

## Advent Considerations

As we journey through Advent, we will once again be invited through the readings of our Sacred Scripture to look at the virtues of peace, justice, mercy, reconciliation. I invite us to hold those virtues in our hearts as we prepare for Pope Francis' World Day of Peace message for January, 1, 2019. And I encourage us to prepare for this journey with a look back on a few momentous ones:

### **The initial one - 1968 by Pope Paul VI**

"...during the latest years of our century's history it has finally become clearly evident that Peace is the only true direction of human progress - and not the tensions caused by ambitious nationalisms, nor conquests by violence, nor repressions which serve as mainstay for a false civil order - We do so because Peace is part and parcel of the Christian religion, since for a Christian to proclaim peace is the same as to announce Jesus Christ: "He is our peace" (Eph. ii. 14) and His good news is "the Gospel of peace" (Eph. vi. 15)...Let, then, the grand idea of Peace, particularly for us, the disciples of Christ, have its solemn Day, the beginning of the new year 1968."

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_mes\\_19671208\\_i-world-day-for-peace.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_p-vi_mes_19671208_i-world-day-for-peace.html)

### **Pope Paul VI - 1972 "If you want peace, work for justice."**

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_mes\\_19711208\\_v-world-day-for-peace.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_p-vi_mes_19711208_v-world-day-for-peace.html)

### **Pope Benedict in 2010**

IF YOU WANT TO CULTIVATE PEACE, PROTECT CREATION "Man's inhumanity to man has given rise to numerous threats to peace and to authentic and integral human development – wars, international and regional conflicts, acts of terrorism, and violations of human rights. Yet no less troubling are the threats arising from the neglect – if not downright misuse – of the earth and the natural goods that God has given us. For this reason, it is imperative that mankind renew and strengthen "that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying..."

Twenty years ago, Pope John Paul II devoted his Message for the World Day of Peace to the theme: Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation. He emphasized our relationship, as God's creatures, with the universe all around us. "In our day", he wrote, "there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened ... also by a lack of due respect for nature". He added that "ecological awareness, rather than being downplayed, needs to be helped to develop and mature, and find fitting expression in concrete programs and initiatives". [5] Previous Popes had spoken of the relationship between human beings and the environment. In 1971, for example, on the eightieth anniversary of Leo XIII's Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Paul VI pointed out that "by an ill-considered exploitation of nature (man) risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation". He added that "not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace – pollution and refuse, new illnesses and absolute destructive capacity – but the human framework is no longer under man's control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable. This is a wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family"...

To be sure, among the basic problems which the international community has to address is that of energy resources and the development of joint and sustainable strategies to satisfy the energy needs of the present and future generations. This means that technologically advanced societies must be prepared to encourage more sober lifestyles, while reducing their energy consumption and improving its efficiency. At the same time there is a need to encourage research into, and utilization of, forms of energy with lower impact on the environment and “a world-wide redistribution of energy resources, so that countries lacking those resources can have access to them”.[20] The ecological crisis offers an historic opportunity to develop a common plan of action aimed at orienting the model of global development towards greater respect for creation and for an integral human development inspired by the values proper to charity in truth. I would advocate the adoption of a model of development based on the centrality of the human person, on the promotion and sharing of the common good, on responsibility, on a realization of our need for a changed life-style, and on prudence, the virtue which tells us what needs to be done today in view of what might happen tomorrow.”

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20091208\\_xliii-world-day-peace.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace.html)

**Pope Francis 2017 "Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace"**

"This is the fiftieth Message for the World Day of Peace. In the first, Blessed Pope Paul VI addressed all peoples, not simply Catholics, with utter clarity. "Peace is the only true direction of human progress – and not the tensions caused by ambitious nationalisms, nor conquests by violence, nor repressions which serve as mainstay for a false civil order" ... While the last century knew the devastation of two deadly World Wars, the threat of nuclear war and a great number of other conflicts, today, sadly, we find ourselves engaged in a horrifying world war fought piecemeal. It is not easy to know if our world is presently more or less violent than in the past, or to know whether modern means of communications and greater mobility have made us more aware of violence, or, on the other hand, increasingly inured to it.

In any case, we know that this "piecemeal" violence, of different kinds and levels, causes great suffering: wars in different countries and continents; terrorism, organized crime and unforeseen acts of violence; the abuses suffered by migrants and victims of human trafficking; and the devastation of the environment. Where does this lead? Can violence achieve any goal of lasting value? Or does it merely lead to retaliation and a cycle of deadly conflicts that benefit only a few "warlords"?

Violence is not the cure for our broken world. Countering violence with violence leads at best to forced migrations and enormous suffering, because vast amounts of resources are diverted to military ends and away from the everyday needs of young people, families experiencing hardship, the elderly, the infirm and the great majority of people in our world. At worst, it can lead to the death, physical and spiritual, of many people, if not of all...Nonviolence is sometimes taken to mean surrender, lack of involvement and passivity, but this is not the case. When Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, she clearly stated her own message of active nonviolence: "We in our family don't need bombs and guns, to destroy to bring peace – just get together, love one another... And we will be able to overcome all the evil that is in the world".[7] For the force of arms is deceptive. "While weapons traffickers do their work, there are poor peacemakers who give their lives to help one person, then another and another and another"; for such peacemakers, Mother Teresa is "a symbol, an icon of our times" ... This is also a program and a challenge for political and religious leaders, the heads of international institutions, and business and media executives: to apply the Beatitudes in the exercise of their respective responsibilities. It is a challenge to build up society, communities and businesses by acting as peacemakers. It is to show mercy by refusing to discard people, harm the environment, or seek

to win at any cost. To do so requires “the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process”.[20] To act in this way means to choose solidarity as a way of making history and building friendship in society. Active nonviolence is a way of showing that unity is truly more powerful and more fruitful than conflict. Everything in the world is inter-connected.[21] Certainly differences can cause frictions. But let us face them constructively and non-violently, so that “tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity,” preserving “what is valid and useful on both sides”.[22] “I pledge the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence.”

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20161208\\_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20161208_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html)

Linked with Francis' June 2017 prayer intention - very powerful 90 second prayer:

Pope Francis' prayer intentions for June 2017: Eliminate arms trade:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUtxTvdSF\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUtxTvdSF_4)

Look for the 2019 World Day of Peace message to be out on December 8th, the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception. **Get it into your Sunday Bulletin for all our worshiping communities to read, discern, act!**

Prayerfully consider supporting the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative: <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/>

Blessed Advent journey!

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