



## World Day of Prayer for Peace.

Pope Paul VI first called on Catholics to begin the new year by reflecting and praying for peace 38 years ago. Pope John Paul II has followed in his footsteps by setting aside January 1 each year as a World Day of Prayer for Peace. Please use the resources in this newsletter for prayer and reflection on this day and throughout the year. As Pope John Paul II reminds us, peace *is* possible and it is our duty as Catholics to pray for peace.

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"It would be Our desire, then, that this celebration take place each year as a sign of hope and promise, at the beginning of the calendar which measures and guides the journey of human life through time, in order that Peace, with its just and salutary equilibrium, will dominate the unfolding of history yet to come."

*- Pope Paul VI, 1968 World Peace Day Message*

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**Our world is not at Peace.** The war in Iraq makes the headlines, and Iraqi, US and coalition lives are indeed being lost each and every day. But as we begin a new year, the picture of global war & conflict is much more devastating. Did you know that ...

- ... 1 out of every 318 people on earth is a refugee?
- ... 6 million children are homeless due to conflict?
- ... 300,000 minor children are forced to be soldiers?
- ... 4,000 people per year are kidnapped in Columbia?
- ...over 3,4000 Palestinians and 1,000 Israelis have been killed since violence resumed in 2000?
- ... more than 2,000 people were killed in conflict in 2004 alone in the Kashmir region?
- ... 70,000 people have been killed and 1.6 million have been displaced from their homes in Sudan?

It is easy to be overwhelmed and to think, "What can I do?." But there is one thing we can all do ...we can **pray for peace.** Pope John Paul II tells us that "prayer for peace is not an afterthought to the work of peace. It is of the every essence of building the peace of order, justice, and freedom."

## Prayers for Peace

### *Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, 171*

May Christ banish from the hearts of all people whatever might endanger peace, may Christ transform them into witnesses of truth, justice and love.

May Christ enlighten the rulers of peoples so that in addition to their solicitude for the proper welfare of their citizens, they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace;

May Christ enkindle the wills of all, so that they may overcome the barriers that divide, cherish the bonds of mutual charity, understand others, and pardon those who have done them wrong;

By virtue of this action, may all peoples of the earth become as brothers and sisters, and may the most longed-for peace blossom forth and reign always among them.

### *John Paul II, "Urbi et Orbi" Message, Easter 1999*

Peace is possible, peace is a duty,

peace is a prime responsibility of everyone!

May the dawn of the third millennium see the coming of a new era in which respect for every man and woman and fraternal solidarity among peoples will, with God's help, overcome the culture of hatred, of violence, of death.

### *Pax Christi USA*

O God,

we believe that peacemaking means planting seeds

even though we may never see the flower, and that it means never losing sight of the vision promised by You.

We hold fast to Your word that one day swords

will be beaten into plowshares.

May we, as peacemakers, stake our lives on that promise.

We ask this through your life-giving Spirit.

Amen.

## Prayer for the Decade of Nonviolence for Children

Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB

The UN has proclaimed 2001-2010 to be the "International Decade for the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World."

I bow to the sacred in all creation.

May my spirit fill the world with beauty and wonder.

May my mind seek truth with humility and openness.

May my heart forgive without limit.

May my love for friend, enemy and outcast be without measure.

May my needs be few and my living simple.

May my actions bear witness to the suffering of others.

May my hands never harm a living being.

May my steps stay on the journey of justice.

May my tongue speak for those who are poor without fear of the powerful.

May my prayers rise with patient discontent until no child is hungry.

May my life's work be a passion for peace and nonviolence.

May my soul rejoice in the present moment.

May my imagination overcome death and despair with new possibility.

And may I risk reputation, comfort and security to bring this hope to the children.

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## What does the Bible say about peace & conflict?

"He will proclaim justice to the nations." *Matthew 12:18*

"The peace sown by peacemakers brings a harvest of justice." *James 3:18*

"Love your enemies and do good to them." *Luke 6:35-36*

"The will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks." *Micah 4:3*

See also Micah 4:3; Matthew 5:9; Luke 24:36; Luke 1:79; Luke 10:6; Luke 12:51; John 16:33; John 14:27; Romans 3:17; 1 Corinthians 14:33; Ephesians 2:17; Mark 13:7; 2 Corinthians 10:3; John 18:36; Acts 7:26

## Peace & Conflict: Am I a Peace Builder?

Use these questions to reflect on your own experiences and to start thinking about peace and conflict:

In the past month, have you ....

- Read about conflict in the newspaper or on the internet?
- Prayed for peace?
- Been involved in an argument?
- Settled a dispute - at home/school/work?
- Watched a movie or television program with violent content?
- Campaigned for peace?
- Tried to see another person's point of view?
- Spoken to someone in a demeaning way?
- Discussed peace & war with your peers?

How would you rate yourself as a peace builder?

## Discussion Questions:

1. What does Jesus have to say about peace? Are his comments realistic and useful today?
2. What action does Jesus take to achieve peace?
3. What role does social justice play in creating a more peaceful world?
4. Discuss the possible roots of the points of view below. Which, in your opinion, reflects Scriptures and the teachings of the Church? Which statements do you agree/disagree with? Why?
  - Conflict is inevitable. It is part of the human condition.
  - We should oppose the arms trade.
  - Conflict is often the result of inequalities. We have a duty to make the world a fairer place.
  - People have the right to fight against oppressive regimes.
  - If a war has a just cause then as Christians we should support it.
  - Under certain circumstances war can be justified.
  - We should intervene when other countries are in conflict.
  - All war is evil.