

PAX CHRISTI UK

Peace Sunday

18th January 2004

Liturgy and Reflection Ideas for Parish Use

Theme: International Law - a Path to Peace

Contents

- Introduction to the Mass and Rite of Penance
- Homily Reflections
- Prayers of the Faithful
- Ideas for Working with Children
- Additional Prayers
- Ideas for Celebrating Peace Sunday
- Text for a Parish Notice or Newsletter
- Article for a Parish Magazine

Introduction and Preparation

- Whatever you do, it would be worth letting people know about Peace Sunday the week before (**Sunday 11th January**). A simple notice in the newsletter (based on the text at the back of the booklet) or a mention at Mass would be ideal.

- This year Peace Sunday opens the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which has as its theme "*My Peace I Give You*". You might wish to organise an ecumenical service that celebrates the way in which Christians work together to build peace in our world.
- Afterwards, let us know how your parish celebrated Peace Sunday 2004. We can share your ideas with others. Email us at paxchristi@gn.apc.org or write to the office.
- **Please consider taking a collection to support the work of Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace.**

*All materials may be reproduced with acknowledgement
© Rob Esdaile/Pax Christi.*

Introduction to Mass and Penitential Rite

Today is *Peace Sunday* and it is also the beginning of the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* - so you might think that our worship is going to have too many themes competing for attention. But the title of this year's Christian Unity Week is ***My Peace I Give You***, while the Pope has asked us to think about the role of ***International Law as a Path to Peace***. For once the themes come together as one. Both ecumenism and international peace-making are about finding new ways of living together in place of conflict and discord. So today is an invitation to reflect on where we are in that process of moving from division to unity, and from distrust to harmony.

Let us begin our celebration by confessing our need for forgiveness and our thirst for real peace.

Lord Jesus, your way is the only true path to peace. Lead us all to unity.

Lord have mercy

Christ Jesus, you reconcile enemies and heal divisions. Take from us our burden of being unforgiving.

Christ have mercy

Lord Jesus, you invite us all to share in the wedding feast of the Kingdom. Let us share in your joy and give us the courage to work for peace.

Lord have mercy

Readings

Isaiah 62:1-5; Ps 95:1-3, 7-10 R/v.3; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Jn 2:1-12

Homily Notes - First Reflection

How do we imagine the scene at the Wedding Feast of Cana? And, more particularly, how do we imagine Jesus' tone of voice when he answers his mother: "Woman, why turn to me?" Do we detect a tone of irritation, a rebuke, a shrugging off of the issue, or do we hear a reaction that is more gentle and compassionate? There's nothing in the text to tell us how to read it. So the tone we assume will say a lot about the Jesus we've learned to believe in. Is he interested in these little dramas of people's lives? Does he get involved?

His mother sees a horrendous situation developing. To run out of wine for your guests on an occasion as important as a wedding would shame the host family in the eyes of their neighbours. And with utter trust Mary puts the situation into Jesus' hands (although some jokers have suggested that it was the unscheduled arrival of Jesus and his enthusiastic friends that caused the problem in the first place!) We know the outcome - an atmosphere of joy (not to mention an enormous quantity of wine!) replaces the pain that Mary had first observed.

The story raises a very stark question for the Christian: Do we really believe that Jesus can turn around the most desperate situations, situations where the words, "They have no wine," might be whispered; times when we've "run out of options" or simply run out of energy or hope? The Jesus who turned up at the wedding feast of Cana didn't just shrug his shoulders when a problem emerged. He acted to reawaken hope. The prophet we hear in our first reading today (Isaiah 62.1-5) wouldn't have shrugged his shoulders, either: "About Zion I will not be silent; about Jerusalem, I will not grow weary, until her integrity shines out like the dawn and her salvation flames like a torch." In his day the Holy City was battered and broken down, the victim of siege and exile, yet he had a vision of how it could be - beautiful and glorious - and he was willing to dedicate his life to that vision.

What about us? There's no shortage of places in our world - overseas, in our neighbourhoods, perhaps even within ourselves - where the wine of life seems to have run dry, where former hopes have been replaced by a very grubby reality. And then, quite unexpectedly, comes the voice of the prophet: "I will not be silent. I will not rest until ..." Until what? What vision am I willing to pursue with all my being? What would I dedicate my time and energies to? Is there anything, anything at all?

