**PRAY FOR PEACE**

A few years ago, I received an email message from a friend in Bethlehem, who is a Christian Palestinian and a Roman Catholic. The same message could have been sent in recent years from Syria or Iraq.

Micheal’s name is spelt in the Arabic way. The “al” stands for Al(lah), God, unlike in Michael, where the “el” stands for El(ohim), God, in Biblical Hebrew. He wrote:

“Greetings from Bethlehem, the birthplace of the King of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ. I wish you a Happy New Year. It is my hope from God that this message will reach you in good health and full happiness in the grace of faith. Please pray for God to protect us, especially in this present situation, from the bad hearts of those who wish us harm. Ask God to open their hearts to the faith, as God did with Saint Paul at the beginning of Christianity.

“My friend in Jesus Christ, I want you to know that my family and I are living in a very bad and difficult situation here in the Holy Land since 29 September 2000 until now. The hardest time was from 18 to 29 October of 2001, when my wife and my children, as well as many children in the area, lived in fear and danger. No one could go out of the home to live a normal life, even to buy food. Everyone was scared of being a target for bullets from both sides, Israeli and Palestinian. For more than two weeks, no children could go to school. Many bullets hit my home breaking windows and walls. All this happened while I was away, looking for work.

“My family and I wish you all a peaceful New Year. Our prayer is that the Prince of Peace will reign in his Holy Land and in our hearts and in the hearts of all people everywhere.”

Your friend, Micheal

Micheal added his own “Prayer for Peace”:

*We will wait for your peace to come, O God.*

The battleground is on the news, the shocking sights, the fire, the white dust, the sounds of hatred, the lack of calm and joy. Help us to believe that peace is possible.

*We will wait for your peace to come, O God.*

The rescuers continue to search, while families ache with desperate hope. Help us to believe that peace is possible.

*We will wait for your peace to come, O God.*

The violence, the disregard for life, is so blatant, so unfair, and so incredible. Help us to believe that peace is possible.

*We will wait for your peace to come, O God.*

And we pray for the victims of this violence; for all those people who have suffered loss. Help us to believe that peace is possible.

*We will wait for your peace to come, O God.*

We pray for our national and world leaders, that you will guide their critical decisions in the days and weeks and months to come. Help us to believe that peace is possible!

*We will wait for your peace to come, O God.*