# Opening Prayer Service

## Gather

God of justice and peace, we see conflict, violence, and war in our world. We pray that you will hasten the day when swords are beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, when people will learn war no more. We come to you for the strength and courage to be peacemakers in our homes, our communities, and our world. We put our trust in you, the source of true peace, and ask that you hear our prayer and give us peace in our time.

## Listen

Micah 4:1-4 OR Isaiah 2:1-5 OR Isaiah 11:1-10

## Respond

Lord, so many people are in pain . . .

**Response: Teach us the way to peace.**

When people around us don’t agree and think differently . . .

**Response: Lord, teach us to listen and understand.**

When we see people getting hurt . . .

**Response: Lord, teach us to speak up.**

When we see people who are hungry and poor . . .

**Response: Lord, teach us to give to them like you give to us.**

When we see people treated poorly because of their skin color or language . . .

**Response: Lord, teach us to be an example of love.**

When we see war and conflict around the world . . .

**Response: Lord, teach us how to make a difference and bring peace.**

When we see pain . . .

**Response: Lord, teach us to bring healing.**

When we feel down and things don’t seem to be going well . . .

**Response: Lord, teach us to talk to our friends, our family, and to you.**

When we stop and see all you have given us . . .

**Response: Lord, teach us to be thankful.**

In our lives, our neighborhoods and the world . . .

**Response: Lord, teach us to pray and teach us the way to peace.**

Lord Jesus Christ, make us ambassadors for peace in all we do each day. Teach us to model peace in our homes, in our community, and in our church. Help us to express your way of peace with strength and conviction. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## Go Forth

Lord make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred,  
Let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled  
As to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

As Jesus welcome his friends with a sign of peace, let us now give each other a sign of peace.

# Handout #2.

# A World in Need of Peace

Think for a moment about all the things that work against peace at home, school, and work, such as meanness, hatred, disrespect, fighting, hateful words. Think about things that work against peace in the community, nation, and world, such as people attacking other people, war, unfair trade practices, global warming.

Write your group’s ideas below.

Create a poster of the situations in family life, school, community, nation, and world that are in need of peace. At the top of the newsprint write: “A World in Need of Peace.” Write the items on newsprint. For families with children: illustrate each item with a picture from a magazine or a drawing by the children. Write your family name on the poster.

Think about the images of conflict, violence, and war that people experience through news reports, television shows, movies, magazines, video games, YouTube channels. What messages about violence do you receive through the media?

* The message about violence in television shows . . .
* The message about violence in movies . . .
* The message about violence in ads/commercials . . .
* The message about violence in television news reports . . .
* The message about violence in magazines and newspapers . . .
* The message about violence in video games and other forms of entertainment . . .
* The message about violence on YouTube . . .
* The message about violence on Facebook, Instagram, or other social media platforms . . .

Discuss your reactions to the message about violence in the media:

* How do the messages about violence make you feel?
* How do the messages influence and shape your perspective on the world?
* Do you think there is too much violence in media? Why? Why not?
* Do you think people can become desensitized to violence (i.e., the images of violence become too familiar to us)? Why? Why not?

# Handout #3a.

# Why Is There Violence in Our World?

“Peace is a precious gift, which must be promoted and protected…Never has the use of violence brought peace in its wake. War begets war, violence begets violence.” (Pope Francis)

Identify three situations of violence—psychological or physical—which the children in your family have seen, read about, or experienced.

Determine the causes of violence using the list of possibilities and adding your own reasons. Be sure to check the posters, “Messages of Violence,” for ideas. If you use items from the list of causes, just indicate their number under the situation of violence and then add your own ideas.