The Gospel gives us a vision that's worth dedicating our whole lives to - the vision of the Kingdom of God, where enemies are reconciled and old hurts are healed. When the brokenness around us has been pointed out to us - the millions of refugees displaced by warfare; the billions of dollars wasted on armaments while people go hungry; the divisions between the churches; our own individual brokenness, wherever we meet injustice and division - what's our reaction? "I will not rest until her integrity shines out like the dawn ..." or "I don't want to get involved"? And do we then go on to do something about it (as did Jesus)? Or do we turn away? If we are not willing to spend ourselves working for peace we shall not have peace, and neither shall our children.

Homily Notes - Second Reflection

It's a wonderful thing to discover your gifts. It's one of the most important things that has to happen in a child's development - to discover that they're good at something; to be told that they've something valuable to offer. People who've never received those messages have no centre, no inner sense of self-worth. They'll spend the rest of their lives seeking security and value in external things - in beauty, wealth, power, popularity. And, of course, each of us needs to hear again and again that message, "You are gifted and valuable," in order to find healing for life's hurts.

But that isn't just something we need to hear for our psychological well-being. It's at the heart of the Gospel, as Paul explains to the Corinthians: The Spirit is at work in each one of us, at work in a unique way, planting different gifts in us which no one else can bring to the community. Without *you* the Body of Christ is incomplete, damaged, wounded. Imagine if we really believed that message. Imagine if our parishes and our schools managed to get that across to every single person involved: *You* have an irreplaceable gift; *you are* an irreplaceable gift! Think how we would change the way we look at each other and how we celebrate together! So the first lesson to be learned from this section of St. Paul's letter is that we must each dare to ask ourselves: What is *my* gift? What do *I* bring that no one else can offer? Where is the Spirit at work *in me* for the building up of the community of the Body of Christ? There is something that only you can bring to the task, something that you can do uniquely well. Dare to believe that!

Secondly, too often we get used to the gaps; we get used to living without the gifts of others and being satisfied with what we already have. The Churches have done so for hundreds of years since the Reformation: Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox - none of us thought we had anything to learn from the others. Every Church tended to view itself as complete and to be happy with its own company. This reading from Paul (like the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* which begins today) challenges that attitude. However much it may be true that the Catholic Church uniquely retains both a vision of the unity of the Body of Christ and the structures to safeguard

it (the Pope, the College of Bishops, and so on), our Church retains the wound of lacking our brothers and sisters and their gifts. We all need to look again at ourselves and our outlook.

Thirdly, what's true of the Church is true also of the political order. Centuries of colonialism were followed by the rhetoric of Cold War, and each of these served to close our view of the world. We had nothing to learn from "foreigners". It was our task to teach the world, not to receive lessons from them. Our nation was beyond criticism. Ours was the only world-view we needed to take seriously.

In a globalised world, we know we can't continue that way. With our heads we acknowledge that we depend on each other for our survival. Global trade, global warming and global security are all topics beyond the competence of individual governments. Only international organisations can co-ordinate responses to problems which don't respect national frontiers. And only international organisations can ensure justice between the nations. So it is that the Catholic Church has become a champion of the *United Nations* and the cluster of bodies that work with it. This *Peace Sunday* the Pope calls us to reflect on *International Law as a Path to Peace*.

Just as we need to look again at how we help the young to discover their gifts; just as we need to learn again that the Church is incomplete so long as it is divided; so too in the realm of relations between the nations. It is the urgent task of all of us to say to our politicians: we cannot solve the problems of the world without true justice for all and without co-operation between the nations; we cannot resolve conflict by simple resort to arms; we can only heal the wounds of humanity by building structures of dialogue and a shared respect for international law; so that all may contribute their gifts and all may know the peace that comes from God; so that every person on the planet may hear the lesson: "You are gifted and you are valuable."

Prayers of the Faithful

Priest: We gather today to anticipate the Wedding Feast of the Kingdom of God, nourished by Christ's Word and by Christ's own body. Let us make our prayers, for ourselves and for all who are in need.

