

Peace in our Hearts and in our World

REFLECTION ONE



At the beginning of this New Year, 2017, let us take time to still our hearts in prayer, trusting in our loving God who has promised to be with us always.

So often, our world seems on the brink of disaster, with wars, racial hatred, terror attacks, consumerism, natural calamities, and the list goes on.... It is easy to lose hope Yet the words of Jesus echo in our hearts. "I am with you always until the end of this world."

(Matthew 28:20)

When we feel overwhelmed by the violence, and 'bad news' in our world, the words of Robert Kennedy take on new significance; "It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, they send forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance." (Robert F. Kennedy South Africa, 1966)

Those tiny ripples of hope and peace are so much needed in our own lives and in our world!

Pope Francis in his message for the celebration of the 50th Day of World Peace, January 1, 2017 encouraged us with these words: “All of us want peace. Many people build it day by day through small gestures and acts; many of them are suffering, yet patiently persevere in their efforts to be peacemakers.”[24]

He continued: “In 2017, may we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words and deeds, and to becoming nonviolent people and to building nonviolent communities that care for our common home. Nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer. Everyone can be an artisan of peace.”[25]

Pope Francis reminds us of the words of Saint Francis of Assisi: “As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that you have greater peace in your hearts.”[3]

Let us take time this month then, to pray for peace- peace in our hearts and peace in our world.

“May God bless you and keep you;
May God’s face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
May God’s face be turned toward you
and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24–26)

REFLECTION TWO

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Pope Francis in his New Year call for Peace, 2017, said: “Far too much blood has been spilled. It is time for weapons to be stilled forever, and the international community to actively seek a negotiated solution so that civil coexistence can be restored in the country.”

At the same time, Francis said that in the world “there is *too much* violence, *too much* injustice, and therefore that this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with *more* love, with *more* goodness. This ‘*more*’ comes from God”.^[4]

Knowing, then, that we can’t do this alone, we pray for God’s help.

Let us reflect of these words, opening our hands and our hearts to hear anew these words of St Paul. “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace...” (Colossians 3:15)

Jesus assures us of his gift of peace: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. “

(John 14:27) These words are ones we have heard many times, but in the midst of discouragement, and dark days, they are ones we need to ponder with faith.

Catherine McAuley spoke of this peace “If you preserve the peace and union which have never yet been violated among us, you will feel, even in this world, a happiness that will surprise you and be to you a foretaste of the bliss prepared for every one of you in heaven. (Quoted in A. Carroll, ‘The Life of Catherine McAuley’, p. 435)

Etty Hillesum a young Jewish woman who lived in Nazi occupied Amsterdam in the early 1940s and died at Auschwitz in 1943, spoke from the heart when she said: “Ultimately, we have just one moral duty: to reclaim large areas of peace in ourselves, more and more peace, and to reflect it towards others. And the more peace there is in us, the more peace there will also be in our troubled world.” (Etty Hillesum, ‘An Interrupted Life’)

Let us take time to reflect on the 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 again to eternal life.”*