

# Peace Sunday - 15 January 2006

## “In Truth is Peace”

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### Introduction and Preparation

- Whatever you do, it would be worth letting people know about Peace Sunday the week before (**Sunday 8th January**). A simple notice in the newsletter (based on the text at the back of this booklet) or a mention at Mass would be ideal. Order the Pax Christi prayer card or the Peace Sunday leaflet and arrange to have these given out to people as they leave Mass on Peace Sunday.
- The Week of **Prayer for Christian Unity** runs between 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> January. The theme for 2006 is “*Where two or three are gathered in my name*” (from Matthew 18:20). The theme was chosen by the Churches of Ireland. You might wish to organise an ecumenical service which celebrates the way in which Christians work together to build peace in our world.
- Afterwards, let us know how your parish celebrated Peace Sunday 2006. We can share your ideas with others. Email us at [paxchristi@gn.apc.org](mailto: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.

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### Introduction to the Liturgy

Today, on Peace Sunday, the Church asks us to pray for our world, for a healing of the wounds of violence and hatred that divide nation from nation and that set one community against another. But, by his choice of theme for today's celebration, Pope Benedict reminds us that the struggle for peace must begin in our hearts: he invites us to reflect on the statement, “*In Truth is Peace*”. Unless we are people of truth, and unless the truth that we speak is the truth of the Gospel, we cannot bring healing to our world. So let us turn to the Lord and acknowledge our own need for forgiveness.

*Lord Jesus, Word of Truth. Lord have mercy.*

*Christ Jesus, Word of Mercy. Christ have mercy.*

*Lord Jesus, Word made Flesh. Lord have mercy.*

## Introduction to the Readings

### First Reading (1 Sam 3:3-10, 19)

In the story of the boy Samuel we hear our own story. Each of us is called by name by God, who thirsts for communion with us - and so is each of our neighbours. Imagine if we were to take that truth more seriously in our dealings with others! How the world would be changed!

### Second Reading (1 Cor 6:13-15, 17-20)

What might sound at first hearing simply like an uncompromising condemnation of sexual promiscuity is actually a meditation on the deepest truth about our humanity: we are temples of the Holy Spirit. The Dove of Peace dwells in us and will work through us, if we will only let Him.

### Gospel (Jn 1:35-42)

In today's Gospel reading from St John, we hear the deepest truth about Jesus, in Andrew's exclamation to his brother: *"We have found the Messiah!"* And, like Simon Peter, we discover that it is Jesus who speaks the deepest truth about ourselves.

## Alternative Introduction to the Liturgy

*"What do you want?"* is Jesus' question to the two disciples who follow him along the road in today's Gospel. Our answer is the same as theirs - another question: *"Where do you live?"* We want to know Jesus and to enjoy his company and to drink in his teaching. That is why we are here in Church today. But today, when the Catholic Church in these islands celebrates Peace Sunday, the question, *"Where do you live?"* might easily be recast as: *"Where does the Prince of Peace live? Where is the Shalom of God - true peace of heart and mind and body, peace in and between our communities? Where is that peace to be found?"* Let us enter into the stillness, and pray for the gift of peace for ourselves, for Christ's Church, for the whole world.

*(Long pause)*

*Lord Jesus, we long for the peace that only you can give.*

*Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.*

*Christ Jesus, pour out your Spirit of peace and compassion upon us.*

*Christ have mercy. Christ have mercy.*

*Lord Jesus, you send us your Spirit that we may be signs of your love.*

*Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.*

## Alternative Introduction to the Readings

### First Reading

To become a disciple you have to discover that you have been called, as Samuel was called. You have to make your own Samuel's prayer: *"Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."* And you have to learn that the one who speaks is a God of peace and compassion.

### Second Reading

If we would have peace then, as Paul tells the Christians of Corinth, we must begin by having reverence for our bodies and the bodies of others. Each and every one of us is a temple of the Holy Spirit. If we really lived that truth fully how different our world would be!

### Gospel

We listen today to the Gospel of John. We hear the voice of John the Baptist proclaiming Jesus as the Lamb of God, the one who would break the chains of hatred and revenge by his death on the Cross.