To determine the causes of violence in a situation ask yourself: Why is this happening? What contributes to the situation?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Situations of Violence**  Situation 1.  Causes:  Situation 2.  Causes:  Situation 3.  Causes: | **Potential Causes of Violence**   1. Not listening to each other 2. Not respecting other people 3. Getting angry and hurting other people 4. Not forgiving the other person 5. Not solving our problems peacefully 6. Judging other people unfairly 7. Getting revenge for something someone did to us 8. Hating other people or groups 9. Using guns to solve problems 10. Not respecting human life 11. Seeing too much violence on TV 12. Not knowing the difference between right and wrong 13. Not taking responsibility for one’s actions   Other causes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

# Handout #3b.

# Why Is There Violence in Our World?

“Peace is a precious gift, which must be promoted and protected…Never has the use of violence brought peace in its wake. War begets war, violence begets violence.” (Pope Francis)

Identify three or four situations of violence—psychological or physical—which the children in your family have seen, read about, or experienced. Determine the causes of violence using the list of possibilities and adding your own reasons. Be sure to check the posters, “Messages of Violence,” for ideas. If you use items from the list of causes, just indicate their number under the situation of violence and then add your own ideas. To determine the causes of violence in a situation ask yourself: Why is this happening? What contributes to the situation?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Situations of Violence**  Situation 1.  Causes:  Situation 2.  Causes:  Situation 3.  Causes:  Situation 4.  Causes: | **Potential Causes of Violence**   1. Poor communication 2. Lack of respect for self 3. Lack of respect for people 4. Addiction and self-destructive behaviors 5. Unhealthy ways to express anger 6. Lack of trust 7. Unwillingness to forgive 8. Inability to listen to another person 9. Inability to solve problems peacefully 10. Hatred 11. Prejudice 12. Racism: discrimination based on race or ethnicity 13. Sexism: discrimination based on gender 14. Punishment 15. Revenge 16. Religious hatred 17. To gain an economic advantage 18. To take control of people or countries 19. Struggle for natural resources such as water or oil 20. Corruption by leaders in business or government 21. Unemployment and lack of jobs 22. Poverty and inadequate living conditions 23. Availability and access to weapons 24. Unethical business practices 25. Loss of moral values 26. Lack of respect for human life 27. Diminishing sense of responsibility 28. Media glorification of violence 29. Deterioration of family life 30. Deterioration of neighborhood/community |

# Handout #4 .

# A Culture of Violence

Violence in our culture is fed by multiple forces -- the disintegration of family life, media influences, growing substance abuse, the availability of so many weapons, and the rise of gangs and increasing youth violence. No one response can address these diverse sources. Traditional liberal or conservative approaches cannot effectively confront them. We have to address simultaneously declining family life and the increasing availability of deadly weapons, the lure of gangs and the slavery of addiction, the absence of real opportunity, budget cuts adversely affecting the poor, and the loss of moral values.  
  
Increasingly, our society looks to violent measures to deal with some of our most difficult social problems—millions of abortions to address problem pregnancies, advocacy of euthanasia and assisted suicide to cope with the burdens of age and illness, and increased reliance on the death penalty to deal with crime. We are tragically turning to violence in the search for quick and easy answers to complex human problems. A society which destroys its children, abandons its old and relies on vengeance fails fundamental moral tests. Violence is not the solution; it is the most clear sign of our failures. We are losing our respect for human life. How do we teach the young to curb their violence when we embrace it as the solution to social problems?   
  
We cannot teach that killing is wrong by killing. We have reached the point in one very visible case where a jury has urged the execution of the person who murdered the physician who was destroying unborn children. This cycle of violence diminishes all of us—especially our children. For our part, we oppose both the violence of abortion and the use of violence to oppose abortion. We are clear in our total repudiation of any effort to advocate or carry out murder in the name of the pro-life cause. Such acts cannot be justified. They deny the fundamental value of each human life, and do irreparable harm to genuine pro-life witness. Just as clearly, a nation destroying more than one and a half million unborn children every year contributes to the pervasive culture of violence in our nation. We must affirm and protect all life, especially the most vulnerable in our midst.  
  
