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Global Franciscan head: Consider Syria fast for 'forseeable future'

Joshua J. McElwee | Sep. 6, 2013 NCR Today

The leader of the main group of the world's Franciscans, who is an American, has called upon the order of priests and brothers to consider praying and fasting for peace in Syria for the "foreseeable future."

Writing Friday to the members of the Order of Friars Minor, one of several that traces their roots directly to the 13-century St. Francis of Assisi, Fr. Michael Perry states [1] the friars "cannot idly stand by and watch as our brothers and sisters suffer as if their suffering has nothing to do with our lives and our Christian, Franciscan identity."

Saying he is joining with Pope Francis planned prayer vigil in Rome Saturday, Perry says he is asking his members "to explore ways to extend this experience of fasting and prayer for peace into the foreseeable future, that the ?cry for peace? might rise up from our Franciscan fraternties and from the Order, that it might become a positive force for justice, truth, and the healing of nations."

Perry, an Indianapolis native who previously served as an advisor to the U.S. bishops and as a missionary to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was elected the leader of the Order of Friars Minor in May. The order counts among its ranks some 15,000 followers of St. Francis in some 113 countries.

Perry's letter was posted as a "message of peace" at the website of the order's English Speaking Conference.

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