

SYRIA: SATURDAY, SEPT. 7,

DESIGNATED AS UNIVERSAL FAST AND PRAYER DAY FOR SUFFERING SYRIA

BY POPE FRANCIS

Sunday, Sept. 8, 2013: Today's first reading, Wisdom 9. 13-18 could not be more timely:

"For the deliberations of mortals are timid and unawared are our plans...and scarce do we guess the things of earth and what is within our grasp we find with difficulty."

I have watched the pundits and the politicians all week as they ponder and debate Syria, and when all is said in done there seem to be no "good solutions." Human wisdom blinks, and stutters, and wonders. It is well to remember that good intentioned actions can go astray, and likewise inaction can embolden. From day to day, I change my mind as perhaps you do to about our wisest course of action or inaction. Human wisdom is never perfect. Only God's wisdom is. That is the message of today's First Reading. And so Christians come up with contrary answers to complex puzzling obstacles. Here is what one group of American Catholics have to say: from PAX CHRISTI, "Grounded in a committment to non-violence, Pax Christi urges you to pray and act for peace."

"Do all that you can to join with religous leaders from around the globe in calling for dialogue and negotiation." This in response to Pope Francis message: He exhorts "the path of dialogue and negotiation...as the **only option** to put an end to the conflict." Cardinal Dolan on behalf of the U.S. bishops echoed the words of Pope Francis.

From the profound mess in Syria, several outcomes are possible: 1) That Assad is put down and an ensuing genocide erupts against his minority Alawite followers and Christians who have been safe with Assad's protection. 2) that radical Islamists take over and declare a radical Muslim State, 3) That secular Syrians prevail, (the happiest outcome) 4. Assad remains and this simmering conflict goes on and on for years.

The Holy Father and Bishops deserve our listening and our prayers, and yet we know that SOMETIMES violence does bring peace. It happened when we intervened to stop genocide in Serbia. So people of good will can differ. No one can deny however that prayer is needed. You are urged to join with Catholics throughout the world in special prayer and fasting on Saturday, Sept. 7 for suffering Syria.

The Second Reading today again reveals the short sightedness and lack of wisdom that can prevail in the minds of the greatest and the holiest. Saint Paul sends the slave Onesimus back to his master; rather than condemn slavery, Paul accepts it as a cultural given just as Americans did until very recently. No human being possesses full wisdom at any given time. We **struggle** toward the full truth both in our personal journeys as well as through history.

Finally the Gospel It is interesting that Jesus uses a military parable that describes a King wisely choosing negotiation rather than risk a foolish engagement that would mean defeat. The deeper challenge from the Gospel is that to follow the Gospel in a radical way is a great and difficult effort.

BREAKFAST QUESTION: What is the wisest course of action for the USA in regard to Syria?

PERSONAL REFLECTION: How do I seek wisdom in the conflicting decisions I am faced with personally?

PRAYER:

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.

Send forth your Spirit to renew the face of the earth.