Likewise, we cannot ignore the underlying cultural values that help to create the environment where violence grows: a denial of right and wrong, education that ignores fundamental values, an abandonment of personal responsibility, an excessive and selfish focus on our individual desires, a diminishing sense of obligation to our children and neighbors, a misplaced priority on acquisitions, and media glorification of violence and sexual irresponsibility. In short, we often fail to value life and cherish human beings above possessions, power and pleasure.  
  
Less obvious and less visible is the slow motion violence of discrimination and poverty, hunger and hopelessness, addiction and self-destructive behavior. The deterioration of family life and the loss of community leave too many without moral direction and personal roots. Grinding poverty and powerlessness leave too many without a stake in society and a place in our community. Economic, social and moral forces can tear apart communities and families not as quickly, but just as surely, as bullets and knives. Lives sometimes are diminished and threatened not only in the streets of our cities, but also by decisions made in the halls of government, the boardrooms of corporations and the courts of our land. An ethic of respect for life should be a central measure of all our institutions—community, economic, political, and legal.

This growing culture of violence reflected in some aspects of our public life and entertainment media must be confronted. But it is not just our policies and programming that must change; it is our hearts. We must condemn not only the killing, but also the abuse in our homes, the anger in our hearts and the glorification of violence in movies and music. It is time, in the words of Deuteronomy (30:19), to “Choose life so that you and your descendants may live ...” We must join with Pope John Paul II to “proclaim, with all the conviction of my faith in Christ and with an awareness of my mission, that violence is evil, that violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, that violence is unworthy... Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity.”  
  
Around the globe, we are seeing the promises of a new world lost in deadly conflict and renewed war. In Bosnia, Rwanda, Haiti, Sudan and so many other places, the world too often has watched as sisters and brothers were killed because of their religion, race, tribe or political position. The post-Cold War world has become a tumult of savage attacks on the innocent. Unprepared for this disorder and confused about what to do to resolve ancient rivalries, the international community has too often stood by indecisively as hundreds of thousands of men, women and children have been slaughtered and millions more have been maimed, raped and driven from their homes. Peacekeeping and peacemaking are the most urgent priorities for a new world.  
  
Not all violence is deadly. It begins with anger, intolerance, impatience, unfair judgments and aggression. It is often reflected in our language, our entertainment, our driving, our competitive behavior, and the way we treat our environment. These acts and attitudes are not the same as abusive behavior or physical attacks, but they create a climate where violence prospers and peace suffers. We are also experiencing the polarization of public life and militarization of politics with increased reliance on “attack” ads, “war” rooms and intense partisan combat in place of the search for the common good and common ground.  
  
Fundamentally, our society needs a moral revolution to replace a culture of violence with a renewed ethic of justice, responsibility and community. New policies and programs, while necessary, cannot substitute for a recovery of the old values of right and wrong, respect and responsibility, love and justice. God’s wisdom, love and commandments can show us the way to live, heal and reconcile. “Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal” are more than words to be recited; they are imperatives for the common good. Our faith challenges each of us to examine how we can contribute to an ethic which cherishes life, puts people before things, and values kindness and compassion over anger and vengeance. A growing sense of national fear and failure must be replaced by a new commitment to solidarity and the common good.

(Excerpts from: *Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action*. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

# Handout #5.

# The Bible Teaches . . . Peace

## Swords into Ploughshares: Micah 4:1 – 4

In days to come  
   the mountain of the Lord’s house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
   and shall be raised up above the hills.  
Peoples shall stream to it,   
   and many nations shall come and say:  
Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
   to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
   and that we may walk in his paths.  
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
   and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.   
He shall judge between many peoples,  
   and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;  
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
   and their spears into pruning-hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
   neither shall they learn war anymore;   
but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees,  
   and no one shall make them afraid;  
   for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

# Handout #6.

# The Bible Teaches . . . Peace

# Old Testament

### Psalm 29:11

May the Lord give might to his people; may the Lord bless his people with peace!

### Psalm 34:15

Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

### Psalm 37:37

Observe the person of integrity and mark the upright; because there is a future for a man of peace.

