Praying for Peace in Ethiopia and Eritrea
(especially the week of May 24, Independence Day for Eritrea)

The situation. Situated in the horn of Africa, Ethiopia bridges the Middle East and Africa. Although rich in history and a crossroad of cultures, Ethiopia has suffered from numerous conflicts with its neighbors. In 1952, the UN decided to federate Eritrea to Ethiopia, hoping to reconcile Ethiopian claims of sovereignty and Eritrean aspirations for independence. But Ethiopia dissolved the federation in 1962, and Eritrea launched a 30-year armed struggle for independence that was finally recognized in 1993. But a border dispute continues to pit these nations against each other. To the east, Ethiopian troops have been involved in armed conflict with Somalia. The conflicts have led to the displacement of many individuals and instability of the region. In addition to armed conflict, recurring droughts and famine have ravaged both countries, where millions suffer from lack of health care, sanitation woes, starvation/malnutrition, low life expectancy, and rampant HIV and AIDS, TB and malaria.

Prayer. Jesus, prince of peace, we unite ourselves with the prayers for peace offered today and every day throughout Ethiopia and Eritrea. We pray that the words of Ethiopian Archbishop Berhane Yesus take root in our hearts and our nation as well as in the hearts of all Ethiopians and Eritreans, for justice and forgiveness are truly the way to peace.

“The pillars of true peace are justice and that form of love which is forgiveness. Let the world understand that justice and forgiveness are not irreconcilable; rather, forgiveness is the opposite of resentment and revenge; forgiveness is that which heals and rebuilds troubled human relations from their foundations.”

Holy Spirit of Compassion, bring peace to this troubled region of our world by raising up people of compassion and courage in these ancient civilizations. Protect the UN Peacekeepers, the members of Doctors without Borders, and all others working for justice and peace in Ethiopia and Eritrea. And give us the compassion and courage to turn our prayers into practice. May forgiveness abound in our own lives and communities. May generosity abound as we and others consider the urgent needs of these sisters and brothers who have suffered so much from war and drought.

(From the prayer of Berhane Yesus, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) on behalf of the religious leaders in Addis Ababa, at the 2005 celebration of International Day of Peace organized by the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea - UNMEE)

Action. Consider supporting Catholic Relief Services’ more than 50 years of meeting basic needs and promoting economic development in Ethiopia and Eritrea (www.crs.org/ethiopia; and www.crs.org/eritrea); the peace and humanitarian efforts of Archbishop Berhane Yesus of Addis Ababa, Patriarch Abune Paulos of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and the UNMEE; and participating in the annual CROP Hunger Walk (www.cropwalkonline.org) of Church World Service.

Prayer of Petition. Jesus, Prince of Peace, we pray for the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea, ravaged the past half century by war, famine, drought, and illness. Inspire their political and religious leaders to work tirelessly for peace. Inspire the international community to increase its peace and humanitarian efforts and open our own hearts to our African brothers and sisters.