

# Pax Christi - Peace Sunday

19th January 2003

## *"Pacem in Terris—A Constant Endeavour"*

### Contents:

- *Introduction to theme*
- *Ideas for marking the day in your parish*
- *Opening prayer for the Mass and Rite of Penance*
- *Homily Reflection*
- *Prayers of the Faithful*
- *Ideas for working with children*
- *Additional prayers*

### Introduction

Peace Sunday this year, with its title: *Pacem In Terris - A Constant Endeavour*, has a particular resonance. 2003 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the last Encyclical of a dying Pope, John XXIII's *Pacem In Terris*, and the opening words of that letter remain as relevant now as when he wrote them:

*"World-wide peace has been humankind's perpetual dream; but it will be attained and preserved only when people observe the order which God has planned."* (*Pacem In Terris* n.1)

John XXIII wrote just months after the Cuban Missile Crisis and only a couple of years after the construction of the Berlin Wall. The Cold War is officially over now, yet for the last year the threat of an invasion of Iraq, with all the attendant uncertainties about the tragic effects it might unleash, has hovered over our own generation. Other "low intensity" conflicts and threats are accepted as background noise in our lives - in Israel and Palestine, in Kashmir, in Colombia and many other parts. The arms trade kills people even when the weapons aren't used, as Pope John himself saw, depriving the poorest of economic development and corroding the hearts of all who base their security on the threat of the destruction of others.

Are we helpless to realise that dream of peace; or can we, as the Catholic community in these islands, commit ourselves anew to *Pacem In Terris*, peace on earth, the message of the Christmas angels that we celebrated last month? This Peace Sunday gives us a major opportunity to help our communities to reflect on and (most importantly) to pray about the issues of peace-making and community-building. We hope that the materials included in this page will help you in your celebrations.

### **Please consider taking a collection to support the work of Pax Christi this Peace Sunday**

Whatever you do, it would be **worth letting people know about Peace Sunday** the week before (*Sunday 12th January*). A simple notice in the newsletter or a mention at Mass would be ideal.

---

### Ideas for celebrating Peace Sunday 2003

*Pax Christi members around the country have a wealth of experience in supporting their parish community in celebrating Peace Sunday. Here are some ideas that may be of help and support to you in your parish community*

#### • **Vigil and Exhibition**

In Jesmond, Newcastle, a 2-hour afternoon vigil for peace was held in the parish. The organisers arranged shared prayer and reflection at each hour and half hour, using the Pax Christi materials.

They also borrowed the **Pax Christi Exhibition** which was displayed on Peace Sunday and remained on display until the following Sunday.

#### • **Use of Pax Christi Prayer Cards**

In a Cardiff parish, a Pax Christi member ordered 500 Prayer cards. These were distributed to members of the parish at the end of each Sunday Mass. A notice about the work of Pax Christi was placed in the parish bulletin.

#### • **Making your own leaflet**

In Steyning, East Sussex, Pax Christi members used quotes from the Reflection notes and a prayer from

the liturgy booklet to create their own Peace Sunday leaflet. They encouraged members of the parish to take this away with them to use at different times during the week.

- **Speaking as Mass**

Members in Sevenoaks offered to speak on the work of Pax Christi at each Mass. They used the Pax Christi leaflet and extracts from the reflection notes to put together a 10-minute presentation which they gave at each Mass.

- **Involving children**

Two Salford primary schools invited Pax Christi members to work with the children at assembly in the weeks leading up to Peace Sunday. They used Pax Christi education and liturgy materials and the children produced peace stories and illustrations. These were then displayed in the parish church before being returned to the children.

- **Light a candle for peace**

A peace candle was lit and dedicated at the beginning of each Mass in a Shrewsbury parish. A member of the parish was invited to explain about Peace Sunday and Pax Christi before the opening prayers of the Mass.

- **Creating a peace corner/shrine**

A Justice and Peace group in Enfield assembled a "Peace Shrine" in the church porch. This consisted of a display board headed with the Pope's theme for Peace Sunday. The centrepiece was a prayer, enlarged from the liturgy booklet, surrounded by the word 'peace' in several languages. Votive candles were placed before the 'shrine'. Parishioners were encouraged to stop at the shrine to pray for peace at some time during the following week.