### Psalm 119:165

Lovers of your law have much peace; for them there is no stumbling block.

### Proverbs 12:20

Deceit is in the heart of those who plot evil, but those who counsel peace have joy.

### Isaiah 9:5-6

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, upon David’s throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever.

### Isaiah 11:1-9

But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord, and his delight shall be the fear of the Lord.

Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide, but he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide fairly for the land’s afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.

Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall graze, together their young shall lie down; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the viper’s den, and the child lay his hand on the adder’s lair. They shall not harm or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea.

### Isaiah 55:10-13

Yet just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me, achieving the end for which I sent it.

Yes, in joy you shall go forth, in peace you shall be brought home; mountains and hills shall break out in song before you, all trees of the field shall clap their hands. In place of the thornbush, the cypress shall grow, instead of nettles, the myrtle. This shall be to the Lord’s renown, as an everlasting sign that shall not fail.

### Isaiah 65:25

The wolf and the lamb shall pasture together, and the lion shall eat hay like the ox—but the serpent’s food shall be dust. None shall harm or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

# New Testament

### A Beatitude of Peace: Matthew 5:9

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

### Greatest Commandment: Matthew 22:34 – 40

. . . a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? He said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

### Love Your Enemies: Matthew 5:43 – 45

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

### Jesus’ Birth Brings Peace: Luke 2:10-14

The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

### Love Your Enemies: Luke 6:32, 35 – 36

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them…But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

### Do Not Judge: Luke 6:37-39, 41 – 42

Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.

Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye, when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.

### Forgiveness: Matthew 18:21 – 22

Then Peter came and said to him, Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times? Jesus said to him, Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

### The Promise of Peace in Jesus: John 14:23-29

Jesus answered and said to him, “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me. I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I will come back to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe.”

### The Promise of Peace in Jesus: John 16:20-33

“Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy. When a woman is in labor, she is in anguish because her hour has arrived; but when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy that a child has been born into the world. So you also are now in anguish. But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

On that day you will not question me about anything. Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. Until now you have not asked anything in my name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

I have told you this in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures but I will tell you clearly about the Father. On that day you will ask in my name, and I do not tell you that I will ask the Father for you. For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have come to believe that I came from God.

I came from the Father and have come into the world. Now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”

His disciples said, “Now you are talking plainly, and not in any figure of speech. Now we realize that you know everything and that you do not need to have anyone question you. Because of this we believe that you came from God.”

Jesus answered them, “Do you believe now? Behold, the hour is coming and has arrived when each of you will be scattered to his own home and you will leave me alone. But I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.”

### Peace Comes through Believing: Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access [by faith] to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God.

### Genuine Love: Romans 12:9 – 21

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay”, says the Lord. No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### God’s Kingdom is One of Peace: Romans 14:17-19

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the holy Spirit; whoever serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by others. Let us then pursue what leads to peace and to building up one another.

### Paul’s Prayer for Peace: Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the holy Spirit.

### The Christian Way of Life: 2 Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brothers, rejoice. Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.

### Peace as a Fruit of the Holy Spirit: Galatians 5:22

In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

### Peace and Unity: Ephesians 4:1-6

I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

### Peace through Trust in God’s Providence: Philippians 4:6-9

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

### Let Peace Control Our Hearts: Colossians 3:12-17

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

### Cultivate Peace: James 3:16-18

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.

# Handout #7.

# Reflections on Jesus and Peace

# Background Handout for Leaders

### Jesus and the Reign of God

44. Jesus proclaimed the reign of God in his words and made it present in his actions. His words begin with a call to conversion and a proclamation of the arrival of the kingdom. “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17). The call to conversion was at the same time an invitation to enter God’s reign. Jesus went beyond the prophets’ cries for conversion when he declared that, in him, the reign of God had begun and was in fact among the people (Luke 17:20 – 21; 12:32).