1. We pray for ourselves, that - like the Prophet Isaiah in today's first reading - we may be filled with a vision of a world transformed, its ruins restored, its mourning turned into dancing; and that we may dedicate our lives to building peace and reconciliation.
Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

2. We pray for Christian Unity, that the wounds of centuries of division may be healed and that one day all who believe in Jesus may be able to share the bread and wine of the Eucharist together.
Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

3. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem and for reconciliation between Arab and Jew. We pray especially for the Christians of the Middle East. May they be bearers of reconciliation to their brothers and sisters.
Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

4. We pray for the young, that they may discover the unique gifts that the Holy Spirit has placed in them, and may learn to use those gifts to build a new culture of peace in our world.
Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

5. We pray for the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, Pax Christi and all those bodies that work for co-operation and understanding between the nations.
Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

6. We remember the sick - especially of this community. May Christ who let his glory be seen at Cana in Galilee come and show himself to them in their hour of need.
Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

7. We commend to God's mercy all who have died - especially who have died recently and whose anniversaries occur at this time. May they rejoice with God this day in the Banquet of Eternal Life.
Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Priest: Father, we rejoice to be your family and to share in the Banquet of Christ's love. Hear our prayers and grant them through the same Jesus, Our Lord. Amen.

Ideas for working with children

1. Rainbow Colours: God loves us all and is with us as a sign of hope for the future

This activity is to help children explore the uniqueness of each individual person and to value that contribution which each person makes to the whole human family, whatever their race, creed or colour.

You will need:

A rainbow peace flag

Coloured ribbons or streamers

Percussion instruments for storm sounds

Approach

This could be told as a story or acted out by groups of children - each group being given a coloured ribbon which it then represents. It could be developed into a drama/dance which is presented to others as part of a liturgy.

Narrator: Once upon a time, all the colours of the world started to argue. Each colour thought it was the best and most important.

Green said: I am most important - a sign of life and hope. My colour is used for the grass, the trees. I can be seen all over the countryside. Without me all animals would die.

Blue interrupted: You only think about the earth. What about the sky and sea? It is water that is the most important thing for life - it is drawn up in the clouds and then rains from the sky. The sky also gives us space and peace. Without my peace you would all be too dizzy and busy.

Yellow laughed: Don't be so serious. I bring happiness and laughter. The sun and the moon are yellow. Every time you look at a sunflower you want to smile. I bring fun.

Orange started to blow her own trumpet: I am the colour of health and strength - I am very precious. I carry important vitamins in food. And I am so beautiful at sunrise and sunset!

Red was getting impatient: I rule you all - in your blood. I am the colour of danger, and bravery. I bring energy and life to the earth.

Purple stood up, tall and straight: I am the colour of royalty and power. Rulers and leaders choose me - I am a sign of wisdom.

Indigo spoke: I am the colour of silence - you hardly notice me. I am always thoughtful - the colour of twilight and deep waters. I am needed for balance in the world.

Narrator: As all the colours continued to boast, their voices getting louder and louder, a storm began. There was a flash of light and a roll of thunder. It began to rain and all the colours crouched down in fear - drawing close to each other for comfort.

Percussion instruments could be used here to evoke the sounds of a storm.

The Rain spoke: You foolish colours, fighting among yourselves, each trying to be better than the rest. Do you not know that God made you all? Each for a special purpose. God loves you all. God wants you all. Join hands with one another and come with me.

The rainbow flag could be stretched across the groups of children as this part of the story is told.

You will be stretched across the sky in a great bow of colour as a reminder that God loves you all, that you can live together in peace, a promise that God is with you, a sign of hope for tomorrow.

Narrator: And so, whenever God has used a good rain to wash the world, the rainbow appears in the sky and when we see it, let us remember to value one another.

(Adapted from *Training for Transformation: Anne Hope, Sally Timmel and C. Hodzi*)

2. Postcards for Peace

This activity encourages children to think of what it takes to make peace – and to share these ideas with others: their parents... local MP... teachers... the Prime Minister.

You will need:

Blank postcards
Coloured pens
Postage stamps

Approach

Share this reflection with the children to help them think of the ways in which our behaviour / the things we do can be “the enemies of peace” causing hurt and suffering to others.

A different child could read each phrase:

In our family, school and parish, we sometimes do things that hurt others.

