



# International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

*Shalom*

Peace and Solidarity/Compassion

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## Introduction

There are many ongoing wars in our world that continue to cause pain, suffering, displacement, and death. In Ukraine, Yemen, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Syria, and Sudan just to name a few. *You Are Sent* encourages us to prophetically respond and be in solidarity with those affected by these most challenging and frightening realities. “Freed and trusting, we are ready to approach others openly in dialogue, to hope against hope, to accept privations, and to welcome insecurity.” (YAS C 16) This passage from YAS may be especially relevant for us now, when we sisters are also facing the tangible reality of war. Facing the cruelty of war and living this aspect of our constitution constantly in our daily life requires us to step out of our comfort zones and dare to respond boldly in unsuspected ways. (YAS, GD 36, 37)

## Call to Prayer

O God nothing happens in the world  
apart from You  
neither in the important affairs  
of world history  
nor in our personal lives.  
Sometimes it is hard for us to pray,  
“Father, Your will be done.”  
Sometimes we can only remain silent,  
hoping, adoring, trusting.

But still, there is strength in the knowledge  
that no suffering is in vain,  
no pain is futile,  
no question, no doubt, without significance.  
You, great God, direct all darkness  
to the light.  
And if, after all that,  
we still find no words for You,  
You accept our silence and our tears.

(shortened prayer from *You, God*)

## Experience

As a volunteer, I worked with the Caritas Helping Point at the Ukrainian-Hungarian Border. There I met a thirty-year-old woman with her three-year-old son, Simon. They arrived in the morning and after an hour, they continued their journey to Israel. They ate a little food and used the hygiene facilities. I could connect with Simon very easily, especially after I showed him where the chocolate was. He was smiling all the time. It seemed to me that he was not really aware of the harsh situation around him. Not like his mother. Her eyes were talking about sadness, desperation, and a lot of pain. She could not speak Hungarian and I could not speak Ukrainian but at the bus before they left, we could understand each other very well. With tears in her eyes, she hugged me. Since then the look of this young woman and Simon’s smile are still in my heart.

## Reflection

Oppression, injustice, vulnerability, fear. All of these are the characteristics of wartime. Each one of them exists in human relationships. They allow us the opportunity to examine ourselves

and to be aware of the wars or cold wars that might surround us. History has unveiled that there is no oppression without an oppressor and an oppressed. There is no fear without a terrifying and feared person. Why do greed and hatred take over the human heart? How can people persevere in pain, in facing the devastation of their lives?

For these questions, only Jesus can give answers. “Jesus never promoted violence or intolerance. He openly condemned the use of force to gain power over others: “*You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you.*” (Mt 20:25-26 as in *Fratelli Tutti*, 238) He goes even further and asks us to be able to forgive seventy-times-seven. Instead of an aggressive reaction to oppression, he offers a gentle reliance on God. He gives us an example before he fulfilled his mission on the cross: “*Ill-treated and afflicted, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughterhouse, like a sheep dumb before its shearers he never opened his mouth.*” (Is 53:7) After his resurrection when he entered the room where the disciples were together – with closed doors because of their fears – these were his first words: “*Peace be with you.*” (Jn 20:19)

1. What are the wars or cold wars that surround us in our communities, cities, and countries?
2. How can I learn the way of nonviolence and be a promoter of peace in my community, in my environment and in my ministry?
3. What helps me to create a compassionate heart that does not prevent me from forgiving the other, even to forgive or not hate the oppressor?
4. What sacrifice/asceticism am I willing to make for the sake of peace?

## Action

After your personal reflection consider what you can do in your communities. Here you can find some possibilities:

- **Praying** regularly – with those to whom we are sent – for peace.
- **Finding** ways to support Caritas Internationalis.
- **Sharing** how you are touched by war and called to act out non-violently and in solidarity in your daily life.
- **Opening** your houses for refugees (if it is possible).
- **Teaching** foreign languages, doing voluntary work for young children and refugees.

### Closing Prayer: A Prayer to the Creator

Lord, Father of our human family,  
you created all human beings  
equal in dignity:  
pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit  
and inspire in us a dream of renewed  
encounter, dialogue, justice, and peace.  
Move us to create healthier societies  
and a more dignified world,  
a world without hunger, poverty,

violence and war.  
May our hearts be open  
to all the peoples and nations of the earth.  
May we recognize the goodness and beauty  
that you have sown in each of us,  
and thus forge bonds of unity, common  
projects, and shared dreams. Amen.

*(The prayer is from Fratelli Tutti)*