45. His words, especially as they are preserved for us in the Sermon on the Mount, describe a new reality in which God’s power is manifested and the longing of the people is fulfilled. In God’s reign the poor are given the kingdom, the mourners are comforted, the meek inherit the earth, those hungry for righteousness are satisfied, the merciful know mercy, the pure see God, the persecuted know the kingdom, and peacemakers are called the children of God (Matthew 5:3 – 10).

46. Jesus’ words also depict for us the conduct of one who lives under God’s reign. His words call for a new way of life which fulfills and goes beyond the law. One of the most striking characteristics of this new way is forgiveness. All who hear Jesus are repeatedly called to forgive one another, and to do so not just once, but many, many times (Matthew 6:14 – 15; Luke 6:37; Mathew 18:21 – 22; Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3 – 4). The forgiveness of God, which is the beginning of salvation, is manifested in communal forgiveness and mercy.

47. Jesus also described God’s reign as one in which love is an active, lifegiving, inclusive force. He called for a love which went beyond family ties and bonds of friendship to reach even those who were enemies (Matthew 5:44 – 48; Luke 6:27 – 28). Such a love does not seek revenge but rather is merciful in the face of threat and opposition (Matthew 5:39 – 42; Luke 6:29 – 31). Disciples are to love one another as Jesus has loved them (John 15:12).

48. The words of Jesus would remain an impossible, abstract ideal were it not for two things: the actions of Jesus and his gift of the spirit. In his actions, Jesus showed the way of living in God’s reign; he manifested the forgiveness which he called for when he accepted all who came to him, forgave their sins, healed them, released them from the demons who possessed them. In doing these things, he made the tender mercy of God present in a world which knew violence, oppression, and injustice. Jesus pointed out the injustices of his time and opposed those who laid burdens upon the people or defiled true worship. He acted aggressively and dramatically at times, as when he cleansed the temple of those who had made God’s house into a “den of robbers” (Matthew 21:12 – 17 and parallel texts; John 3:13 – 25).

49. Most characteristic of Jesus’ actions are those in which he showed his love. As he had commanded others, his love led him even to the giving of his own life to effect redemption. Jesus’ message and his actions were dangerous ones in his time, and they led to his death - a cruel and viciously inflicted death, a criminal’s death (Galatians 3:13). In all of his suffering, as in all of his life and ministry, Jesus refused to defend himself with force or with violence. He endured violence and cruelty so that God’s love might be fully manifest and the world might be reconciled to the One from whom it had become estranged. Even at his death, Jesus cried out for forgiveness for those who were his executioners: “Father, forgive them . . .” (Luke 23:34).

50. The resurrection of Jesus is the sign to the world that God indeed does reign, does give life in death, and that the love of God is stronger even than death (Romans 8:36 – 39).

51. Only in light of this, the fullest demonstration of the power of God’s reign, can Jesus’ gift of peace—a peace which the world cannot give (John 14:27)—be understood. Jesus gives that peace to his disciples, to those who had witnessed the helplessness of the crucifixion and the power of the resurrection (John 20:19, 20, 26). The peace which he gives to them as he greets them as their risen Lord is the fullness of salvation. It is the reconciliation of the world and God (Romans 5:1 – 2; Colossians 1:20); the restoration of the unity and harmony of all creation which the Old Testament spoke of with such longing. Because the walls of hostility between God and humankind were broken down in the life and death of the true, perfect servant, union and well-being between God and the world were finally fully possible (Ephesians 2:13 – 22; Galatians 3:28).

### Jesus and the Community of Believers

52. As his first gift to his followers, the risen Jesus gave his gift of peace. This gift permeated the meetings between the risen Jesus and his followers (John 20:19 – 29). So intense was that gift and so abiding was its power that the remembrance of that gift and the daily living of it became the hallmark of the community of faith. Simultaneously, Jesus gave his spirit to those who followed him. These two personal and communal gifts are inseparable. In the spirit of Jesus the community of believers was enabled to recognize and to proclaim the savior of the world.

