

ACSJC Discussion Guide: World Day of Peace Message 2005

On the 1st of January each year the Holy Father delivers a message for the World Day of Prayer for Peace.

This event was first celebrated by Pope Paul VI in 1968, when he outlined his intention to mark the beginning of each year by delivering a message of peace that would be a source of hope to Christians and all people of the world.

The theme used by Pope John Paul II for this year's message is ***Do not be Overcome by Evil but Overcome Evil with Good.***

This Discussion Guide provides a brief summary of the message, a reflection, some questions for consideration or discussion, and additional resources.



The full text of the World Day of Peace Message can be found on the Vatican's website: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/index.htm

2005 WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE

“Do not be Overcome by Evil but Overcome Evil with Good”

Pope John Paul II has called on the leaders of nations, the faithful and all people of good will to preserve peace, work for justice and kindle charity.

He uses the words of St Paul (Rom 12:21) for the title of his message. These words help us to think about the conditions needed to bring peace to our world.

All people have a right to enjoy a peaceful existence. Along with this right, we all have a responsibility to foster peace through actions and decisions that are inspired by good.

Evil, good and love

Evil is not some impersonal force that is outside human control – it is the result of our free will. Our choices have a moral dimension that involves individual responsibilities and concerns our relationship with God, others and all of creation. At a basic level, the choice for evil is a rejection of the demands of love. A choice for good is derived from and directed towards love.

Jesus' great commandment of love for God and neighbour is central to the work for peace in our world. Its demand is far reaching – “the inner logic of Christian love, which in the Gospel is the living source of moral goodness, leads even to the love of one's enemies”.

The universal moral law

There are many social and political manifestations of evil in our world. Pope John Paul II highlights outbreaks of violence in Africa, Palestine, Iraq and the experience of many communities living in fear of terrorism.

Violence is an unacceptable evil that never solves problems. Peace will not be attained through violence.

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. (n.4)

The Pope calls for an ever greater commitment to ensure respect for the lives of individuals and entire peoples. He calls for a great effort to form consciences and to educate the young in these common moral values. These values are essential if we are to ensure “a social, economic and political order respectful of the dignity, freedom and fundamental rights of each person”.

The good of peace and the common good

Fostering peace requires careful reflection on the common good – “When the common good is promoted at every level, peace is promoted”. Every person is called to show concern for the wellbeing of others in all aspects of life.

Political authorities around the world have a responsibility to create the conditions needed for the safety and development of individuals, families and communities. And all nations have a responsibility to contribute to the common good of all peoples of the world. The closer relationship of nations resulting from globalisation calls for “true international cooperation” with the contribution of every nation for the good of humanity as a whole.

This common good is about more than people's social and economic wellbeing. At a deeper level it is about the human dignity and respect that is owing to all people by virtue of their creation and destiny in God.

The good of peace and the use of the world's goods

The work for peace cannot be separated from the development of people. This requires the fair distribution of the goods of the earth and the protection of human rights.

By the mere fact of being conceived, a child is entitled to rights and deserving of care and attention; and someone has the duty to provide these. The condemnation of racism, the protection of minors, the provision of aid to displaced persons and refugees, and the mobilization of international solidarity towards all the needy are nothing other than consistent applications of the principle of world citizenship. (n.6)

The extreme poverty afflicting millions around the world is a grave obstacle to peace that must be resolved through international solidarity.

The Pope focuses on three commitments of international solidarity that are essential to addressing world poverty:

- the renewed commitment of the world community meeting the 'Millennium Development Goals' to halve the level of extreme poverty and hunger in developing countries by 2015.
- progress in the reduction of the foreign debt of poor countries that will free people from the vicious circle of low income, weak investment and inadequate growth.
- the commitment of adequate levels of international aid which is vital as a means of enabling States to deal with the grave problem of poverty.

The Pope calls for "moral and economic mobilization" and a "new impulse" in addressing global poverty and fostering social and economic development that assists developing countries to be in control of their own future.

Following the disastrous impact of the Indian Ocean tsunami, which occurred after the 2005 Peace Message was released in December, the Holy Father has prayed on many occasions for the victims of this tragedy. He has noted the importance of "solidarity efforts that are developing in every part of the world" to assist the people of the countries that have been affected.

The generosity of so many countries and their citizens in responding to this tragedy is a good example of the "moral and economic mobilization" the Pope refers to.

The universality of evil and Christian hope

In the face of many world tragedies and despite the personal and social sins that are always a feature of human activity our hope renews our commitment to justice and peace.

For Christians, the hope for a better world finds its strength in the saving power of Christ who redeemed all of humanity through his death and resurrection.

