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Pope Francis' views on Syria show him to a peacenik

Maureen Fiedler | Sep. 5, 2013 NCR Today

Popes have spoken for peace before in other world conflicts, but this time with Pope Francis, it felt different. He seemed to be moved to the depth of his soul after he contemplated it all in prayer. That's what came across to me when I read Pope Francis' statement calling for peace in Syria.

I shared his full statement with several friends. They included, no surprise to *NCR* readers, some of my Catholic feminist friends. Responses were overwhelmingly positive and occasionally registered a pleasant shock. One email was especially noteworthy: "Breaking news. Call CNN. I AGREE TOTALLY WITH THE POPE!! Now that is a first!"

Francis definitely knows how to connect. He spoke from the heart about the suffering of Syrians who were victims of that horrific attack using chemical weapons. But he counseled against a violent response: "War brings on war. Violence brings on violence."

"My heart is deeply wounded by what is happening in Syria and anguished by the dramatic developments," he said. And then he took action. He called for a day of prayer and fasting on Saturday and plans to lead some of that from St. Peter's Square.

On Saturday in Washington, D.C., there will be a peace march beginning at noon at the White House and heading for the U.S. Capitol. I plan to be there.

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