53. Gifted with Jesus’ own spirit, they could recognize what God had done and know in their own lives the power of the One who creates from nothing. The early Christian communities knew that this power and the reconciliation and peace which marked it were not yet fully operative in their world. They struggled with external persecution and with interior sin, as do all people. But their experience of the spirit of God and their memory of the Christ who was with them nevertheless enabled them to look forward with unshakable confidence to the time when the fullness of God’s reign would make itself known in the world. At the same time, they knew that they were called to be ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19 – 20), people who would make the peace which God had established visible through the love and the unity within their own communities.

54. Jesus Christ, then, is our peace, and in his death-resurrection he gives God’s peace to our world. In him God has indeed reconciled the world, made it one, and has manifested definitely that his will is this reconciliation, this unity between God and all peoples, and among the peoples themselves. The way to union has been opened, the covenant of peace established. The risen Lord’s gift of peace is inextricably bound to the call to follow Jesus and to continue the proclamation of God’s reign. Matthew’s Gospel (Matthew 28:16 – 20; cf. Luke 24:44 – 53) tells us that Jesus’ last words to his disciples were a sending forth and a promise: “I shall be with you all days.” In the continuing presence of Jesus, disciples of all ages find the courage to follow him. To follow Jesus Christ implies continual conversion in one’s own life as one seeks to act in ways which are consonant with the justice, forgiveness, and love of God’s reign. Discipleship reaches out to the ends of the earth and calls for reconciliation among all peoples so that God’s purpose, “a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him” (Ephesians 1:10), will be fulfilled.

(*The Challenge of Peace*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

# Handout #8.

# The Church Teaches . . . Peace

### Dignity of the Human Person

“At the center of the Church’s teaching on peace and at the center of all Catholic social teaching are the transcendence of God and the dignity of the human person. The human person is the clearest reflection of God’s presence in the world; all of the Church’s work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God’s creative work and the meaning of Christ’s redemptive ministry.” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, The Challenge of Peace*)

“…We can turn away from violence; we can build communities of greater peace. It begins with a clear conviction: respect for life. Respect for life is not just a slogan or a program; it is a fundamental moral principle flowing from our teaching on the dignity of the human person. It is an approach to life that values people over things.” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action*)

"We cannot remain indifferent. Today the world has a profound thirst for peace. In many countries, people are suffering due to wars which, though often forgotten, are always the cause of suffering and poverty. In Lesbos, my dear brother, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and I saw the sorrow of war in the eyes of the refugees, the anguish of peoples thirsting for peace. I am thinking of the families, whose lives have been shattered; of the children who have known only violence in their lives; of the elderly, forced to leave their homeland. All of them have a great thirst for peace. We do not want these tragedies to be forgotten. Rather together we want to give voice to all those who suffer, to all those who have no voice and are not heard. They know well, often better than the powerful, that there is no tomorrow in war, and that the violence of weapons destroys the joy of life." (Pope Francis, Address for the World Day of Prayer for Peace, Assisi, Sept. 20, 2016)

### Essential Conditions for Peace: Truth, Justice, Love, and Freedom

“Peace is founded on truth, built on justice, nurtured and animated by charity and brought into affect under the auspices of freedom.” (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*)

John XXIII identified the essential conditions for peace in four precise requirements of the human spirit: truth, justice, love, and freedom. Truth will build peace if every individual sincerely acknowledges not only his rights, but also his own duties toward others. Justice will build peace if in practice everyone respects the rights of others and actually fulfills his duties toward them. Love will build peace if people feel the needs of others as their own and share what they have with others, especially the values of mind and spirit which the possess. Freedom will build peace and make it thrive if, in the choice of the means to that end, people act according to reason and assume responsibility for their own actions. (Summarized from *Pacem in Terris*)

### Called to Live an Ethic of Justice, Responsibility, and Community

“Fundamentally, our society needs a moral revolution to replace a culture of violence with a renewed ethic of justice, responsibility and community. New policies and programs, while necessary, cannot substitute for a recovery of the old values of right and wrong, respect and responsibility, love and justice. God’s wisdom, love and commandments can show us the way to live, heal and reconcile. ‘Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal’ are more than words to be recited; they are imperatives for the common good.