## Homily Notes - First Reflection

The Holy Father has invited us to reflect today, on this Peace Sunday, on the theme, *"In Truth is Peace"*. The title is almost too short to be a sound-bite. Blink and you miss it! So think of it more as a motto (or a Latin tag: *In Veritate Pax*, the sort of thing a medieval knight might have written under his coat-of-arms to sum up his outlook). But this is no philosophical word-play. Rather, in those three words Pope Benedict encapsulates a truth which we all know from experience: you can't build peace on a lie.

You can't build peace on a lie, and this applies in all our relationships at every stage of our lives. It means there has to be a coherence between our words and our deeds, between what we say we are about and how we live. There is nothing sadder than the "pillar of the community" who is haunted by some secret addiction, be that to alcohol, to drugs, to sex, to power or whatever. There is nothing sadder than the family that projects itself to the outside world as a united, deeply loving and warm grouping while, behind closed doors, the atmosphere is one of bitterness and recrimination. And, one could add, that there is nothing sadder, either, than the parish which says it is committed to the Gospel values of love, justice and community, but which fails to "walk the talk", so that people are left feeling isolated, disempowered or unwanted.

At every level, from the personal to the political, from the domestic to the international, we need to ask ourselves whether our lives are *founded on truth*. Because, so the Pope warns us, unless they are, we shall have no peace. (By the way, that intuition also applies to sexual morality, discussed by Paul in today's second reading. Unless love-making is a physical statement of what is going on in our hearts - unless it expresses an exclusive, open-ended, loving commitment to one partner - it is a lie, and it will not end in peace.)

You can't build peace on a lie. If this applies to the normal ups and downs of daily life, how much more so does it apply when things go seriously wrong. You can't move on from the past, you can't bring healing to a situation of pain, without honestly facing what has happened. Sweeping things under the carpet, pretending that none of it ever occurred - this simply won't do when it comes to issues which have marked us deeply. "Forgive and forget" is all very well in the case of trivial arguments, but for bigger issues it's a recipe for disaster. As the old adage goes, if we do not learn from history we are condemned to repeat it. Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela grasped that when they set up the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in the new South Africa. The past had to be faced in order to build a healed future.

We Christians ought to be comfortable with all of this. We begin the Eucharist with confession of our faults, of our responsibility for wrong-doing and our need for forgiveness. Before Communion we confess Christ as the Lamb of God, the one who takes away the sins of the world and renews God's Covenant with his people. We do not need to pretend, or to deny what has gone wrong in the past. The truth on which we build our lives is the truth of God's mercy, not our own strength or virtue. That is the truth we celebrate here at Mass. That is the truth we must share with the world. And we can do that only by our commitment to the search for peace and justice, truth and reconciliation.

## Homily Notes - Second Reflection

I suppose it's only a matter of time before we stop using that old phrase, "the penny dropped". After all, it's rather a long time since a penny in the slot was enough to buy a bar of chocolate, or open a public toilet door, or any of those other useful things that Victorian slot-machines once did. But both today's first reading and today's Gospel are really about moments when "the penny dropped".

In the first reading, the boy Samuel realises he is being called, but he doesn't know by whom, and he doesn't know what the experience means - until the old man, Eli, understands what is going on and tells him what to do: *"Say: Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."* In the Gospel, Andrew and the other disciple follow Jesus out of curiosity and because of John the Baptist's strange greeting, *"Behold, the Lamb of God."* But it is only when they have spent time with him that the penny drops for them and Andrew goes to tell his brother, Peter, *"We have found the Messiah."*

After the penny has dropped there is no going back, whether for Samuel or for Andrew and Peter. A whole new vista opens up for them, the world bathed in the love of God. Now they know something that they can never forget: that they are called by name, called to speak the Word of God to the people of their age, called to witness to the truth of God through their own lives.