- Sometimes we bully others
- Or we have fights in the playground
- We say unkind things to or about each other
- We only let our best friends join in our games
- We do not always share our sweets and other things
- We sometimes laugh at mistakes others make

Things happen in our world that cause people to suffer

- We all know that war hurts people
- Refugee children suffer as they try to escape war
- Children suffer if their parents are killed
- Some young children have to work very hard to get food
- Some children are forced to do things they do not want to
- When people are very poor they also suffer
- People suffer when they are turned away at the door of another country where they try to find peace

Invite the children to think about **one** of these “enemies to peace” and to think of what needs to happen to “turn this around.” They are then invited to write or draw their response on a postcard under the heading

“To make peace we must...”

- The postcards can be collected and offered during the Mass or liturgy
- They could be mounted and displayed in the church or school hall
- They could be presented to parents or teachers
- They could be sent to local leaders such as MP’s, bishops...

(Adapted from an idea of the Roper family, Luton)

Additional Prayers for Adult Use - Rainbow Prayer for Peace and Justice

Could be used with the Pax Christi rainbow peace flag - possibly placed in front of the altar - and ribbons or coloured streamers. As each line is read a ribbon/streamer could be unfurled in front of the altar and drawn out towards the congregation.

Red: So that we may no longer be overcome by greed and anger, help us to recognise each person as a brother or sister and open our hearts to them in that nonviolent love which brings peace.

Orange: So that the world may be free from the threat of war, fill us with the Spirit’s fire as we proclaim your gospel of peace.

Yellow: So that all children may have the possibility to grow in the light of love, free from fear, hunger, disease and exploitation, show us the paths to peace.

Green: So that the Earth may be saved from our destruction and continue to sustain all living things, teach us to dance to the rhythm of creation until we know your reign of peace.

Blue: So that all who are suffering or who are in prison may find true freedom, give us the wisdom to choose the things that make for peace.

Indigo: So that all may have work which is valued fairly and rewarded justly, we will try to use things well and share what we have.

Violet: So that all may be free to use their talents for the good of all, we will respect the dignity of every human life.

God, the rainbow speaks to us of your promise of a world where peace will reign: where difference is celebrated, where every person can achieve the fullness of life and live in harmony and unity. May we respond to your promise and commit ourselves to work for peace today and every day. Amen

(Adapted, Ann Kelly, Pax Christi Birmingham)

Prayer of intercession

Voice 1. Gracious Father,
We pray for peace in our world:
for all national leaders
that they may have wisdom to know
and courage to do what is right;

Voice 2. For all men and women:
that our hearts may be turned to
You in the search for
righteousness and truth;

V1. For those who are working to improve
international relationships:
that they may find the true way of
reconciliation;

V2. For those who suffer as a result of war:
the injured and disabled,
the mentally distressed,
the homeless and hungry,
those who mourn for their dead,
and especially for those
who are without hope or friend
to sustain them in their grief.

(Adapted, Baptist Peace Fellowship)

Ideas for Celebrating Peace Sunday 2004

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 in your parish. We encourage you to look at the Pax Christi website for additional prayer material, ideas and inspiration: www.paxchristi.org.uk

"The children's liturgy focused on the theme of peace and they built a 'peace wall'. We made a display with Pax Christi information from the website. During the afternoon a two-hour service of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament took place with prayer and reflection for peace."

(Holy Family parish, Derby)

"On Peace Sunday, as we welcomed each person to Mass, we handed out the Peace Sunday leaflet. At the beginning of each Mass, a young person read out an introduction and verse from the Archbishop Romero book *Violence of Love* as another young person lit a Peace candle. Mass then followed and our priest linked his sermon with the readings and with peace. After communion we used a reading from the Pax Christi liturgy ideas. Everyone present said how much they enjoyed the services and wanted to do something more."

(St Joseph's, Jarrow)

"Our group led a silent vigil and peace walk through Muswell Hill on Peace Sunday. We passed the other six churches in our area - stopping at each one to say a prayer for peace. This was our way of linking Peace

Sunday and Christian Unity. We advertised the event in all of these churches before the day."

(North London Pax Christi Group)

"We organised a one-day peace vigil on the Friday before Peace Sunday, to pray for peace, justice and reconciliation at a troubled time. The 'Watchers' - those taking part - were asked to stay for half an hour and we provided prayers, readings and reflections that they could use."

