

Novena for Peace in the Holy Land

*Through the Intercession of
Dr. Robert D. Miller II, OFS,
Ph.D.*



In memory of Bob's Franciscan witness of peace & Biblical scholarship

Dr. Robert Miller II, OFS, (1966-2023) was a distinguished Old Testament scholar, a Catholic Secular Franciscan, and a loving husband and father. Throughout his life, Bob traveled to and lived in the Holy Land, where he immersed himself in its rich history. As a fellow at the Albright American School of Archaeology, he excavated, surveyed, and led tours, sharing his expertise with others. He taught classes for the Sisters at Ecce Homo, and lived with his family at both the Tantur Ecumenical Institute and the Albright. Later, as a professor, he continued his work, bringing students to the Holy Land to explore its ancient sites and meet the people who live there today, including visits to the Crèche Orphanage in Bethlehem. His deep love for the land was only surpassed by his profound affection for all its people. Dedicated to both the history and the present-day struggles of the region, he worked and prayed tirelessly for a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict. Following his passing, we now seek his intercession, hoping for the peace he so fervently sought to become a reality.

By Anne-Marie Miller, OFS...Bob's loving spouse

Day One—The Annunciation

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by Your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection: When God sent the archangel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary to announce the Divine plan for the coming of the long-awaited savior, it was the announcement of a sea-change in the world. Mary, a daughter of Israel, pondered these things in her heart, not knowing what it all meant, but she said “Yes.” 2,000 years later, we know that God fulfilled the longing of our hearts through the birth of Jesus, but there is still much waiting: waiting for peace, universal acceptance of Jesus as Lord and for the brotherhood and sisterhood of the human race and all creation.

Response: Maranatha, come, O Lord! Renew and heal the people of the Holy Land in the power of Your Spirit.

We Pray: Gracious God, the land in which you brought about the Mystery of salvation is still wrought with conflict, hatred and violence. Many still long for the Messiah to appear. May it be known to Jew and Gentile alike that Jesus is Lord, that in the son of Mary lies the peace which we seek. Bob, faithful Franciscan witness, pray for this holy intention before the Throne of Grace. Through Christ our Lord, Amen. ***Our Father, Hail Mary and Gloria Patri***

Day Two—The Journey to Bethlehem & Birth of Christ

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection: The footprints of God are spiritually imprinted across the Holy Land, from the time of Abraham, Moses and the prophets, to Jesus, and into the present day. The journey of the Holy Family from Galilee to Judea was fraught with peril, as was the birth of Jesus in vulnerable circumstances in Bethlehem. Both Israelis and Palestinians today experience vulnerability and peril at the hands of one another in the land which they inhabit together. May the Spirit’s gifts of wisdom and understanding fill the hearts of each citizen of the Holy Land to see God’s holy presence in the other.

Response: Maranatha, come, O Lord! Renew and heal the people of the Holy Land in the power of Your Spirit.

We pray: Loving God, our refuge and our strength. Console and protect those who are in danger of violence throughout the Middle East. May each Jew, Christian and Muslim see God’s dignity in the person of their neighbor and strive to protect and preserve the dignity and life of all. Bob, faithful Franciscan witness, pray for this holy intention before the Throne of Grace. Through Christ our Lord, Amen. ***Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria Patri***

Day Three—Simeon’s Prophecy

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by Your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection: Myriam and Yosef (Mary and Joseph) lived in awe in the days immediately following the birth of Yeshua (Jesus). It is recorded in Scripture that they presented him for dedication at the Temple, as prescribed by the Torah (Law). Their lives were permeated by the faith and traditions of Judaism. But Mary receives unexpected words of foreboding from Simeon the prophet in the Temple that day. “A sword,” he says, “will pierce your heart.” “What does it all mean?” she must have wondered, as her heart drifted from joy to anxiety. “When will this happen, and what will this heartbreak be?” Later she was to learn the excruciating way she was called to walk with Christ as a chosen instrument of God’s love in a broken world; that this often means intense suffering on behalf of others, until they awaken to the Light of Love at the heart of all religions.

Response: Maranatha, come, O Lord! Renew and heal the people of the Holy Land in the power of Your Spirit.