Everybody has a part to play in overcoming evil and bringing about good in the world. The expression of neighbourly love in all aspects of our lives is a great force for peace. So is the operation of social and political structures that are guided by charity. The Pope says, "When good overcomes evil, love prevails and where love prevails, there peace prevails".

The Eucharist is the "wellspring of all communion" – with Christ and with every human being. The message concludes with a call to all Catholics during this year dedicated to the Eucharist. We are called to recognise that despite every difference of human existence, "we are 'God's family' and that together we can make our own effective contribution to building a world based on the values of justice, freedom and peace".

Questions for Discussion

The Universal moral law unites all people and requires an ever-increasing commitment to ensuring people's lives are respected and improved. The peace message identifies many actions that embody human solidarity and the duty to promote and safeguard human rights. The overwhelming generosity of people responding to the need of victims of the current tsunami crisis is another good example. What other activities can we undertake in our daily lives that foster human dignity and wellbeing?

Are there individuals or groups in our community who experience alienation, disadvantage, poverty or violence? Are there examples of how the local community has reached out to assist those in need? How can we be a voice for those who have no voice?

The Pope calls for a great effort to form consciences and educate future generations in the principles which promote and defend the human dignity, freedom and fundamental rights of each person. How can we promote these principles in our nation's social, economic and political life?

During a year that is dedicated to the *Eucharist*, we are mindful that our hope for peace in the world finds its strength in the saving power of Christ and in our communion as members of the worshipping community. Are there particular activities or events our parish community can undertake to celebrate or promote the solidarity of the human family - with those in need, with other churches and faiths, with Indigenous communities and culturally diverse groups?

Associated Resources

The Australian Catholic Bishops' 2004 Social Justice Sunday Statement, ***Cultivating a Culture of Peace***, addresses a diverse range of topics relating to the work for peace in the Australian context. Access the Statement at: <http://www.acsjc.org.au/index.shtml>

In 2000, the international community committed itself to UN **Millennium Development Goals** that would halve extreme poverty by 2015. More information can be found at: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> and <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/html/about.shtm>

Jubilee Australia coordinates the 'drop the debt' campaign which highlights the impact of unserviceable debt on many countries already enduring great poverty. For useful information, visit: <http://www.jubileeaustralia.org/>

Latest information on **Caritas Australia's Asia Earthquake Appeal** for the countries affected by the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami can be found at: <http://www.caritas.org.au/emergencies/earthquake.htm>

Current and previous **papal messages for the annual World Day of Prayer for Peace** can be found at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/index.htm and http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/messages/peace/index.htm

Reflection

Peace can only be achieved through goodness, not through evil. Violence is an evil and will never result in true peace:

Violence is an unacceptable evil and ... it never solves problems. (n.4)

Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings. (n.4)

The choices we make in our daily life can work towards peace within ourselves, one another and our world:

Each of these choices has an intrinsic moral dimension, involving specific individual responsibilities and the fundamental relationship of each person with God, with others and with all of creation. (n.2)

This is the foundation for a social, economic and political order respectful of the dignity, freedom and fundamental rights of each person. (n.4)

If we are seeking true peace and making good choices, we will be both conscious of and respectful of the dignity and well-being of others.

Each person, in some way, is called to work for the common good, constantly looking out for the good of others as if it were his own. (n.5)

Our efforts for peace will always be supported by our prayer and our Christian hope and love. God alone can enable individuals and peoples to overcome evil and achieve good. (n.11)

They should show by their lives that love is the only force capable of bringing fulfilment to persons and societies, the only force capable of directing the course of history in the way of goodness and peace. (n.12)

Prayer for Peace

Almighty God,
the source of our good.
You call us from oppression and conflict
to freedom and cooperation for the good of all.
help people everywhere to build a world of peace
ever more solidly established on the four pillars:
truth, justice, love and freedom.

Pope John Paul II, *Pacem in Terris: A Permanent Commitment*,
Message for World Peace Day 2003

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) was set up by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference (ACBC) in 1987 as the national justice and peace agency of the Catholic Church in Australia. The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference mandates the ACSJC to promote research, education, advocacy and action on social justice, peace and human rights, integrating them deeply into the life of the whole Catholic community in Australia, and providing a credible Catholic voice on these matters in Australian society. In this way the ACSJC seeks to bring good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed. The ACSJC is accountable to the ACBC through the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development Ecology and Peace.

building
social justice networks

researching
policy

educating
on issues

presenting
Catholic Social teaching

promoting
a spirituality of
justice

advocating
change

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ACSJC

Phone 02 9956 5811

Fax 02 9954 0056

Email admin@acsjc.org.au

Website www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

19 MacKenzie Street North Sydney NSW 2060 Australia

