

Peace Sunday 2005 - "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

## Ways of marking Peace Sunday - Reflections, Prayers and Stories

**Create an exhibition** using the Pax Christi poster "*Violence Ends Where Love Begins*" as a centrepiece. You could enlarge quotations from this booklet and extract sections of Pope John Paul's peace message (available in December) and place them around the poster. You could also collect "good news" stories from local and national newspapers and display them as signs of hope.

**Organise a peace walk** - following the example of Amiram Goldin below - to places in your local area that have been trouble spots or places of violence. Be present at these places in silence and prayer. This would be an ideal ecumenical event - an activity for Christian Unity Week.

**Reproduce a story** or prayer for peace in your parish bulletin during the week leading up to Peace Sunday. On Peace Sunday arrange to have people available to give out the Pax Christi prayer for peace card or the Pax Christi Peace Sunday leaflet.

**Illustrate** the "*Blessed are the peacemakers*" prayer. This could be undertaken by adults or older children - making a poster or collage to illustrate the characteristics of a peacemaker. These could be displayed in church or school.

## Reflections, stories and prayers

*The following resources can be used within the framework of a Mass, or to create a liturgy around the themes of violence, evil, light, peacemaking, and responsibility, or to create an exhibition, using stories and photographs to illustrate these themes.*

### Love in action

That love of others, that care for their freedom, is what causes us to go into such controversial subjects as the individual and the state, war and peace. The implications of the gospel, teaching the works of mercy, lead us into conflict with the powers of this world. Our love of God is a consuming fire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It is a living God and a living faith that we are trying to express. We are called to be holy, that is, whole human beings.  
*(Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, writing in 1955)*

### The weakness of violence

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.  
*(Martin Luther King Jr)*

## Inspirational stories

### Do not be overcome by evil

In October 2003, a group of Jewish families, bereaved through violence, embarked upon a peace pilgrimage of sites of suicide bombs. Amiram Goldin, whose son Omri was murdered in 2002 by a suicide bomber, urged that people "*switch the train from the track of blood to the track of peace and stop the cycle of revenge and killing. It is not natural for the son to be buried by his father. You cannot recover from the pain. We carry it with us every day and every night. When I was shouting when my son was killed nobody heard, and since then more than 250 Israelis have been killed and hundreds of Palestinians have been killed. They are victims of this cruel situation*".  
*(Adapted from The Guardian, October 2003)*

### **But overcome evil with good**

In 1984, Jo Berry's father, Sir Anthony Berry, was killed by an IRA bomb at the Tory Party Conference in Brighton. Pat Magee, a former IRA activist, was given multiple life sentences for his part in the bombing. A journey began which brought them together in 2000. While overcome with grief, Jo held on to the belief that something positive would come from the tragedy. She went to Ireland many times, listened to stories of people who had been caught in the violence - sharing her pain with them. About her journey and her meeting with Pat Magee she says, *" I wanted to meet Pat to put a face to the enemy, and see him as a real human being. At our first meeting I was terrified, but I wanted to acknowledge the courage it had taken him to meet me. We talked with extraordinary intensity... Over the years of getting to know Pat, I feel I've been recovering some of the humanity I lost when that bomb went off. Pat is also on a journey to recover his humanity".* Pat, who was released following the Good Friday Agreement in 1999, says, *"Some day I may be able to forgive myself. Although I still stand by my actions, I will always carry the burden that I harmed other human beings. But I am not seeking forgiveness. If Jo could just understand why someone like me could get involved in the armed struggle then something has been achieved. Jo set out with that intent in mind - she wanted to know why".*

In 2003 Jo helped Pat set up Causeway, a healing project that helps individuals address unresolved pain caused by the troubles in Northern Ireland.

*(Adapted from The Forgiveness Project)*

**Prayer for forgiveness** - *recalling actions that cut us off from one another... that lead to evil in our world*

Response: **O God, forgive.**

For the **hatred** which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class. **R/**

For the **greed** which exploits human labour and lays waste the earth. **R/**

For our **envy** of the welfare and happiness of others. **R/**

For our **indifference** to the plight of the homeless, and the refugee. **R/**

For the **lust** which uses for ignoble ends the bodies of men, women and children. **R/**

For the **pride** which leads to trust in ourselves and not in God. **R/**

We pray that we may be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving of one another, as God in Christ forgave us.

*(Adapted from Coventry Liturgy)*

### **Blessed are the peacemakers**

Blessed are you peacemakers,  
who say no to war as a means to peace.

Blessed are you peacemakers,  
who are committed to disarm weapons of mass destruction.

Blessed are you peacemakers,  
who wage peace at heroic personal cost.

Blessed are you peacemakers,  
who challenge and confront judges, courts and prisons.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who help those who are hurting.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who befriend perfect strangers.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who open doors for acting justly,  
loving tenderly and walking humbly with God  
and all people of good will.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who welcome, encourage and inspire.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who offer hope and healing.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who care and comfort.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who help find answers.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who provide stability not insanity.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who help restore faith and love.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who delight in creation, art and creativity.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who see the good in others.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who never give up.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
who give and give and give.

*(Fr Paul Milanowski, Grand Rapids, Michigan)*

### **Peace is in our hands**

Peace is in our hands,  
    hands once clenched  
        in anger or anxiety,  
the body eloquent of the mind.

Peace is in our hands,  
    empty of weapons,  
        open in generosity,  
the body eloquent of the heart.

Peace is in our hands,  
    outstretched in welcome,  
        clasped with others' hands,  
the body eloquent of the soul.

Peace is in our hands,  
    tooled with gentleness,  
        tending the good earth,  
the body eloquent of the spirit.

Peace is in our hands,  
    affirming the views of others,  
        receiving their gifts,  
the Body inclusive of us all.

*(Alan Horner, Living Spirituality Project, April, 2000)*