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راعي طائفة اللاتين  
فلسطين-غزة

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From the Church of God in Gaza

To the beloved Saints in Palestine and the world

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

From the valley of tears, from Gaza that is sinking in its blood, the blood that has strangled the joy in the hearts of one and a half million inhabitants, I send you this message of faith and hope. But the message of love is imprisoned; choked in our throats as Christians; we do not venture to even say it to ourselves. The priests of the Church today are raising hope as a banner, so that God will have mercy on us and have compassion on us and keep a remnant for himself in Gaza so that the light of Christ that was lit by Deacon Philip at the establishment of the church will not be extinguished but continue to shine in Gaza. May Christ's compassion revive our love for God even though it is currently in "intensive care".

I announce to you from my heart as the father and priest, the death of the daughter of our school in Holy Family, the dear, Christine Wadi al-Turk, the first Christian to die in the war. Christine was in the tenth grade in our school and she died this morning, Friday, January 2, 2009 as a result of fear and the cold. The windows in her home were open to protect the children from glass fragments and the missiles that pass above it. The bombing that hit her neighbor's home caused her whole body to shake in horror. She could not bear all this, so she went to complain to her Creator about her situation and request a home and a refuge where there is no crying, screaming or wailing, but joy and happiness.

Our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

What you see on television and what you hear is not all of the harsh reality experienced by our people in Gaza. The television and radio cannot transmit the whole truth because of its immensity in our land. The bitter siege on Gaza has become a hurricane that is growing every hour until it has become a war crime, a crime against humanity. If the people of Gaza are now presenting their tragedy to the court of conscience of every human, who has "goodwill", the time to come is the time of God's just court.

The children of Gaza and their parents are sleeping in the corridors of their home, if there are any, or in the toilets and bathrooms for their protection. They are trembling with fear at every voice, movement and bombardment and the heavy shelling of the F-16 planes.

It is true that these planes in most of their flights so far, have targeted the main government and Hamas headquarters, but all of these headquarters are near people's homes, and are not more than 6 meters away, which is the legal distance between buildings. Therefore, people's homes have been severely damaged and many children have died because of this. Our children are living in a state of trauma and fear. They are sick from it and for other reasons such as the lack of food, malnutrition, poverty and the cold...

As for the tragedies that are occurring in the hospitals, you can say what you like. These hospitals did not have basic first aid before the war and now thousands of the wounded and the sick are pouring into the hospitals and they are performing operations in the hospital

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corridors. Many of them are sent to the Rafah crossing to Egypt, those who pass may not return as they die on the way and the situation of the people in the hospitals is frightening and sad.

I summarize my letter to you by lifting our suffering to God and to you. Our people in Gaza are treated like animals in a zoo, they eat but remain hungry, they cry, but no one wipes their tears. There is no water, no electricity, no food, but fear, terror and blockade ... Yesterday the bakery refused to give me bread. The reason being that the baker refused to feed me with flour that is not worthy of humans so that he will not disrespect my priesthood. The good flour had finished, and what flour he had was inappropriate for human consumption. I have vowed to not eat bread for the duration of this war.

We want you to raise your continuous prayers to God, and not to hold a mass or service without remembering the suffering of Gaza before God. I am sending short messages from the Bible to our parishioners to increase the hope in their hearts. We have all agreed to pray this prayer at the top of every hour: "O Lord of peace rain peace on us, O Lord of peace, grant peace to our land. Have mercy, O Lord, on your people and do not keep us in enmity forever. Please stand with us now and sing this prayer with us.

Your prayers with us move the whole world and teach it that any love that is prevented from reaching your brothers and sisters in Gaza is not the love of Christ and the Church. The love of Christ and the Church does not recognize political and social barriers, wars and so on. When your love reaches us, it makes us feel that we, in Gaza, are an integral part of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and our Muslim brothers and sisters in our midst are our people and our destiny, we have what they have and we suffer like they do, we are all the people of Palestine.

In the midst of all this, our people in Gaza remain rejecting war as a means for peace and confirming that the road to peace is peace. We in Gaza are steadfast and have resolution in our eyes: "between slavery and death, we have no choice." We want to live to praise the Lord in Palestine and witness for Christ, we want to live for Palestine, not die for it, but if death is imposed on us, we will die honest, brave and strong.

We join you in your prayers so that Christ may give us His real peace, so that "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the calf and the young lion together; and a little child shall lead them."

The peace of Christ, that peace to which you are called to be one body be with all of you and protect you. Amen.

Your Brother,  
Father Manuel Mussallam  
Priest of the Catholic Church in Gaza