

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY – TUESDAY, 14<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2025

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Good morning.

Dr Ezzideen Shehab runs a clinic in Gaza. Over the weekend, he posted these words on social media after he returned to his home: “I came back today. I thought I had known despair before, but what I saw today is beyond despair. ... It is something colder, a stillness where even God seems to have withdrawn His hand.” He describes how he and his family are living “in a state of total psychological collapse” as they survey the bulldozed remains of their home and their neighbourhood.

On the other side of this human abyss, surviving Israeli hostages are returning to their families, traumatised and broken after the horrors they have endured and witnessed over the last two years. The joy of their return and the relief of their loved ones will surely be tempered as they face the enormity of the struggle for healing and hope that lies ahead.

The return of hostages and the ceasefire are of course good news – but I find myself wondering what people are celebrating. For the victims on both sides, there is such trauma and desolation, as survivors begin to piece together the shattered remains of their lives. So many must be hoping and praying that this is indeed a new era of peace, and that the world’s leaders will make good on their promises. What we are witnessing is the aftermath of a catastrophic failure of humanity.

If true peace is to emerge from such horror and violence, there is so much more to be done. Violence sows its seeds deep in the human heart, and future generations reap its bitter fruits of vengeance. I resist the Christian language of forgiveness and love of enemies, for only those who have mourned their murdered loved ones and stood in the ruins of their homes have the right to use such words at a time like this. Only the crucified can know the full cost of forgiveness.

The prophet Jeremiah calls us to attend to a timeless cry echoing through history in the wake of every war and conflict: ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.’ Jeremiah warns against false prophets who say ‘peace, peace, when there is no peace’. In this time of mourning and great weeping, we must hope that a genuine and just peace will emerge for all the peoples of that tormented region. Only then might there be cause for true celebration.