Pope Benedict asks us to make today a day of prayer for peace, reflecting on the theme, *"In Truth is Peace"*. Peace is the truth to which we are called, on which we are invited to build our lives. That is the truth of God, the truth of Jesus Christ, the vision which transformed the lives of Samuel in the Old Testament and of Andrew and Peter and the other disciples in the New: *Shalom*, the Peace of God's Kingdom. It is a peace rooted not in the threat of violence but in reconciling love; not in the power to impose our will but in the self-giving of Christ, who loved unto the end and was nailed to a Cross. It is a peace which becomes possible only when we reject expediency, and hypocrisy, and our own narrow self-interest, as motives in our own lives and in the building of our society.

But Peter is led to the truth of God and to the Gospel of Peace only by the witness of his brother. And Andrew finds the Messiah only because of the witness of John the Baptist, and, a thousand years before them, Samuel only learned to say, *"Speak, Lord, your servant is listening,"* because of the wisdom of the old priest, Eli. Peace, God's peace, can only happen through ever-expanding circles of witness. Which raises the question for us and our communities: are we opening each other's eyes and ears to the vision of God's *Shalom*? Are we teaching the young, like Samuel, to listen to the voice of God? Are we encouraging each other to look again at our world and see it with the eyes of Christ?

*"We have found the Messiah."* He is our truth. He is our peace. And he invites us to turn away from violence and the threat of violence. No more war! No more preparations for war! No more wasting of so much God-given talent on perfecting ways of killing people! *"Behold, the Lamb of God, the Prince of Peace!"* Let us follow him.

## Prayers of the Faithful

*To be added to your own parish prayers*

We pray for our Church. May we have the courage to speak and act in honesty and truth so that we can be true instruments of healing and reconciliation in our world.

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

We pray for those who live with the reality of violence and oppression: the peoples of Iraq, Israel and Palestine, the Great Lakes region of Africa... (*add your own*) that they will find the justice and human security they seek, so as to live life to the full.

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

We pray for those who work for peace and especially for the work of Pax Christi, the international Catholic movement for peace. May we be open to their call to pray, study and act for peace wherever it may be needed.

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

## Additional prayers

Loving God, you sent Jesus to show us how to live nonviolently.

Jesus, you listened carefully to everyone,  
cared about the feelings of others.

You forgave those who hurt you.

Your heart went out to people no one else cared about.

Jesus, send us your Spirit to help each of us be

truthful whenever we speak,

loving whenever we act,

and courageous whenever we find violence or injustice around us.

*(from Family Pledge of Nonviolence, Parenting for Peace and Justice Network, USA)*

## Prayer of Petition - Beyond Borders

*Response: God of nations, hear our prayer.*

For the courage to go beyond the borders of our experiences ...  
For the trust to go beyond the orders of our imaginations ...  
For the charity to help those beyond the borders of our family and friends ...  
For the forgiveness to go beyond the borders of misunderstanding ...  
For the hope to go beyond the borders of our fears ...  
For the desire to go beyond the borders of our beliefs ...  
For the confidence to challenge the borders of our limitations ...  
For the patience to accept those beyond the borders of the familiar...  
For the understanding of those beyond the borders of our nation ...  
For the wisdom to see beyond the borders of our vision ...

*Response*

## Ideas for working with children

### Create a tree of peace

#### You will need:

- Wire, heavy-duty paper, paints
- Long pieces of card, 15cm x 4 cm which will become part of the roots
- Circular pieces of card which will become the fruits
- Coloured pencils

The roots, trunk and branches could be made with wire or polystyrene and then covered with heavy paper and painted.

Alternatively, a large picture could be drawn of the roots, trunk and branches. This can then be displayed at the front of the church/hall.

#### What to do:

As people enter, hand out strips of card to some and circles of card to others, and hand out pencils.

During the Mass, or peace service you create, invite people to think of words which describe the roots of peacemaking, the things we must do and be in order to build peace. Those with the long strips of card write their word on the card.

Invite people to think of words that describe the fruits of peace, those things that come about when we get our relationships with one another, with God, and with the earth, into good order. Write these words on the circular pieces of card.

At an appropriate time these words can be brought forward and placed either on the roots or on the branches of the tree.