“Above all, we must come to understand that violence is unacceptable. We must learn again the lesson of Pope Paul VI, ‘If you want peace, work for justice.’ We oppose lawlessness of every kind. Society cannot tolerate an ethic which uses violence to make a point, settle grievances or get what we want. But the path to a more peaceful future is found in a rediscovery of personal responsibility, respect for human life and human dignity, and a recommitment to social justice. The best antidote to violence is hope. People with a stake in society do not destroy communities. Both individuals *and* institutions should be held accountable for how they attack or enhance the common good. It is not only the ‘down and out’ who must be held accountable, but also the ‘rich and famous.’ Our society needs both more personal responsibility and broader social responsibility to overcome the plague of violence in our land and the lack of peace in our hearts. Finally, we must realize that peace is most fundamentally a gift from God.” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action*)

### Peace Will Only Come with Justice and Forgiveness

“No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: this is what in this Message I wish to say to believers and non-believers alike, to all men and women of good will who are concerned for the good of the human family and for its future.

“No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: this is what I wish to say to those responsible for the future of the human community, entreating them to be guided in their weighty and difficult decisions by the light of man’s true good, always with a view to the common good.

“No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: I shall not tire of repeating this warning to those who, for one reason or another, nourish feelings of hatred, a desire for revenge or the will to destroy.” (Pope John Paul II, *Message for World Day of Peace 2002*, #15)

“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. Violence is a crime against humanity, for it destroys the very fabric of society…To all of you who are listening I say: Do not believe in violence: do not support violence. It is not the Christian way. It is not the way of the Catholic Church. Believe in peace and forgiveness and love, for they are of Christ.” (Pope John Paul II, September, 29 1979, Mass in Drogheda, Ireland)

### Called to Embrace a Spirituality of Peacemaking

“God created the human family as one and calls it to unity. The renewed unity we experience in Christ is to be lived out in every possible way. We are to do all we can to live at peace with everyone (Romans 12:18). Given the effects of sin, our efforts to live in peace with one another depend on our openness to God’s healing grace and the unifying power of Christ’s redemption.  
  
”Change of mind and heart, of word and action are essential to those who would work for peace (Romans 12:2). This conversion to the God of peace has two dimensions. On the one hand, in imitation of Christ we must be humble, gentle and patient. On the other, we are called to be strong and active in our peacemaking, loving our enemies and doing good generously as God does (Luke 6:35-36, 38), filled with eagerness to spread the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15).   
  
”Likewise, discovering God’s peace, which exceeds all understanding, in prayer is essential to peacemaking (Philemon 4:7). The peace given in prayer draws us into God, quieting our anxieties, challenging our old values and deepening wells of new energy. It arouses in us a compassionate love for all humanity and gives us heart to persevere beyond frustration, suffering and defeat. We should never forget that peace is not merely something that we ourselves as creatures do and can accomplish, but it is, in the ultimate analysis, a gift and a grace from God.” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*)

### Peacemaking is First a Matter of the Heart

“True peacemaking can be a matter of policy only if it is first a matter of the heart. In the absence of repentance and forgiveness, no peace can endure; without a spirit of courageous charity, justice cannot be won.

“Amid the violence of contemporary culture and in response to the growing contempt for human life, the Church must seek to foster communities where peaceable virtues can take root and be nourished. We need to nurture among ourselves *faith and hope* to strengthen our spirits by placing our trust in God, rather than in ourselves; *courage and compassion* that move us to action; *humility and kindness* so that we can put the needs and interests of others ahead of our own; *patience and perseverance* to endure the long struggle for justice; and *civility and charity* so that we can treat others with respect and love.

## Handout #9.

## A Papal Message of Peace

To the people and nations of the world,

Despite the progress we are making to create a peaceful world, there are many difficult problems and challenges on the road to peace . . .