We Pray: Those who serve God’s plans in a special way often pay the price for their vocation by suffering and death. We pray for the safety and effectiveness of all emissaries of peace, for foreign aid and diplomatic dialogue in the Holy Land during the ongoing conflict there. We pray that the voices calling for peace and reconciliation between Israelis, Palestinians and their Arab neighbors will be heeded and kept safe from violent reprisal. Bob, faithful Franciscan witness, pray for this holy intention before the Throne of Grace. Through Christ our Lord, Amen. ***Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria Patri***

Day Four—The Holy Family Flees

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by Your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection: The Holy Family fled in haste soon after Jesus’ birth, due to the threats to Jesus’ life by the despotic ruler, Herod. The land was also under the oppressive military occupation of the Romans. The Jewish people lived in a land filled with fear. War and the threat of war continues to be an ever-present reality for the people of the Holy Land. Palestinians suffer under Israeli military occupation, and Israelis, only decades from the Holocaust, suffer threats from both Palestinian terrorism and surrounding Arab nations. Many children from both sides have experienced violence and death. Palestinians have fled their homes in fear, and the modern nation of Israel was established by Jews fleeing for their lives from oppression in other countries. The cycle of trauma continues. When will it end?

Response: Maranatha, come, O Lord! Renew and heal the people of the Holy Land in the power of Your Spirit.

We Pray: Lord, our Stronghold of Safety, put into the hearts of all in leadership in the Holy Land, a commitment to the sanctity of life, regardless of creed or ethnicity. May a day come when the people of the Holy Land of all backgrounds will live without fear for their children and enjoy safety in their homes and communities. May laws that are just for all be enacted, allowing peace and mutual respect to flourish. Please prosper the reconciling work of groups such as The Parents Circle and the Rossing Center, who create opportunities for healing dialogue among people who have suffered on all sides of the conflict. Bob, faithful Franciscan witness, pray for this holy intention before the Throne of Grace. Through Christ our Lord, Amen. ***Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria Patri***

Day Five—The Holy Family’s Life in Nazareth

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by Your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection: Most of the human family live out their lives in the context of family and local community. This is where human beings find their identity, sense of belonging and continuity of tradition through the generations. The Holy Family were no exception. Known as “The Hidden Years,” of Jesus’ life, because we know few details, most of his life was encompassed by daily dedication to the small but significant tasks of everyday human life. Today’s Holy Land is a quilt of diverse local communities of Jews, Palestinian Muslims and Christians, and minorities such as the Druze. Often they have little to no meaningful contact with one another, due to the mistrust and lack of understanding of one another’s ways that have arisen over the decades of conflict. May greater mutual understanding and tolerance be nurtured so that the ways God speaks within different communities and traditions will be appreciated, expanding the reverence of all for the plans of Divine Providence unfolding in our world today.

Response: Maranatha, come, O Lord! Renew and heal the people of the Holy Land in the power of Your Spirit.

We Pray: Lord of each of our lives, we pray for the flourishing of each human community. We ask Mary to spread her maternal mantle of peace over all the families of the Holy Land. We ask St. Joseph to intercede for all who live quiet lives of integrity there, as well as for those who misguidedly seek social change through violence and intimidation. May the reign of peace grow in each

heart, home and community in the Holy Land. Bob, faithful Franciscan witness, pray for this holy intention before the Throne of Grace. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria Patri.

Day Six—John the Baptist’s Call to Repentance

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by Your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection: At the cusp of great change, John the Baptizer appeared to announce the sea-change ahead and to call people to repentance. Though the signs of the times were not in their favor, John affirmed to the people of Judea and Galilee that God had heard their cries for justice, restoration and healing. His cry for repentance resounds down to our present day, in the words of the prophet Isaiah to “make a highway for our God.” We do this in every age by renouncing our prideful human projects of domination and ownership, and surrendering to God’s dream for the world. May Christ’s words, “Salvation comes through the Jews,” be embraced and respected anew as vocation, responsibility and mission by all parties in the Holy Land, as they live out their lives in particular religious communities.

Response: Maranatha, come, O Lord! Renew and heal the people of the Holy Land in the power of Your Spirit.

We Pray: Lord of Transformation, remind every person each day to see You as our Source of wisdom, life, healing and sanctification. Let

us not take superficial refuge in religious ritual or tradition. We know that your desire for us is to be transformed into your likeness, not only to be simply adherents to a particular faith tradition. Let each person, religious and secular, in the Holy Land, hear the call of John the Baptizer to repent, to “change the direction in which they are looking for ultimate fulfillment.” Our happiness is always in God’s will, and God’s will, ultimately, always leads to peace that passes all understanding. Bob, faithful Franciscan witness, pray for this holy intention before the Throne of Grace. Through Christ our Lord, Amen. ***Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria Patri***

Day Seven—Jesus’ Ministry of Healing & Reconciliation

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by Your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection: Jesus manifested the Good News he proclaimed by healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, restoring the lame and the outcast, forgiving sins and preaching hope to the poor. In his day, and in ours, the need for God’s transformative love continues. The Franciscan friars established by St. Francis of Assisi have had a presence in the Holy Land since the 13th century. This flowed from Francis’ extraordinary interaction with the Sultan of that time, marked by mutual respect and regard. They did not “convert” one another, but were mutually converted in a larger sense to a vision where enemies might become friends. May this be the spirit in which we approach those different from us, and may the Franciscan

Order and the larger Christian community continue to be ministers of reconciliation in the Holy Land.

