

Encouragement Encouragement

January 2017 – Issue 66

Seeking Peace...

Shalom – yes, a peaceful new year to all. Jesus says “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) Later He asks the apostles to have courage, and that they would have troubles, but He has overcome the world. During Advent and Christmastide the word Peace is echoed in cards, in greetings that we give each other and final blessings. To many it can simply be a pleasant way of wishing someone well and hoping all goes well for them. But to others, Peace means an absence of war and strife. To others the word has an even deeper meaning, and that is ‘a world’ in which all can live in equilibrium, safe with shared resources and in a world that is just to all.

In our times, as in many before we try to resolve conflict between nations and within groups of people so that relationships may blossom without fear or enmity. We certainly live at a time when conflicts affect many people and is destructive and very difficult to resolve. Peace thus seems elusive and any attempt to bring resolution is thwarted by the desire for wealth, power, personal interest and divided ones at that.

Why then, do we reject Peace yet seemingly try to embrace it in sentiments and greetings. There are many illustrations of the thoughts on Peace and there are literally thousands of attempts to define it and encourage others to pursue it. Jesus made it a blessing and held it in great esteem when teaching us how to live. He said ‘Blessed are the Peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God’. Those who try to encourage Peace become His family, His children. This is a wonderful way of expressing the unity that Peacekeeping brings, for it unites and does not divide, it brings people together. As God’s children we are His treasured possession and at play at His feet – children who do not rival each other, put trust first in His Fatherhood and care over them. The need for strife is removed because the Peace that is

instilled reflects His love for His children and spills over in the love of each other.

That Peace is not just an absence of something but total and complete trust in the God who made us for love of Him and each other.

It leads those who seek it into an ever greater relationship with the Father of All Mankind, the Son who Redeemed and Saved us, and the Spirit that enlightens each and every one to understand the nature of *peace-filled hearts* for whom conflict, injustice becomes contrary to the call of being a member of God’s Family.

True Peace enables us to proceed through the many storms of life with lightness of spirit, knowing who is in charge of all that happens, and that He has ‘overcome the world’ and that whatever befalls nothing can destroy that interior predisposition of a quiet and silent heart.

We all know when someone has that interior Peace and somehow we love being with them. It does not mean that all is easy for them, or that they do not have to seek it in prayer, often by letting go of those things that might disrupt that Peace – but yet they stand back from all that would disturb. As St. Teresa of Avila said: “Let nothing frighten you – all things are passing away – God never changes – patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing, God alone suffices.”

Clearly there are things that can make holding this Peace difficult. If you see people killed, children suffer, the world in turmoil, problems in families, poverty – all make it difficult to keep that very special Peace. We are therefore encouraged to do what we can to remove all that would be an obstacle to Peace. We are therefore duty-bound to **work** for Peace. There are many ways in which this can be achieved and sought. There are many organisations that promote this activity of Justice and Peace, all of which play their part in establishing the Kingdom of God.

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Lord, make me a channel of Your Peace



Many have paid the price of working for Peace. There have been those who refused to take up arms in unjust conflicts. Those who gave their lives for others so that Peace could be maintained and those who conscientiously promote the good of others in service. They are all Peacemakers, those who stand up for the rights of others irrespective of the consequences to themselves and in a peaceful manner. Once asked why she would not support an anti-war rally, or disarmament, Mother Teresa simply said "If there is a rally to promote Peace I will be the first to join..." It is not possible to seek true justice with an angry and unforgiving heart, not filled with God's Peace.

In the last sixty years and certainly since the last world war in the forties, there have been many movements that have worked for Peace... Pax Christi, Church in Need, various Civil Rights Movements that have worked for reform by peaceful means. Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker Movement was applauded by both Pope Francis and Pope Benedict. Saint John XXIII said this of Peace that "True solid peace of nations cannot be found in equality of arms but in mutual trust alone". Pope Paul VI said "If you want Peace work for Justice" and Saint John Paul II added "Do not be afraid to take a chance on Peace, to teach Peace, to live Peace. Peace will be the last word in history".

All three reflect the influence of the Holy Spirit in our time, to lead people to strive for all types of Peace starting from within themselves. As Saint Francis said, we should all be instruments of Peace. Surely a good aspiration for a new year?

A Bishop who worked for Peace and died because of his stand said this:

"Peace is not a product of terror or fear
 Peace is not the silence of cemeteries
 Peace is not the silent revolt of violent repression
 Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all
 Peace is dynamism and it is a duty.

Bl. Bishop Oscar Romero (1917-80)

So, as this New Year starts a good resolution would be to become a peace-filled person, and resolve to establish peace around you in whatever situation you find yourself in...

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This may require a deal of self-control and self-sacrifice. It may take you out of your 'comfort zone' or it may simply make you more prayer-filled and reliant on God and grace-filled.

Amazing things can be done by Peace-filled means – try it?
 Halina Holman

Pope Francis

"God is not indifferent! God cares about Mankind! God does not abandon us! At the beginning of the new year, I would like to share not only this profound conviction but also my cordial good wishes for prosperity, peace and the fulfilment of the hopes of every man and every woman, every family, people and nation throughout the world including all Heads of State and Governments and all Religious Leaders. We continue to trust that we will see us all firmly and confidently engaged on different levels in the pursuit of justice and peace. Peace is both God's gift and a human achievement. As a Gift of God it is entrusted to all men and women who are called to attain."

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In our joy, we think we hear a whisper.
 At first it is too soft. Then only half heard.
 We listen carefully as it gathers strength.
 We hear a sweetness.
 The word is Peace.
 It is loud now,
 Louder than the explosion of bombs.
 We tremble at the sound.
 We are thrilled by its presence.
 It is what we have hungered for.
 Not just the absence of war. But true Peace.
 A harmony of spirit, and comfort of courtesies.
 Security for our beloveds and their beloveds.
 We, Angels and Mortals, Believers and Nonbelievers,
 Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.
 Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves,
 And we say without shyness or apology or
 hesitation:
 Peace, My Brother.
 Peace, My Sister.
 Peace, My Soul.

Amazing Peace, Maya Angelou

Feasts in January

1st Mary the Mother of God

6th (8th) Epiphany of the Lord (Holy D. Obl.)

9th Baptism of the Lord

11th St. Aelred, 21st St. Agnes

24th St. Francis de Sales

25th Conversion of St. Paul

26th Ss. Timothy and Titus

27th St. Angela Merici

28th St. Thomas Aquinas

31st St. John Bosco