

Tuesday Reflection 21st October 2021

Today is International Peace Day. It marks the beginning of the Catholic Non-violence Days of Action, which end on 2nd October, the International Day of Non-violence and Gandhi's birthday. These set time aside for us to reflect, pray and act for peace and nonviolence, and remind us that peace is an active virtue which reaches far beyond the absence of conflict.

How appropriate then that two recent Mass Readings - the Second Reading last Sunday and the First Reading today - have peace as their theme.

In Sunday's reading, the Letter of St James contrasts the disharmony and evil that arise from jealousy and ambition with the peace gifted by divine wisdom. It continues: "Peace is the seed-ground of holiness, and those who make peace will win its harvest" (James 3:18).

Today's reading from Ephesians enjoins us to:

"Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together." (Ephesians 4:2-3).

Both readings emphasise the importance of inner peace and harmony as the "seed-ground of holiness" and both stress the role of peace for binding us together in community.

Jesus teaches that peacemakers are blessed, "for they shall be called the sons and daughters of God" (Matthew 5:9).

So how do I become a peacemaker? These are suggestions from Pax Christi, and they require us to work on ourselves:

- By striving for peace within myself and seeking to be a peacemaker in my daily life;
- By refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence (perhaps by 'turning the other cheek');
- By living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others (and not just my fellow-humans) of the means to live;
- By actively resisting evil (for example by speaking out against racism and discrimination of all kinds) and working nonviolently to eradicate violence and the causes of violence from my own heart and from the face of the earth.

At the present time the need for peace appears greater than ever. The important lesson is that peace has to start from our own hearts. Some 6000 years ago, it was articulated by the Chinese sage Lao-Tzu:

If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations,
There must be peace in the cities.
If there is to be peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbours.
If there is to be peace between neighbours,
There must be peace in the home.
If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart.

Michael Townson