Response: Maranatha, come, O Lord! Renew and heal the people of the Holy Land in the power of Your Spirit.

We pray: Father of Unity, we pray for Palestinian Christians, even in their dwindling numbers, to be given the grace to manifest the person of Christ in such a way that it powerfully communicates the love of God to those of other religious traditions in their midst. We ask your continued blessing on the Franciscan Order and their ministry of peace in the Holy Land and around the world. We pray a blessing, too, for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, that their presence might bring gentleness to the atmosphere of tension there. Bob, faithful Franciscan witness, pray for this holy intention before the Throne of Grace. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria Patri

Day Eight—Jesus' Betrayal, Death and Resurrection

Franciscan witness, pray for this holy intention before the Throne of Grace. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.
Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria Patri

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by Your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection: It has been said that Jesus recapitulated in his own person the spiritual history of the people of Israel, and their call to transformation for the sake of the world. As he said during his earthly lifetime, "In this world, you will have trouble; but take heart, I have overcome the world." Can we believe this, when we see so much destruction and hatred poured out on all sides in the Holy Land and around the world? We often despair, with the Israelis and Palestinians, that there can ever be a peace that allows enemies to permanently become neighbors and friends. May the humility and loving self-gift of our Lord Jesus Christ show us all a transforming path to a reconciliation that allows hearts to be made new in God's love.

Response: Maranatha, come, O Lord! Renew and heal the people of the Holy Land in the power of Your Spirit.

We pray: God of healing love, we know that it is your will that the words of the Shema, "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is One," be mirrored by our oneness as a human family. Pour out your Spirit on hardened and fearful hearts and closed minds. Bring a salve of kindness to the wounds inflicted by prejudice, injustice and lack of empathy for the neighbor, all too common in the Holy Land and in every land. May both Jew and Muslim see something unexpectedly new, by grace, in the power of the Cross and the Resurrection of Yeshua, a man of their own land. Bob, faithful

Day Nine—The Descent of the Holy Spirit

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by Your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection: When the Holy Spirit (in Hebrew, *Ruach Ha' Kodesh*) was poured out upon the apostolic community after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, miracles happened. The followers of Jesus saw their words of witness convert Jew and Gentile alike, their prayers heal and raise the dead, and they saw their own fear flee like the darkness at dawn. Do we, in our day, trust too little? What might we accomplish, if we but believed and stepped out in faith on behalf of peace? May we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and not just an uneasy truce of grudging co-existence, but that love would be shed abroad in the hearts of all the Holy Land's peoples and in our hearts.

Response: Maranatha, come, O Lord! Renew and heal the people of the Holy Land in the power of Your Spirit.

We pray: God of Miracles, Jesus affirmed that “with God, all things are possible.” “Without God,” though, he said, “we can do nothing.” May we recommit to being people of faith and peace in our own communities and to do all we can to support the peace efforts in the Holy Land, which carries so much sacred history, destiny and providential Divine presence in the religious imagination of Jew, Christian and Muslim. Where two or more agree in prayer, our Lord said, God is present and active in answering that prayer. May our prayers and advocacy efforts on behalf of peace be unceasing until we see a new day dawn for the peace of Jerusalem, and for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. Bob, faithful Franciscan witness,

pray for this holy intention before the Throne of Grace. Through Christ our Lord, Amen. ***Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria Patri***

Closing Prayer

Gracious and merciful God, Creator of all peoples, thank you that we, Jew, Christian and Muslim, adherents of the Abrahamic traditions, share a common faith in You as our Father. In our day, the call for peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land is urgent. The cycle of violence continues to spiral through generations, breaking hearts of the Holy Land's residents and creating disbelief in the minds and hearts of those around the world who might but believe if they saw people of faith treating one another with justice and love. We thank you for the years of ministry and study on behalf of Biblical history by Dr. Robert Miller, and his faithful Christian witness as a Secular Franciscan. May his prayers before the Throne of Grace avail much for a lasting peace in the land where Jesus walked, to fulfill the hopes of Sr. Francis of Assisi that the people of the Holy Land would live in charity together and witness to Your great love for us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Written By Amy S. Kulesa, OFS, who made her Franciscan Profession in 2003 while Bob served as Minister of the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Fraternity.

Praise be to God in
His angels and
saints!
Great is Thy
Faithfulness, O Lord.

