Dear Students, Faculty, Librarians, and Staff,

Today, as war devastates the lives of family members, loved ones, and colleagues of ours in the Middle East and as antisemitism, Islamophobia, hate speech, racism, and fear affect us here at home, I write with hope that you are taking care of yourself and each other.

And I write with gratitude for all you are doing as members of this diverse, inclusive, beloved academic community to support our foundational Jesuit values, which include accompaniment, empathy, care, and respect for the lives and viewpoints of others, based upon our shared respect for the dignity of every individual.

Earlier this week, Interim Provost Eileen Fung and Vice President of Student Life Julie Orio, along with senior members of the Student Life team, **reminded the community** about the guidelines and policies in place to help ensure that demonstrations on campus take place safely, respectfully, and responsibly. I encourage you to review that message, which also contains detailed information about the resources and support available to you.

Many of us have been engaged in conversations, correspondence, teach-ins, and meetings with many members of the community — and I hope that these conversations will continue. Your voices and opinions are critical to our work together as an academic community.

As USF president, I want to address a statement from **Universities United Against Terrorism** that I, along with a coalition of about 100 other university presidents, signed denouncing Hamas and terrorism. I chose to sign in order to add my voice in solidarity with Israelis and Palestinians. No single statement can address the complex history and geopolitical situation that is causing suffering for so many. However, I want to emphasize that this particular statement described the signatories as standing "with Israel, with the Palestinians who suffer under Hamas' cruel rule in Gaza, and with all people of moral conscience." With my individual co-signers, I pray for the release of Israeli hostages. I pray for the Palestinian people and for an immediate end to the violence that is causing such horrible and inhumane suffering.

As our community moves forward, I am committed to having the difficult conversations, engaging with students, faculty, and staff as we work through what is happening in the Middle East and the repercussions it has on our community. We are living in a time when it is very important to be present for each other, to learn and listen, and to hold space for each other to express our views — even when we disagree, even (and especially) when our community members are suffering and fearful. That's why our recent teach-ins, meetings, and exchange of information and views in and beyond the classroom are essential.

On Sunday, Nov. 5, speaking in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis said the following:

"I continue to think about the serious situation in Palestine and in Israel where many, many people have lost their lives. In God's name, I beg you to stop: cease using weapons. I hope that avenues will be pursued so that an escalation of the conflict might be absolutely avoided, so that the wounded can be rescued, and help might get to the population of Gaza where the humanitarian situation is extremely serious. May the hostages be freed immediately. There are also many children among them — may they return to their families. Yes, let's think of the children, of all the children affected by this war, as well as in Ukraine and by other conflicts: this is how their future is being killed. Let us pray that there might be the strength to say, 'enough.'"

Thank you for joining in prayers for peace.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Fitzgerald, S.J.
President

P.S. Please take note of a **new site** that aggregates information on services and resources for all members of the USF community.

What did you think of this email?

Poor Fair Good