(East Grinstead Ecumenical Justice and Peace Group)

"Peace Sunday was promoted on the front page of our parish newsletter. We set out five practical actions that people could take: using the Pax Christi prayer card; joining a Prayer for Peace Holy Hour later in the week; joining a peace vigil outside Salford Cathedral; contributing to the Pax Christi collection which we organised and signing the Call to Conversion - Arms Trade petition."

(Our Lady of Dolours Parish, Salford)

Texts for a parish notice or newsletter

The following text could be placed in the parish newsletter or read out in order to prepare the parish community for Peace Sunday.

Pax Christi is an international Catholic movement for peace. We encourage Catholic Christians to try to take responsibility for peace in their own lives and in the world. **Every year, Pax Christi helps to promote Pope John Paul's annual World Peace Message on Peace Sunday.**

Pax Christi works with others to respond to the teaching of Jesus about peace:

- by **experiencing** in our own lives the peace promised by Jesus.
- by **offering** this peace to others through witness, sharing and nonviolence.
- by working to **transform** our communities through action and advocacy for justice, work for the abolition of war and for an end to all forms of violence.

To join **Pax Christi**, or find out more about their work, pick up a **Pax Christi** leaflet from the back of the Church or write to:

Pax Christi, St Joseph's, Watford Way, Hendon, London N4 4TY
or contact them via their website at www.paxchristi.org.uk

Article for a parish magazine: "Peace On Earth, Peace in the Church"

This year, by a nice twist of the calendar, both **Peace** and **Ecumenism** are brought into sharp relief in our Sunday liturgy on January 18th. Father Rob Esdaile reflects on the strong links that join the struggle for peace with work for Christian Unity.

Justice and peace work and ecumenism tend to have a similar status in most churches. There's someone on the parish council or pastoral team who is officially responsible for each of them; they both generate a large amount of good will (since Peace and Christian Unity both qualify as "good ideas"); and there's a tendency for them to remain at the margins of the community's consciousness and work. These are topics for the small groups of enthusiasts who keep the flame of hope alive - and who may on occasion rouse the rest of us to action.

However, this year there's an invitation to rethink our attitudes to both peace and ecumenism. Not only does *Peace Sunday* (January 18th) coincide with the beginning of the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* but the theme of the latter is: *My peace I give you*. That theme was chosen by the churches of Aleppo in Syria - and few are better qualified to speak of the urgency of the search for peace than the Christians of the Middle East. Ecumenism and peacemaking belong together, not just because they require similar skills and techniques (healing old wounds, righting past wrongs and finding ways forward in often intractable situations) but also because they draw their inspiration from the heart of the Gospel.

In the readings at Mass this Peace Sunday first the Prophet Isaiah reflects on the broken-down state of Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile (*Isaiah 62.1-5*). He cries out: "About Zion I will not be silent; about Jerusalem I will not grow weary, until her integrity shines out like the dawn and her salvation flames like a torch." He sees the ruins brought by war and dedicates himself - all of his energies - to rebuilding the broken community. Then St. Paul reminds us (*1 Cor 12.4-11*) that each of us must make our own contribution. The Spirit is given to all of us - and all of us need the gifts of others. No one individual or parish or denomination or nation can claim to be self-sufficient. We are incomplete without each other.

Finally in the Gospel we hear of the Wedding Feast at Cana. It is the best of times - joy, celebration and togetherness; and the worst of times - "They have no wine." "They have no wine" could well serve as a description of the lives of many in our world: there is nothing which allows life to become a picture of fullness and plenty; nothing to lift people up from the daily grind. That's true not only for the third of humanity who live on less than two dollars a day, scraping together a living in a constant struggle for survival. It's true even more so for many people in our own culture who feel that they have lost their direction and their meaning - a generation never wealthier and never less happy, as psychological studies indicate.

Only the presence of Christ can open up new possibilities, as Mary recognised at Cana when she said to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you." Only the action of Christ, turning the water of our existence into the wine of the Kingdom, can revive the Christian churches and lead them beyond their divisions to true peace. Only the action of Christ can open up new possibilities for peace, for justice and for joy in our world. And, since the Spirit has been given to us all, it must be the actions and the contribution of each one of us which make those possibilities a reality.