



October 30, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For the past few months the world has been horrified as war has broken out between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The roots of the conflict go back decades, if not centuries, and there are innumerable complications in multiple dimensions: political (both local and international), ethnic, historic, and even religious. Our hearts are moved to pray for peace in solidarity with our brothers and sisters suffering innocently.

Pope Francis wrote in his Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship), “We can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits ... Every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil. Let us not remain mired in theoretical discussions, but touch the wounded flesh of the victims” (nn. 258, 261).

In the current war, as in so many others, the Church suffers tremendous collateral damage. Faithful, peace-loving people become innocent victims, indeed are sometimes targeted, and we, their fellow-believers, have an obligation to come to their assistance. “While we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

The Church in Armenia has very ancient roots, and its liturgy is celebrated to this day at Saint Sahag Armenian Church in Saint Paul. I have invited their Pastor, Father Tadeos Barseghyan, along with members of other communities, to an **Ecumenical Prayer Service for Peace at 1:00 pm, on Saturday, November 7, 2020, at the Cathedral of Saint Paul**. Similar prayer services have already occurred in New York City, Detroit, Cleveland, and other places around the country, and leaders of the Roman Catholic Church have been eager to join in praying for reconciliation, justice, and peace.

Please join me, Bishop Cozzens, Father Tadeos, and other faith leaders at this prayer service, either socially distanced in person, or virtually at the link provided at the Archdiocesan Events webpage. Let us also continue to remember the innocent who have already suffered and died and show our support for our fellow Armenian Christians.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis