

Fr. Martin's Reflection – February 12, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am sure we are all aware of the horrendous earthquake that occurred through Turkey and Syria. The stories and images are devastating. In the aftermath of a 7.8 magnitude earthquake near the city of Gaziantep in southeastern Turkey, buildings are flattened, and city blocks are reduced to rubble. The death toll is already well over 11,000. In the hours and days ahead, it's expected to climb well beyond that number.

Since the earthquake struck in the middle of the night, it caught nearly everyone at home and in bed—the worst possible time. Scores of subsequent aftershocks have further damaged buildings in towns and cities across Turkey and Syria and threaten to take down more structures in the future. Currently, residents are being urged to stay away from their homes, leaving a significant population on the streets and in the cold. Reports of casualties and flattened apartment blocks are coming in from well beyond Gaziantep—large Turkish cities such as Hatay, Kahramanmaras, and Diyarbakir, as well as smaller towns and villages stretching into Syria.

Search and rescue efforts are already well underway. Countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic are flying in immediate aid, along with many others as well as local churches. A truly international relief effort has mobilized.

Let us help where we can and pray for those affected by this massive earthquake. If you can support financially please go to: <https://support.crs.org/donate/earthquakes> or simply go to 'Catholic Relief Services.'

God of Life, in the midst of the death and trauma caused by this terrible event, let us bring our intercessions together, praying that all who have been affected by this earthquake will find comfort in your embrace. May all those who have lost their loved ones find peace in your presence, and may your strength uphold those involved in the actions of solidarity with the victims. We lift our prayers to you for the victims and their families, as well as to the churches and local communities in Syria and in Turkey mobilizing their networks to help their sisters and brothers. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.*
—Psalm 46:1-3 (NRSV)

Fr. Martin