Over the last few months, we have gathered together as religious and civic leaders, heads of businesses and institutions, members of this metropolitan community, to celebrate many of our joys and sorrows – the three-hundredth birthday of our city, the inauguration of a new mayor, and the tragedy of September 11. Yet again, we gather with hope and confidence in the power of prayer and the gift of faith.

Remembering that religion and faith transcend every nation and all barriers, we lift our minds, hearts, and voices to Almighty God and pray that He may shower upon us the blessing of peace, promised to all of goodwill. As our city of Detroit has risen out of ashes and experienced resurrection again and again in its

three-hundred years, let us pray that our whole world might know a rebirth of peace, a renewed appreciation of the dignity of the human person and an end to all war and violence. May the God of peace guide us all on the *way* to peace. Amen.