



International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Shalom

Peace and Non-violence

November 2021

Introduction

The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor reaches God's heart and breaks open our hearts, challenging us to say "no" to violence that plagues our world and "yes" to human dignity and respect for the integrity of creation. We ought to confront our silence, complicity and indifference with a zeal for peace and nonviolence. *"All of you, hear the humble appeal of the Successor of Peter who cries out: today too... peace remains possible. And if peace is possible, it is also a duty!"* (Pope St. John Paul II, XXXVI [World Day of Peace in 2004](#), "Teaching Peace"). With Pope Francis' blessing, *"To all I offer my best wishes that the coming year will enable humanity to advance on the path of fraternity, justice and peace between individuals, communities, peoples and nations."* ([World Peace Day 2021](#)), we go forth into the heart of the world as women and men of hope, peace and love.

Call to Prayer

Let us ask the Lord that each creature living on earth may experience peace in our common home as a *oikos* where:

- Peace is a house where laughter is heard.
- Peace is the forgiveness of sin.
- Peace is the healing of the soul.
- Peace is a wall that can be broken down.
- Peace is the embrace of strangers' hands.
- Peace is extinguishing of a flame just in time.
- Peace is to fly through the skies.
- Peace is to become part of the world.

(cf. Piotr Rubik's song, [Litany of the Four Seasons](#))

Experience

There are more than 200 countries in the world and several times as many ethnic, national and tribal groups with their own interests and goals, which can be common or divergent. If there is a divergence of interests and goals, conflicts can occur. Usually conflicts are complex and there are many causes of conflict economic, political or ideological factors. Economic factors may include access to natural resources oil and water. Ideological factors are root in past conflicts such as the Cold War. An example of the religious factor can be found in the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. Additionally conflicts can arise from external interference, armaments, or the aspirations of regional powers for domination, dispute for control of natural resources, economic power, political interest, terrorism, and religious fanaticism.

Unfortunately, all conflicts have their consequences, such as population losses, uncontrolled migration, excessive armament, child soldiers, economic collapse, a growing wave of refugees and social pathologies (e.g. drug addiction and aggression which in many cases lead to broken homes/families) (Source: Educational platform of the [Ministry of Education and Science](#).)

Some broken homes may not be as fortunate in resolving their conflicts as is the case with a family in one of the parishes where we SSND serve that had a difficult experience. After being together with his wife for over 20 years, the husband decided to leave his family. The wife and children behaved admirably in this situation. They forgave and gave the father freedom of choice. They prayed and received the sacraments. They also asked others to pray for them. Continually they showed love and respect to the husband and father. The struggle lasted several months. A miracle happened! The husband refrained from leaving, apologized to his wife and children, and returned to a sacramental life. The most important value for this family today is God and the preservation of marital unity.

1. What has been my experience and learning about peace and nonviolence?
2. Read “Educating for the alliance between humanity and the environment” in [LS, 209-211](#) and dialogue about: What “solid virtues” are we developing in ourselves in caring for all creatures in our common home?
3. What can we do to educate and advocate for “ecological citizenship” ([LS, 211](#))?

Reflection

We may feel helpless in the face of this reality. However, it is important to consider how we can build peace in our surroundings, how to shape the attitude of our hearts? St. John Paul II explained: *“For this reason I have often reminded Christians and all persons of good will that forgiveness is needed for solving the problems of individuals and peoples. There is no peace without forgiveness!”* [Pope John Paul II World Day of Peace 2004](#)

Our Constitution and General Directory remind us:

“We are called to acknowledge our contribution to injustices in the world, particularly those stemming from unrestrained desire for power, prestige, and possessions. God’s grace enables us to counteract these tendencies and foster within ourselves and in society an attitude of humility and sharing in order to bring about a more just and humane world.” (YAS, GD 22)

“In our attitude of listening and openness we follow Mary. She pondered the word received...” (YAS, C 32)

Action

- How do I react to evil in the world, in the community, in myself?
- In what ways am I a person capable of dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution?
- How do I listen and be open to the “otherness” of the people I meet every day?
- Do I build peace around me or rather destroy it?
- What can I do concretely for peace where I am? (Prayer, forgiveness, making a phone call, a smile, a small act of kindness...)

Closing Prayer

Create in us, O LORD, a pure heart and grant us the fullness of life in love, in the mutual kindness and mercy that we experience from you. May our mercy embrace even our enemies, for they are also your children and our brothers and sisters. May your kingdom of love and communion embrace us all. Amen.

An excerpt from the [Prayer of Forgiveness](#)