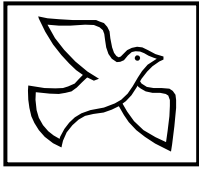


World Peace Day – January 1, 2004

A reflection and prayer resource developed by the St Philip Neri Peace & Justice Commission



The Church's Teaching:

A Call to Peace. Every year since 1979, Pope John Paul II has called on Catholics to begin the New Year by reflecting and praying for peace in the world. In continuing this tradition, Pope John Paul II follows in the steps of Pope Paul VI who had wished to celebrate on January 1 each year a World Day of Prayer for Peace.

"Once more this year I feel bound to invite all men and women, on every continent, to celebrate a new World Day of Peace. Humanity needs now more than ever to rediscover the path of concord, overwhelmed as it is by selfishness and hatred, by the thirst for power and the lust for vengeance."

*Pope John Paul II
2004 World Peace Day Message*

What does the Bible say about peace and 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*

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

What does the Church have to say? The church encourages us to follow the path of peace. For three hundred years Christians would neither engage in Rome's military campaigns nor justify killing as a means to achieve goals. Only later did the Church allow for war under very special prescribed circumstances. These are summarized in the Just War theory. It provides Christians with a set of criteria to judge a conflict and to decide whether it is justifiable.

Here are some examples of Catholic teaching on the subject of peace and conflict:

"Peace is founded on truth, built on justice, nurtured and animated by charity and brought into affect under the auspices of freedom." - *Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, #167*

"Christians, and the followers of other religions, must work together to build a world without violence, a world that loves life, and grows in justice and solidarity ... Religion must never be used as a reason for conflict." - *Pope John Paul II, September 12, 2002*

"Peace must be born of mutual trust between nations rather than imposed on them through fear of one another's weapons." - *Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, #82*

"Injustice, excessive economic or social inequalities, envy, distrust, and pride raging among men and nations constantly threaten peace and cause wars. Everything done to overcome these disorders contributes to building up peace and avoiding war." - *Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2317*

Discussion Questions:

- ❖ Pope John Paul II states that peace is possible, and that there is a duty to promote peace: "We Christians see the commitment to educate ourselves and others to peace as something at the very heart of our religion." How are the messages we receive from the media concerning peace different from those of the Pope?
- ❖ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Mt 5:9). How does this verse speak to you and your life?
- ❖ The Pope states that justice must be "complemented by love" for peace to become a reality. How does love temper human justice?
- ❖ Why is it important to reflect on, and pray for, peace?

Praying for Peace. Pope John Paul II reminds 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." What follows are a few selected prayers and a listing of online resources for you to use in the coming year for reflection and prayer for peace in our world.

Prayer 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.

Prayer For Vocations to Peacemaking

Pax Christi

Dear God,
the harvest is plenty and the laborers are few.
Your people long for peace,
they thirst for justice.

Send into our midst women and men
whose hearts can embrace the entire world.

Send into our midst young and old,
from all your beloved cultures and races,
Who offer their arms to lift up the lowly and
oppressed.

Send into our midst new peacemakers
Who will walk with the powerless,
as well as those in power

To proclaim your teaching and
To witness against hate, greed, fear and strife.
Create us anew as your peacemakers, O God,
And send us your peace.

Peace for the Children of God

Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu, South Africa

O God, all holy one,
you are our Mother and our Father,
and we are your children.
Open our eyes and our hearts
so that we may be able to discern
your work in the universe.
And be able to see Your features
in every one of Your children.
May we learn that there are many paths
but all lead to You.
Help us to know that you have created us
for family, for togetherness,
for peace, for gentleness,
for compassion, for caring, for sharing.

May we know that You want us
to care for one another
as those who know
that they are sisters and brothers,
members of the same family,
Your family,
the human family.

Help us to beat our swords into plowshares
and our spears into pruning hooks,
so that we may be able to live
in peace and harmony,
wiping away the tears
from the eyes of those
who are less fortunate than ourselves.
And may we know war no more,
as we strive to be
what You want us to be:
Your children.
Amen.

Online Resources

Vatican: http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm

Includes Pope John Paul II's 2004 World Peace Day Message and more prayers for peace

Pax Christi USA: <http://www.paxchristiusa.org>

National Catholic Peace Movement

US Bishops: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/index.htm>

Department of Social Development and World Peace