---

## Introduction to Mass and Penitential Rite

Today is Peace Sunday, when our Bishops invite us to reflect on the call to be peace-makers in our world. And Pope John Paul II has invited us to reflect on the theme of "Peace on Earth - A Constant Endeavour". How committed are we to building peace? Where are we called to bring peace? And where do we need to receive Christ's gift of peace - at home or at work, in a particular relationship or situation? Each one of us needs to receive that gift, to be healed and forgiven. And so does the whole Christian community - It is appropriate that this Peace Sunday falls within the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. So let us turn to God in prayer, asking him to give us his gift of peace and to make us bearers of peace to others:

*Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace.*

**Lord have mercy.**

*Christ Jesus, healer of division.*

**Christ have mercy.**

*Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to lead us in the paths of peace.*

**Lord have mercy.**

---

## Homily Reflection: Hearing the Signs of the Times

Our second reading today, a passage from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, picks up on a very familiar image of the Church - as the Body of Christ - and uses it to deal with matters of sexual ethics. It's an important issue and Paul offers us a brilliant insight - that the Body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit; in other words, that God's very Spirit dwells in us and works in us and makes us holy. Perhaps we already begin to feel uncomfortable at that. We're not used to thinking of ourselves as holy, as being described as embodying the presence of God in our neighbourhood. And in a society which values personal freedom above nearly every other value maybe we don't want to be told that we are "bought and paid for", God's property and not our own.

On the other hand, it would be all too easy to neutralise Paul's insight by applying our own stereotypes, filtering his message out: "Typical Paul," we might say, "talking about sex as usual;

typical Church, obsessed with matters of the bedroom; typical repressed claustrophobic Catholic view of life ..." Well, if that's our gut reaction maybe we have some work to do unpacking our own past experiences and our own hearing of the Gospel! But it's not fair to blame Paul for it.

Imagine, instead, if we believed Paul. God's Spirit dwells in me. God is at work in me. I am sacred. And so is my neighbour. And my neighbour's neighbour. And everyone I might ever meet. All of them the presence of God, all of them holy. Of course, that goes beyond what Paul wants to say: he's talking about fellow-Christians and their experience of the Spirit of the Risen Lord; And Paul addresses himself explicitly to believers, urging us to live up to our calling and to show ourselves worthy of the name of Christ which we carry.

And yet the Church has become increasingly convinced in the last fifty years that the Spirit is at

work beyond its own confines, at work in un-baptised believers and followers of other faiths, at work indeed in all who live good lives and listen attentively to their conscience. Forty years ago it was precisely to "all men and women of goodwill" that Pope John XXIII addressed his last encyclical, *Pacem In Terris*. At the time it was a revolutionary gesture, calling on all, believers and unbelievers alike, to work together to avert the terrible threat of nuclear war and to build a global human community. And Pope John's initiative was founded precisely on the faith that every human person bears the image of God. It is from this inalienable human dignity that all human rights derive and on this basis Pope John elaborated a vision of a world-wide human community living in harmony.

Such was his trust in Christ and in the Spirit of Christ that he is still remembered, forty years after his death, as "Good Pope John", a bringer of hope amidst the darkness and fear of the Cold War years. And in his letter he asked himself where the Spirit could be seen at work in his day. He spoke of the "*Signs of the Times*" and listed three of them. Interestingly, the "*Signs*" he picked out were not the "ecclesiastical" signs that we might expect - of Church growth or successful Vatican initiatives or more Catholic schools - but the decidedly down to earth matters of the "improvement in the social and economic condition of the working classes", the changing role of women in society, and the independence movements in Europe's former colonies.

A generation later do we still have the same trust in God that Pope John showed? Do we still recognise the fundamental dignity of every human person? Do we still ask the same question: where is God's spirit at work today? And if we do, what would our list of these "*Signs of the Times*" include? Perhaps we ought to highlight the commitment to human rights championed by organisations such as *Amnesty*

*International*, the demand for justice in world trade and for the remission of the un-payable debt of the poorest countries, the establishment of an international criminal court to bring the perpetrators of genocide and other atrocities to justice. And each of us *should* be able to add our own signs of hope to the list. Our faith should train us to discern those "*Signs of the Times*", should teach us how to recognise God's Spirit at work in the world today. It's a way of thinking about things which should come naturally to us - not from a cheap optimism but out of a trust in God's goodness.

Somewhere in our lists there ought to be something about the search of peace and the witness of those who reject war as a way of righting wrongs. The deep disquiet which has been raised in many countries, including Britain and the United States, by talk of a "*War On Terrorism*" might itself be seen as a "*Sign of the Times*" in this sense. We know how uncertain the consequences of such action are. We know that there is the potential for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons being unleashed. We know the risk of a regional conflict becoming a global war. We know the risk of irreversible environmental damage. And we know that hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of lives are at risk. As the current Pope so clearly teaches, war destroys everything and solves nothing.