#### Prayer

Jesus, you commanded us to love our enemies  
and pray for those who bother us.  
And you showed us how to do it.  
But it is so hard to do  
and it means that no matter what happens,  
I must respond with love, with peace.  
It means that I must look more honestly at myself,  
and take others as they are without passing judgment.  
It means I must try to bridge gaps and break down barriers  
rather than make them.  
Teach me to see good in others.  
Give me an understanding heart that helps me see  
the one whom I thought to be an enemy as a friend.

*(adapted from Families Caring: Parenting for Peace and Justice Network, USA)*

## Blindfold Trust Walk

*This activity helps people to feel more positive about each other and it also promotes better co-operation in groups, especially a group which is used to working together.*

Divide people into pairs. One person leads the other blindfolded or with the eyes closed. The leader takes the blindfolded partner around and explains where he/she is taking him/her, what to expect, reassuring him/her that he/she will not fall or bump into anything. After a few minutes, partners change roles. When everyone has had a turn at being led, bring the group together and discuss how it felt to lead or be led.

## Making a mural: what would people be doing in a world of peace?

You might like to base this activity on a scripture reading, one of the prayers given above, or a poem, to help start the process. Invite people to say what the reading means to them.

e.g.:    Isaiah 11: 6-9            *"The wolf lives with the lamb"*  
          Micah 4: 1-4            *"Swords will be turned into ploughshares"*  
          Matthew 5: 43-48        *"Love your enemy"*  
          Matthew 19: 21-22      *"Forgive seventy times seven"*

### You will need:

- A long roll of lining paper (or smaller sheets taped together)
- Water paints or felt pens, sponges, old magazines, glue, scissors, pieces of old fabric, wrapping or textured paper, and other oddments that you have to hand
- Bible, prayer, or poem

### What to do:

Read through the scripture passage or the poem or prayer, and ask the children to share ideas on what a world of peace might be like.

- What would people be doing?
- How might they be feeling?
- What would be the main colours/ textures of this world?

Then, invite people to put their ideas on to the paper - making sure that no one paints over something someone else has painted! Display the resulting mural for everyone to see.

## Thoughts on truth, peacemaking and Christian witness

*The following quotations could be enlarged and displayed or reproduced as a series in a newsletter or bulletin. They could be used as meditations in a vigil or peace service, or as a basis for personal reflection or discussion.*

### Questions to consider

- Can you think of a time in your own life when the truth led you to take a stand or change your perspective? Did this offer a chance for healing and peacemaking?
- Everyone has a partial truth. What does this tell us about the task of peacemaking and nonviolence in action?

Violence is never a proper response. With the conviction of her faith in Christ and with the awareness of her mission, the Church proclaims "That violence is evil, that violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, that violence is unworthy of humanity. Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings."

*(taken from the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church - quoting Pope John Paul II in Drogheda, Ireland in 1979. Burns and Oates, 2005)*

If we wound or kill another, a part of the truth is lost forever and we are the poorer for it.

*(Sr Mary Lou Kownacki OSB)*

What is needed now is the Christian who manifests the truth of the Gospel in social action... clear and decisive Christian action explains itself and teaches in a way words never can.

*(Thomas Merton. Peace in the Post-Christian Era, Orbis, 2004)*

If you disagree with me, you have something to give me; if you are sincere and seek the truth as best you may, honestly with modest care, your thought is growth to mine, you deepen my vision.

*(Dom Helder Camara, in Peacemaking Day by Day, Pax Christi)*

As Christians the most fundamental truth that we must voice if we would build a world at peace is that all people are our brothers and sisters, children of God. *That* must be the starting point, and not the assumption that they are by their very existence a threat, rivals, potential enemies. It is a truth that we must learn again and again and teach each other again and again, whenever the voices of prejudice re-emerge in ourselves and in others.

