We invite you to consider the theme of Iraq and Refugees in your prayer this month.

…We dare to create a globalized network of action and contemplation woven together with all the tenderness and compassion of our Shepherd God. GS 2003 chapter Direction

…peoples of all nations gathered, changing history with the strength of the Spirit. GS 2003 Assembly Direction

The same year as GS International chapter/assembly last gathered and proclaimed the words above, an invasion took place in Iraq that continues as a war to this day, creating displacement and refugees as well as deaths and all sorts of violence, especially to civilian women and children.

While GS has no presence in Iraq, GS in Lebanon and Syria have responded to the “stranger in their midst” by creating service responses to the refugees who have entered by the hundreds of thousands in both countries.

GS in USA has joined a delegation with Caritas USA and Caritas Int. in a US response seeking peace and advocacy to change this terrible situation and to support those responding to those in need.

Pray for Peace and Pray for Iraq and for all those affected by war.

The notes below can be starters for your prayer:

A Litany for Iraq –
Sent by a Palestinian women form Jerusalem
the litany comes from the Chaldean liturgy whose tradition celebrates Christ the source of resurrection in all situations of death and deprivation.
For lasting peace in this ancient land – From you, O Lord.
For wisdom and compassion for all in authority – From you, O Lord.
For comfort for families separated or bereaved – From you, O Lord.
For the release of captives – From you, O Lord.
For safety and security for minority communities.
For refreshment for the weary and healing for the sick – From you, O Lord.
For continuing faithfulness of the ancient churches of this land – From you, O Lord.
For tenacity of spirit for small Christian groups – From you, O Lord.
For the mutual enrichment and support of those of different Christian traditions – From you, O Lord.

You, Lord of all, we confess;
You, Lord Jesus, we glorify;
For you are the life of our bodies
And you are the Saviour of our souls.

A poem written by a member of the US delegation of the Mid-east, January 2008

Listen up my country—all you people puzzled or paralyzed. It is time to heed the cry, the call, the urgently stated desire of this Syrian Sister, this good shepherd to her people.

Listen up oh members of my government to the anguish of the people fleeing homes for their very lives. Listen up to this clear vision of my Syrian Sister, this good shepherd to Iraqis.

Listen up all people in the United States. Listen up policy makers and generally, ordinary people and tycoons of economic dominance. Listen up to this good shepherd’s searing call:

“We don’t need any money.
We don’t need anything but peace!
This war is a crime against humanity.”
Simone Campbell, Damascus, Syria January, 2008

A letter from the East – to the New World/ America

We really trust that all of us were created on the image of God. Love, brotherhood and peace lives and vibrates in our hearts.
Dear sisters and Ladies,
We believe that the mercy of God comes through the acts of humans. For us, you were angels of mercy representing the nobility of humanity. You crossed vast distances to prove to your brothers and sisters in humanity that you care. You came to show that you love, support and respect the poor people of Iraq who live in pain in the land of refuge.

Your kind gesture proves that the faithful person can build bridges across distances, and that kindness and love have no borders and no limits.

The friends of the Good Shepherd Sisters and the workers in the field of the Good Shepherd highly appreciate your visit. Your care was like a balsam spreading in this suffering East – the beautiful east which is searching for peace and justice.

Together we can build and contribute for a new world a world that enjoys much more justice and much more love.

Yours faithfully, Sisters, friends and collaborators of the Good Shepherd Sisters.
Damascus - SYRIA 30/1/2008

Photos below of beauty, destruction and families served by Good shepherd, seeking hope.