October 12th

THE NEW SHOFAR

God is our objective. The Prophet is our political leader. The Quran is our constitution. Jihad is our method. Martyrdom is our aspiration…
The Muslim Brotherhood

Satan's minions wreaked havoc on October 7th

On the second anniversary of the events that took place in Kibbutzim in Israel on October 7, it remains difficult to find appropriate words to describe what happened, to appreciate the depth of the evil that had rolled across the nation. Our struggles to understand prompts questions about how such occurrences were possible: *Why, Lord did you remain silent? How could you tolerate this? How could he permit this endless slaughter, this triumph of evil?*

In all these moments of anguish, the words of **Psalm 44** that come most to mind. It is a psalm of lament crying out in anguish for tribulations that have brought the nation to its knees: *You have broken us in the haunt of jackals, and covered us with deep darkness ... because of you we are being killed all day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Rouse yourself! Why do you sleep, O Lord? Awake, do not cast us off forever! Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? For we sink down to the dust; our bodies cling to the ground. Rise up, come to our help! Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!"* (***Ps* 44:19, 22-26**). This cry of anguish, which Israel raised to God in its suffering in the exile to Babylon, is also the cry for help raised by all those who in every age - yesterday, today and tomorrow - suffer for the love of God, for the love of truth and goodness.

Only Faith can produce an enduring Hope

We cannot hope to understand the full breath of the divine plan and can only manage to see it piecemeal. We must pray even more earnestly so that his power, the power of grace he has planted in our hearts, will not be buried or choked within us by the mire of selfishness, cowardliness, indifference or opportunism. Let us cry out to God, that he may draw men and women to conversion and help them to see that violence does not bring peace, but only generates more violence.

From the time of David onward the Jewish people have faced invasions, persecutions, exiles and pogroms that should have crushed their faith long ago. This is the history given voice in the words of the Psalm…*We are being killed, accounted as sheep for the slaughter*" were fulfilled in a terrifying way. But all of this was not limited to the distant past. We saw it with the Nazis under Hitler, and with the personification of evil in the terrorists of Hamas. Deep down, those vicious criminals, by wiping out this people, wanted to kill the God who called Abraham, who spoke on Sinai and laid down principles to serve as a guide for humankind. Those evil marauders proclaimed that God had to die and power had to belong to man alone - to those men, who thought that by force they had made themselves masters of the world. It was the Tower of Babel all over again.

It was by destroying Israel by the *Shoah* (Holocaust), they ultimately wanted to tear up the Jewish foundation of the Christian faith and to replace it with a faith of their own invention: faith in the rule of man, the rule of the powerful. The justification of power

through domination and hatred. These wars and evils are actions taken against God, attempting to usurp the divine prerogative by the corrupt powers of men.

Satan remains at war with God – a war he has already lost

The persecutors of the Jewish people, whether they were the Egyptians during the time of Moses, the Assyrians who destroyed the Northern Kingdom; the Babylonians, the Syrians or the Roman Empire itself, the Nazi, Hamas or militant Islam, they all saw the people of Israel as being a part of the garbage of world history. They rejected the biblical vision whereby all men and women had a divine dignity in that they were created in the very image and likeness of God and instead tolerated the Jews only for their usefulness. They were written off as ***lebensunwertes***- lives unworthy of being lived.

So, what should we Christians be doing on this second anniversary of October 7th? We should find time to be quiet and then in those moments of reflection, we should bow our heads in imitation of the three young men in Babylon facing death in the fiery furnace. We should join them in their cry of faith and hope, a cry that was the opposite of desperation: *Only our God can deliver us. But even if he does not, be it known to you, O King, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up* (cf. ***Dan* 3:17ff**.). It is not Trump, or the UN; not Egypt, Turkey or any of the Gulf States that will bring an enduring and just Peace. On God. Only God working through hearts that are open in faith willing to do the works of God in the name of Christ.

Let us pray without ceasing

We should not forget that Day of Evil; not water down or attempt to justify the actions of the Evil One who works through the bloodied hands of the terrorist assassins of Hamas by pointing to the evil realities of the war in Gaza. The fates of those innocents, those who were raped, slaughtered and brutalised in their homes, or at the festival should forever jar our memories and touch our hearts. They should not be used to stir up hatred in the world, to perpetuate any thoughts of an eye for an eye. Those innocents stand before us as terrifying and eternal witnesses to the impact hatred has in the lives of men and women everywhere. Our recollections of that day should call us to see evil as being evil and to reject it out of hand. Their stories should stir up within us the courage to do good and to resist evil, to call it out whenever and wherever we find it, preferring always love over hatred, forgiveness over judgment and God over Satan.

Benedict XV1 noted, during a visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau that humanity had walked through a “valley of darkness”. This was not meant just as a reflection on the past. It was also a prayer of Hope for the future, a commitment to finding peace and mercy, not at the hands of powerful men promoting political, ideological or military solutions to the world problems but through humbling ourselves before God and committing all things to his loving hands: *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff - they comfort me ... I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long*” (**Ps 23:1-4, 6**).