*(Fr Rob Esdaile)*

## Article for a parish magazine

### Peace Sunday - In Truth is Peace

In England and Wales we celebrate the 39<sup>th</sup> World Day of Prayer for Peace on Sunday, 15 January, 2006. Pope Benedict has asked us to take as our theme the words, *"In Truth is Peace"*. Maybe the phrase seems a little opaque at first. In Truth is Peace? What does that mean? However, a little bit of unpacking makes the meaning plain enough. Perhaps we might say instead, *"Without respect for truth there can be no peace,"* or maybe, *"Peace needs honesty for its foundations,"* or, *"Peace and deceit won't mix."*

Those are things we know intuitively, from experience. When there's been a row we know that we can't sort things out unless people are willing to be honest about what's happened. We know we can't move forward while people are in denial or covering up the reality of the situation. We know that we can't build friendship on lies.

Apply that lesson to the wounds of history, to the relations between ethnic groups, or religions, or nations, that have been soured by mistrust and misdeeds down the ages. How can we move forward as a global community - as the peoples of western Europe have moved forward in the last century - to the point where war seems unimaginable, an impossibility?

As Christians the most fundamental truth that we must voice if we would build a world at peace is that all people are our brothers and sisters, children of God. *That* must be the starting point, and not the assumption that they are by their very existence a threat, rivals, potential enemies. It is a truth that we must learn again and again, and teach each other again and again, whenever the voices of prejudice re-emerge in ourselves and in others.

Secondly, we must be truthful about the way the world is. There is a welter of terms we use which are designed to hide the reality of things. Can we talk of credit when we mean debt? Can we talk of free trade when we mean un-fair trade? Can we talk of defence when we mean the sustained threat of massive lethal violence? Can we talk of peace when we mean a trillion dollars a year being spent on armaments? Can we talk of an ethical foreign policy when Britain is consistently one of the top five arms-exporting countries in the world, selling weapons to the very areas of the world most threatened by civil strife or regional conflict - North Africa, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and so on. Peace requires the honesty to call things by their proper names and to acknowledge our complicity in the discord of our world.

Thirdly, we must bear true witness to the possibility of peace, the promise which is at the heart of the Gospel. *“Glory to God in the highest”* demands *“Peace for God’s people on earth”*. Christ, born of Mary, the poor man of Nazareth, God’s only-begotten Son, has broken the cycle of vengeance and retaliation. He refused to hate his tormentors. He gave his life as an offering to God and by his love he bought our peace. We should not be despondent. Peace is possible. Christ has made it so. That is the truth we proclaim, and in that truth we shall find peace.

*Fr Rob Esdaile*

## Text for a parish notice or newsletter

*The following text could be placed in the parish newsletter or read out on 8<sup>th</sup> January in order to prepare the parish community for Peace Sunday, or used on the day itself.*

Next (This) Sunday is Peace Sunday when every parish is encouraged to celebrate and reflect on the Pope’s World Peace Day message. At the request of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, **Pax Christi**, the international Catholic Movement for Peace, has produced prayers and resources to help us reflect on the theme and on its work.

**Pax Christi** works with others to respond to the teaching of Jesus about peace, and to help create a world where people can live in peace without fear of violence in all its forms. It is involved in education and campaigning on issues such as the arms trade, the Middle East, and supports programmes that develop education for peace and seek alternatives to violence.

To join **Pax Christi**, or to find out more about its 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 [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk)

## Useful contacts

**CAFOD**, Romero Close, Stockwell Road, London SW9 9TY [www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)

**CARJ, Catholic Association for Racial Justice**, 9 Henry Road, London N4 2LH [www.carj.co.uk](http://www.carj.co.uk)

**Churches Together in Britain and Ireland** (for material on Christian Unity Week) [www.ctbi.org.uk](http://www.ctbi.org.uk)

**CIIR, Catholic Institute for International Relations**,  
Unit 3, Canonbury Yard, 190a New North Road, London N1 7BJ [www.ciir.org](http://www.ciir.org)

**Committee for International Justice and Peace**,  
Catholic Bishops’ Conference for England and Wales,  
39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX [www.catholic-ew.org.uk/international.index.htm](http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/international.index.htm)

**Holy See**, Vatican website [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

**Jesuit Refugee Service**, 6 Melior Street, London SE1 3QP [www.jesuit.org/refugee](http://www.jesuit.org/refugee)

**National Justice and Peace Network**,  
39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX [www.justice-and-peace.org.uk](http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk)

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