If we believe in the inviolable rights of every human being, including the most fundamental right of all - the right to life; if we believe (as Pope John XXIII believed) that, "It is unthinkable that war can any longer be regarded as a suitable way of restoring rights which have been violated," (*PinT* n.127); if we believe that we are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, called to be bearers of God's peace to a broken world, then we must recognise our calling: to be voices that speak of peace and people who live lives of peace, "*Signs of the Times*" in our own day.

---

## Prayers of the Faithful

**Priest:** Christ came to bring us Peace on Earth. Let us pray today for peace for ourselves, for our homes, for our families, for our world.

*The response to our prayers is: Lord Jesus, give us your peace.*

We pray for ourselves. Lord, make of us people of peace, bringers of reconciliation and healing to those we meet, builders of trust and confidence in our world.

*Let us pray to the Lord: Lord Jesus, give us your peace.*

Let us pray for reconciliation between the Christian Churches. May we, who share one baptism and receive the one Spirit, be united in our witness to peace and united in our compassion for the victims of war.

*Let us pray to the Lord: Lord Jesus, give us your peace.*

We pray for the people of Iraq and their neighbours, for the peoples of Israel and Palestine, for the peoples of Kashmir, India and Pakistan and for all who are threatened with war. May they be kept safe from harm and may the wounds of history be healed.

*Let us pray to the Lord:*      **Lord Jesus, give us your peace.**

We pray for those around the world who reminds us, through their words and actions, that peacemaking is a constant endeavour. We pray especially for the work of Pax Christi, the international Catholic movement for peace.

*Let us pray to the Lord:*      **Lord Jesus, give us your peace.**

We pray for all who are sick or in any kind of distress in our own community, especially May they know the peace of Christ in their sickness?

*Let us pray to the Lord:*      **Lord Jesus, give us your peace.**

We commend to the Lord all who have died, especially the victims of violence, and of this community who have died and whose anniversaries fall at this time.

*Let us pray to the Lord:*      **Lord Jesus, give us your peace.**

**Priest:** Lord God, in you alone do our hearts find rest and in Christ Jesus you give us a peace that the world can never give. Hear these the prayers of our hearts, and grant them through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

---

## Ideas for working with children

### Reflection : Blessed are the peacemakers

- Ask the children to listen carefully while you say:  
*“Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called the children of God”*
- Ask the children to say what they think Jesus meant. Can anyone say what a “peacemaker” is?
- Do the children realise that they are probably peacemakers? When they choose not to fight, when they help their friends make up after a quarrel, when they do something to make a sad person happy - they are being a peacemaker.
- Ask the children if they know of any places where people are not enjoying peace. How do they feel about that? Have they any ideas on how peace might be brought to these places?
- Tell the children that during our Eucharist we show that we want to be friends with the people around us by shaking hands and saying “Peace be with you”. We also show our concern for the people in the world who are not able to enjoy the gift of peace. We pray for these people in our bidding prayers.

### Activity 1 : Making a peace frieze

You will need

A roll of paper about 2 m long - which may be displayed down one side of the church

Coloured card, pens scissors, glue

Pieces of coloured card with the phrases

**“Peace is...”**

**“Blessed Are the Peacemakers”**

Small pieces of coloured card in heart shapes with the phrase **“Love is...”**

Small pieces of card in the shapes of flowers, trees, butterflies etc...

Invite the children to complete one or two of the cards and choose one or two coloured shapes to mount on the frieze.

*(Adapted from God’s Greatest Gift by Bernadette Wilson, ViewPoint Resources. Used with permission)*

### Activity 2 : Peace Pyramid

You will need

- Pieces of card - cut to the size of a brick
- Coloured pens
- Three ‘bricks’ already marked **‘A’**, **‘peacemaker’**, **‘brings’**,

Invite the children to think of words they would use to complete the phrase ‘ A peacemaker brings...’.  
e.g. friendship, trust, hope.

They write these words, and decorate the brick as they wish.

The Peace Pyramid could be displayed in the sanctuary or on a wall of the Church

## Prayers

Dear God, sometimes we find it hard to like some people and perhaps they find it hard to like us.

Help us to be kind to all the people we shall meet today — the people who live next door, the people we shall meet in the street and in the shops and everyone in our school, church or group.

There are many people who live and care for us...  
**(invite children to think of some now).**

We know that you love us. Please help us to share some of your love with each other by remembering the things that a peacemaker brings...  
**(children to add their own words here)**

## Prayer of St Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled, as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life

---

## Additional Prayers

To you, Creator of nature and humanity,  
of truth and beauty, I pray:

**Hear my voice,**

for it is the voice of the victims of wars and violence  
among individuals and nations.

