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Prayer and Fasting for Peace in The Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan

I whole-heartedly join a growing number of Church Leaders responding to the call of Pope Francis for a day of prayer and fasting for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in South Sudan on February 23rd. That is the Friday of the first full week of Lent. Moved by the Holy Father's invitation, I looked ahead to the texts appointed for reading at the eucharist that day.

The prophet Ezekiel speaks of God's desire that we turn from the wickedness of the ways in which humans commit such abominable crimes against one another. He calls us to re-set our hearts toward doing what is right and just in the sight of God. (Ezekiel 34:21-28)

The psalmist sings of his trust in the Lord's plenteous redemption, and kindness. (Psalm 130)

In the gospel of the day, we hear Jesus teaching on reconciliation and how we go about that work, however hard it may be however long it may take. (Matthew 5:20-26)

The peoples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan have suffered through the horrors of war for so many years. They know so much death and are acquainted with so much grief. Communities have been destroyed and family life shattered. So many of their children know nothing but war. So many in fact are orphaned by its carnage.

On this Friday, February 23rd, let us fast as an act of solidarity with those who suffer so much deprivation through war and those whose poverty is incomprehensible. And let us pray for those who work for reconciliation and peace – that their ranks be swelled and their strategies embraced. May the peoples for whom they labour finally know a peace that is just and lasting, a peace in which they and their children can live in hope of better times, in full accord with the will of God.

Fred J. Hiltz
Archbishop and Primate