NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

A prayer for wartime

Isabella R. Moyer | Sep. 6, 2013 NCR Today

I was too young to be part of the peace movement of the 1960s, but I grew up listening to the music. "Blowin' in the Wind [1]," "Give Peace A Chance [2]," "For What It's Worth [3]," "Imagine [4]" and many others are more than just memory tunes. They are clarion calls for an end to the seemingly endless cycle of war and violence that has plagued humanity for all ages.

Paul Simon was one of the voices of that generation. Today, his voice rings even truer and deeper with the wisdom of age and experience. "Bridge Over Troubled Water" was an iconic song in the 1970s. When Simon sang it [5] during the "America: A Tribute to Heroes" concert on Sept. 21, 2001, it transformed into a heart-wrenching lament.

In 2006, Simon wrote the song "Wartime Prayers [6]." The words echo in my mind as I follow the daily news reports and discussions on the Syrian crisis, trying to make sense of what is happening. Amid so many voices, who do we believe?

> *People hungry for the voice of God*
>
> *Hear lunatics and liars ...*

As my hair grays, so does my view of the world. The black-and-white certainty of youth is increasingly replaced with myriad shades of gray. An awareness and acknowledgement of complexities means that easy answers are often elusive.

> *Because you cannot walk with the holy if you're just a halfway decent man*
>
> *I don't pretend that I'm a mastermind with a genius marketing plan*
>
> *I'm trying to tap into some wisdom*
>
> *Even a little drop will do*
>
> *I want to rid my heart of envy*
>
> *And cleanse my soul of rage before I'm through*

Amid the despair and hopelessness, what are we to do?

> *Well, you cry and try to muscle through*
>
> *And try to rearrange your stuff*

But when the wounds are deep enough

And it's all that we can bear

We wrap ourselves in prayer

Simon's image of wrapping ourselves in prayer is a mighty powerful one. Some have questioned the call to prayer made by Pope Francis. "It's not a concrete solution," they say. And yet the world is uniting in prayer for peace in Syria.

War, by definition, divides and forces us to choose sides. Peace is a universal hunger that transcends denominations, religions, races, nations and cultures. Giorgio Bernardelli at the Vatican Insider writes [7] how Francis' peace vigil for Syria has "swept away historical differences between Christians and brought Muslims closer together as well."

Wartime prayers

Wartime prayers

In every language spoken

For every family scattered and broken

Together, we pray ...

Source URL (retrieved on *07/29/2014 - 11:56*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/prayer-wartime

Links:
[1] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUX9IcSzHX0
[2] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkZC7sqImaM
[3] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gp5JCrSXkJY
[4] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRhq-yO1KN8
[5] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNM9PDB5jo0
[6] http://www.paulsimon.com/ca/node/764
[7] http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/world-news/detail/articolo/medio-oriente-middle-east-chiesa-church-iglesia-27571/