**Hear my voice,**

For it is the voice of all children  
who suffer and will suffer  
when people put their faith in weapons and war.

**Hear my voice,**

when I beg you to instil into the hearts  
of all human beings the wisdom of peace,  
the strength of justice and the joy of fellowship.

**Hear my voice,**

for I speak for the multitudes in every country  
and every period of history who do not want war  
and are ready to walk the road of peace.

**Hear my voice,**

and grant insight and strength so that we may always  
respond to hatred with love,  
to injustice with a total dedication to justice,  
to need with sharing of self,  
to war with peace.

**Oh God, hear my voice,  
and grant unto the world your everlasting peace.**

*(Pope John Paul II)*

### Now, more than ever:

- We confess the spiritual poverty within ourselves and our nation
- We mourn the victims of violence in our land and around the world
- We believe that the nonviolent will inherit the earth
- We hunger and thirst for justice for all
- We seek the courage to be merciful to all
- We pray for the Spirit to grant us purity of heart
- We recommit ourselves to be active peacemakers
- We pray to be ready to suffer persecution for the sake of justice
- We believe nonviolence is the light of the world

*(Pace e Bene Franciscan Centre, Las Vegas)*

---

## Article for Parish Magazines or Newsletters

---

### “Peace on Earth”

Sunday, January 19<sup>th</sup> is being kept as *Peace Sunday* by the Catholic Church in England & Wales. It's an opportunity for us all to reflect on the peace that Christ gives us and on how we are called to be peace-makers. We use the words, “*Peace be with you,*” so easily (and perhaps thoughtlessly) at Mass, that it's good occasionally to stand back and think about what we mean when we say them.

This year the Pope has asked us to reflect on the theme: “*Pacem In Terris: A Constant Endeavour.*” That probably won't mean very much to you unless you've either got a bit of Latin under your belt (*Pacem In Terris* means “Peace On Earth”) or a very long memory – *Pacem In Terris* was the title of Pope John XXIII's last Encyclical Letter in 1963. 2003 sees the fortieth anniversary of that document. He wrote it just after the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the world was as close to nuclear war as it's ever been. He wrote it to plead with politicians to step back from the brink. Above all, he wrote it to help both Catholics and all people of good will to think coherently about issues of peace and justice.

Despite being forty years old and touching on some issues (such as the end of the old European Empires) which now seem ancient history, Pope John's letter is still very much worth reading. It builds its whole argument from reflection on human dignity and on the human rights and duties which follow from that. If we're all made in God's image and are infinitely valuable, then *all* relationships, in the family, in society, in the nation and between different countries, have to be constructed so that human dignity is safeguarded and the values of truth, freedom, love and justice are lived out. And none of us can simply opt out and say “it's not my responsibility”. All of us have to contribute to the common good and work to build a world at peace.

Pope John concluded in 1963 that, in the age of weapons of mass-destruction, “it is unthinkable that war can any longer be regarded as a suitable way of restoring rights which have been violated.” But we seem to be slow to understand. Perhaps this time, in the face of the possible invasion of Iraq, world leaders will finally learn that lesson. Or maybe not – in which case God help us and God help the civilian populations of the whole Middle East. But it is up to us to help politicians to resist the possible drift into a prolonged and perhaps un-winnable war. We need to let our MPs know of our concerns about the possible use of force. We need to insist that the United Nations is the proper forum for dealing with rogue states and despotic leaders. And, nearer to home, it is our responsibility to show that there is an alternative to conflict, by living as people of peace, seekers of reconciliation.

That means practical steps: including prayers for peace and justice in the parish's worship; encouraging the community's younger members to reflect on the call to work for peace; informing ourselves about particular issues; letter-writing; taking up a collection for the Catholic Peace Movement, *Pax Christi*, or becoming members (as individuals or as a group). Only by such concrete actions do we make ourselves truly people of hope. Only by getting involved in peace-making can we show that, as for John XXIII, so also for us: “*It is our burning desire that peace should be established all over the world*”. Peace depends on us and on our willingness to commit ourselves to working with all people of good will to build the lasting peace which the world craves, a peace based on the Kingdom values of truth, justice, love and freedom.

(Our thanks to **Fr Rob Esdaile** for this article and the reflections)



**Pax Christi**  
**St Joseph's**  
**Watford Way, Hendon,**  
**London**  
**NW4 4TY**

Tel 020 8203 4884  
Fax 020 8203 5234  
Email: [paxchristi@gn.apc.org](mailto:paxchristi@gn.apc.org)  
Website: [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk)