

# The Pope's Call for A Day of Reflection & Dialogue

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To His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, I offer humble and deep gratitude for his Call for a Day of Reflection, Dialogue and Prayer for Peace and Justice in the World, as Pilgrims of Truth, Pilgrims of Peace.

The Call is necessary because often our natural tendency is agitation, not reflection.

We want to impose our words but are reluctant to listen.

Love of our own opinions keeps out what a dialogue brings: new insights, a way out of a box, and hope, for ourselves and others.

We strive and strive and strive, but often fail to make a simple, pure and genuine request to a God keen to satisfy our deepest longings.

And when we pray, we often ask for peace and justice in a partisan way, not for everyone or for every side, not for the whole world.

Wounded in our bodies, hearts and memories, we at times ask not for peace and justice but for the disappearance of our adversary. At such times, the adversary is no longer a human being with a soul. At such times, our human life has value but the life of our adversary does not. He is a blot, an excrescence, a burden on the earth, an abomination.

All across our world, we humans are turning some people into dust, in our minds or in some cases physically. Often their crime is to belong to a despised race or class or tribe or caste or religion. They are flawed not because they have done something wrong but because they belong to a disapproved group.

Dear brothers and sisters, we cannot allow this and yet think of ourselves as spiritual or civilized or modern – or human.

The Call from His Holiness Pope Benedict, and the response to it from so many, enables all of humankind to realize, firstly, that differences do not remove our common humanity. We are all humans. Our common humanity is our deepest bond with one another.

Secondly, the Call enables us to pray for, and through dialogue make an effort for, the coming together of divided hearts.

At this dialogue initiated by Pope Benedict, I beg the God who is Almighty and All-loving to inspire human beings in all corners of the world to end oppression and domination, restrain greed, soften hating hearts, fill empty stomachs, wipe the tears of children, women, and men, and open the door to experiences of love, compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation, and joy.

My mind travels across past centuries to the Saint whose voice and steps were heard on this sacred ground and who continues to pull human beings towards peace and compassion. To be able to pray again at this spot, as I was able to do 25 years ago at the invitation of Pope John Paul II, is a special experience, which is another reason for me to thank Pope Benedict.

There is an ancient Hindu prayer which my grandfather Mahatma Gandhi daily recited:

*Ishaa vasyam idam sarvam yat kincha jagatyaan jagat/ Te na tyaktena bhunjithaa maagridah kasya svid dhanam*

The translation is: 'Renounce the world, and receive it back as a gift from God. And then covet not.'

It seems to me that St Francis lived this prayer, and became a blessing to all of us. So, along with thanking the Pope, I also thank this place, Assisi.

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