

A Reflection on Peace

Francis did not see peacemaking as a strategy but as a way of life in Christ. Peacemaking is not something that one does in certain circumstances ... For Francis everyone can be drawn to peace and kindness through your peace and gentleness. Peace is thus a way of life. A gift of grace that he deeply embedded in the Franciscan way.

THE FOLLOWING ARE PRINCIPLES OF A FRANCISCAN UNDERSTANDING OF PEACE AND PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES:

- **Non ownership of property**
much violence is the result of greed, possessiveness and jealousy.
- **Non dominance in social and organisational settings** – power over others can lead to violence.
- **Belief that all beings are part of God's presence in the world** – all created things are equal in dignity no matter their colour, creed, beliefs or species.
- **Peace is the heart of the Gospel and the heart of true Gospel living** – authentic Christian communities are peaceful.
- **Peace begins in the human heart** – it takes shape in our thoughts and is expressed through our words and our actions.
- **Franciscan peacemaking should arise from maternal spirituality** – the belief that we give birth to Christ in our lives and in the life of the world. We are all midwives of peace.
- **The challenge to love all people especially the poor, vulnerable, despised and our enemies** – perpetrators of violence often demonise or dehumanise their victims.
- **Responding with mercy to each other and our world**
nurturing grievances and the inability to forgive is a fertile breeding ground for violence.
- **Noticing the injustice and inequality in our communities**
those who feel invisible and unheard can be driven to violence.

CONSIDER EACH PRINCIPLE.

Can you give an example of where violations of these principles has led to war or violence?
What could be added to this list. Who are the apostles of peace in today's world?

The Peace Prayer is often attributed to St Francis but was written in its current form many centuries after his death. It does, nevertheless, capture his desire to nurture a more peaceful world.
Beside the traditional peace prayer is one adapted to a contemporary setting.
What could you include in a peace prayer for your community, school or social group?

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.

Creator of all, make me a person of peace.

Where there is oppression, let me bring equality;
Where there is abuse, dignity;
Where there is fragmentation, unity;
Where there is exploitation, justice;
Where there is conflict, resolution;
Where there is discrimination, mutuality;
Where there is violence, vision;
And where there is powerlessness, power.
Grant that I may not so much seek to compete
As to collaborate; to exclude as to include,
To dominate as to complement.
For it is in healing that we are healed;
It is in reconciling, that we are reconciled;
It is in loving, that we are loved.