

---

## Pope Francis: “I continue to hope that there are paths to peace in the Middle East”

“I am constantly thinking of the grave situation in Palestine and Israel”, **Pope Francis** said at the end of the weekly general audience, in the traditional final greetings to the Italian-speaking faithful gathered in St Peter's Square. “I appeal for the release of the hostages and the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza,” he said: “I continue to pray for those who are suffering and I continue to hope that peace will prevail in the Middle East, in the tormented Ukraine and in other war-torn regions.” “I remind you all that starting tomorrow, Friday October 27, - the Pope's invitation - we will celebrate a day of fasting, prayer and penance. At 6 pm we will gather in St Peter's to pray for world peace.” Francis had also touched on the subject of war in his address to the Portuguese-speaking faithful shortly before: “At this time – he said - let's not allow the clouds of conflict hide the sun of hope. Rather, let us entrust the urgent need for peace to Our Lady, so that all the cultures may open up to the breath of harmony of the Holy Spirit.” At the centre of the catechesis of today's audience were Saints Cyril and Methodius, “the apostles of the Slavs”, who were sent as missionaries from Greece, where they were born, to Great Moravia in the 9th century, “which at that time included various peoples, some of whom had already been evangelised, but among whom many pagan customs and traditions had survived.” “Faith must be inculturated and culture evangelised. Inculturate the faith and evangelise the culture, always! With these words, spoken extemporaneously, the Pope gave topical relevance to their message.

“The Gospel cannot be preached in the abstract, distilled:

The Gospel must be inculturated. It is also a cultural expression,” he added, once again departing from the written text. Cyril, Francis explained, realised that “in order to proclaim the Gospel and to pray, a suitable, appropriate, specific tool was necessary” and so he created the Glagolitic alphabet, into which he translated the Bible and liturgical texts. “People feel that the Christian faith is no longer foreign – it becomes their faith, spoken in their mother tongue”, Francis remarked: “Just think: two Greek monks giving an alphabet to the Slavs. It is this openness of heart that rooted the Gospel among them. These two were not afraid: they were very brave!”

“A person is free inasmuch as he is courageous and does not let himself be put in chains”,

the Pope reminded the faithful, still speaking off-text, in reference to the two missionary saints whom John Paul II proclaimed co-patrons of Europe, dedicating an encyclical to them. Francis chose three words to describe their mission: unity, inculturation and freedom. “First of all, unity,” Francis explained: “The Greeks, the Pope, the Slavs: at that time there was an undivided Christendom in Europe, working together to evangelise. In addition to inculturation, the third characteristic of the preaching of the Apostles to the Slavs is freedom. “Freedom needs courage”, Francis pointed out. “A person is free inasmuch as he is courageous and does not let himself be put in chains”, he continued off text. With respect to the “struggles” encountered by Cyril and Methodius “on the part of some Latins, who saw themselves deprived of the monopoly of preaching among the Slavs”, Francis said:

“The struggle within the Church, ever so!”.

“We ask Saints Cyril and Methodius, Apostles to the Slavs, to be instruments of freedom for others”. The final invocation: “Be creative, steadfast, humble, in service.”

