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A brown nun speaks into a microphone while a brown woman in Western business clothes sits

Iraqi Sr. Caroline Saheed Jarjis, a member of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, speaks to reporters Oct. 12, 2023, during a briefing about the assembly of the Synod of Bishops in the Vatican press office. Margaret Karram, the Israel-born Palestinian president of the Focolare movement, listens as she speaks. (CNS photo/Robert Duncan)

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Synod participants who have known war and conflict firsthand led the assembly of the Synod of Bishops Oct. 12 by praying for peace between Israel and Palestine, throughout the Middle East and across the globe.

Iraqi Sr. Caroline Saheed Jarjis, a member of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, read in Arabic the day's Gospel passage from Luke, which included the line: "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

Margaret Karram, a Palestinian born in Israel, who is president of the Focolare movement, read prayers of petition for "the Holy Land; for the people of Israel and Palestine, who are in the grip of unprecedented violence; for the victims, especially the children; for the injured; for those being held hostage; for the missing and their families."

"In these hours of anguish," she said, members of the synod unite with Pope Francis in praying for peace in every nation of the Middle East and in every country at war.

Cardinal Louis Sako, the Iraq-based patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church, presided over the prayer service and asked God to act so that "all humanity, which has in you alone its origin, would form one family without violence, without absurd war."

After the morning session, Karram and Jarjis met with reporters at the synod's daily briefing. They were joined by Archbishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya of Bamenda, president of the bishops' conference of Cameroon, a nation experiencing violence since 2016 between government forces and militants demanding the independence of the country's English-speaking regions.

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Karram, a special guest at the synod, told reporters, "My heart has been torn apart with a deep pain" since the Hamas attack on Israel Oct. 7 and Israel's massive response against the people of Gaza.

"I believe that we can take many steps for peace, but I also believe in the power of prayer," she said, and the experience of the synod is not extraneous to her hopes and prayers for peace.

"The experience of these days is teaching me what it means to walk together," Karram said. "It is not easy to listen to the other and understand, to dialogue, to let oneself be challenged by others," but that is what the synod is teaching participants.

The hope, she said, is that "we are able to make this a lifestyle, not only a methodology, a lifestyle of the church," and one that could be offered to different communities of people wanting to resolve even social or political differences with respect for each other and an acceptance of diversity.

Fuanya told reporters, "This synod is a very big consolation to Africa because with the problems we have in Africa, sometimes we feel isolated and abandoned. But coming to the synod, we join with the rest of the universal church to sit down and pray together for the problems that are going on in Africa, and especially for the countries that are affected by war."

"We have learned from what is happening on the other continents, the wars that are just going on in Ukraine, Palestine and Israel, and other places, that we all have to be pro-peace," he said. "War can never be the solution. We all have to be pro-peace and join together as one church, God's children united, praying for peace."

This story appears in the **Synod on Synodality** feature series. View the full series.