



# CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX

Cardinal Nasrallah Pierre Sfeir  
Maronite Patriarch of Antioch  
Maronite Patriarchate  
Bkerké  
LEBANON

21<sup>st</sup> July 2006

Your Eminence,

Fidelity to the word of God telling of events accomplished in Bethlehem, Jericho and Jerusalem, demands not only that we remember what happened long ago, but also that we hold in prayer – filled with sadness – what is happening in those places today. In recent days, our celebration of the Word of God has brought before us Lebanon and its cedars, Tyre and Sidon, together with Gaza and Nazareth. We must receive their complex history and hold in our hearts a painful present. We must be willing to do anything we can to establish a just and, therefore, a peaceful future.

With confidence, we write to assure you that the Catholic community in England and Wales will respond with generosity to the appeal of the Holy Father to keep this Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2006, as a special day of prayer and penance. Many of our people will be in Lourdes. The Holy Land and the neighbouring countries will not be forgotten in those days of pilgrimage. We also know that the response of the Catholic community to CAFOD's appeal for funds in response to the appalling and developing crisis affecting so many thousands will be generous and be an expression of our communion with your people and heartfelt concern for all who are suffering.

We also promise, as leaders in the Church in this land, to raise our voices to all those responsible for violence and for the suffering of civilians as we demand an immediate cease-fire so that the wholesale destruction of life and property may stop. We are also clear that countries like our own must accept our responsibilities not only to work for a ceasefire but also to create the conditions for a peace settlement that addresses the legitimate desires of the peoples of both Lebanon and the Holy Land.

For several years, our Bishops' Conference has walked with the Churches of the Holy Land. That commitment means we understand these words of Pope Benedict: "The Lebanese have the right to see the integrity and sovereignty of their country respected, the Israelis have the right to live in peace in their state, and the Palestinians have the right to have their own free and sovereign homeland."

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## DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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Bishop of Portsmouth*

*Assistant General Secretary: Dr David Ryall*

We pray that Jesus of Nazareth may bring about in our day his Father's kingdom of justice, love and peace and we pray that the Lebanon may once again be a beacon of hope through its commitment to peace and unity in a divided world.

With prayerful best wishes,

Yours in Christ,

**Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor**

Archbishop of Westminster and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

**Archbishop Patrick Kelly**

Archbishop of Liverpool and Vice-President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

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