The Church believes that these problems and challenges can be addressed by embracing the values and virtues of peace . . .

Working together, I believe there is a lot we can do to change this situation of violence in our world. We can . . .

I am hopeful about creating a peaceful world because . . .

I will continue to pray for you and for a world of peace,

Pope \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Handout #10.

# Pledge of Nonviolence

“Peacemaking is not an optional requirement of our faith. We are called to be peacemakers,

not by some movement of the moment, but by our Lord Jesus.”

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace*)

Making peace must start within ourselves, in our family, and in our relationships with people and the world. We commit ourselves as best we can to become nonviolent and peaceable people.

### Respect Self and Others.

To respect myself, to affirm others and to avoid uncaring criticism, hateful words, physical attacks and self-destructive behavior.

I/we commit to…

### Communicate Better.

To share my feelings honestly, to look for safe ways to express my anger, and to work at solving problems peacefully.

I/we commit to…

### Listen Carefully.

To listen carefully to one another, especially those who disagree with me, and to consider others’ feelings and needs rather than insisting on having my own way.

I/we commit to…

### Forgive.

To apologize and make amends when I have hurt another, to forgive others, and to keep from holding grudges.

I/we commit to…

### Respect Nature.

To treat the environment and all living things, including our pets, with respect and care.

I/we commit to…

### Play Creatively.

To select entertainment and toys that support our family’s values and to avoid entertainment that makes violence look exciting, funny, or acceptable.

I/we commit to…

### Be Courageous.

To challenge violence in all its forms whenever I encounter it, whether at home, at school, at work, or in the community, and to stand with others who are treated unfairly.

I/we commit to…

# Handout #11.

# Praying for Peace



# Prayer Service

## Gather

Father, all powerful and ever living God,

we praise and thank you through Jesus Christ our Lord

for your presence and action in the world.

In the midst of conflict and division,

we know it is you

who turns our minds to thoughts of peace.

Your Spirit changes our hearts:

enemies begin to speak to one another,

those who were estranged join hands in friendship,

and nations seek the way of peace together.

Your Spirit is at work

when understanding puts an end to strife,

when hatred is quenched by mercy,

and vengeance gives way to forgiveness.

For this we should never cease

to thank and praise you.

Amen.

(Eucharist Prayer for Masses of Reconciliation II)

## Listen

**Pledge of Nonviolence**

Reader 1: To Respect Self and Others—To respect myself, to affirm others, and to avoid uncaring criticism, hateful words, physical attacks and self-destructive behavior.

**Response: I can and I will.**

Reader 2: To Communicate Better—To share my feelings honestly, to look for safe ways to express my anger, and to work at solving problems peacefully.

**Response: I can and I will.**

Reader 3: To Listen—To listen carefully to one another, especially those who disagree with me, and to consider others’ feelings and needs rather than insist on having my own way.

**Response: I can and I will.**

Reader 4: To Forgive—To apologize and make amends when I have hurt another; to forgive others, and to keep from holding grudges.

**Response: I can and I will.**

Reader 5: To Respect Nature—To treat the environment and all living things, including our pets, with respect and care.

**Response: I can and I will.**

Reader 6: To Play Creatively—To select entertainment and toys that support our family’s values and to avoid entertainment that makes violence look exciting, funny, or acceptable.

**Response: I can and I will.**

Reader 7: To Be Courageous—To challenge violence in all forms whenever I encounter it, whether at home, at school, at work, or in the community, and to stand with others who are treated unfairly.

**Response: I can and I will.**

### Respond

Prayers of Petition

**Grant us your peace, O Lord.**

## Go Forth

Loving God, you sent Jesus to show us how to live nonviolently. Jesus, you listened carefully to everyone. You cared about the feelings of others. You forgave those who hurt you. Your heart went out to people no one else cared about. Jesus, send us your Spirit to help each of us be truthful whenever we find violence or injustice around us. We make our prayer, counting on your mercy and love to help us live peacefully. Amen.