



Oceania bishops send prayers, condolences to Syria, Turkey

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The Catholic bishops of Oceania have sent a message of prayerful condolence and solidarity to Church and civic leaders in Turkey and Syria as the countries suffer the effects of devastating earthquakes.

Meeting for their quadrennial assembly of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania in Fiji, the bishops expressed deep sadness at the loss of life and the damage from which it will take years to recover.

“We know that God is close to those that suffer. We pray that your people sense the love and care of their brothers and sisters around the world, including from Oceania,” the bishops wrote.

The message was signed by the president of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania, Suva Archbishop Peter Loy Chong, with the support of the presidents of the four episcopal conferences: Australia, New Zealand, Solomon Islands/Papua New Guinea and the Pacific.

Here is the text of the message:

From the other end of the world, our hearts break at the death and destruction we are seeing on our television screens and in our newspapers.

We know that God is close to those that suffer. We pray that your people sense the love and care of their brothers and sisters around the world, including from Oceania.

One of the key themes of our Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania gathering this week is the connectedness of human suffering and the suffering of our world. We have seen in your countries how natural disasters can wreak such pain and anguish, with thousands of lives lost.

The Catholic Church has established appeals to raise funds to support the ongoing efforts for rescue and recovery, and we will encourage the faithful in our region to respond generously. The Church is also providing human resources on the ground to respond to immediate needs through our aid agencies.

Be assured of our ongoing prayers and our attention as your people recover from this tragedy.