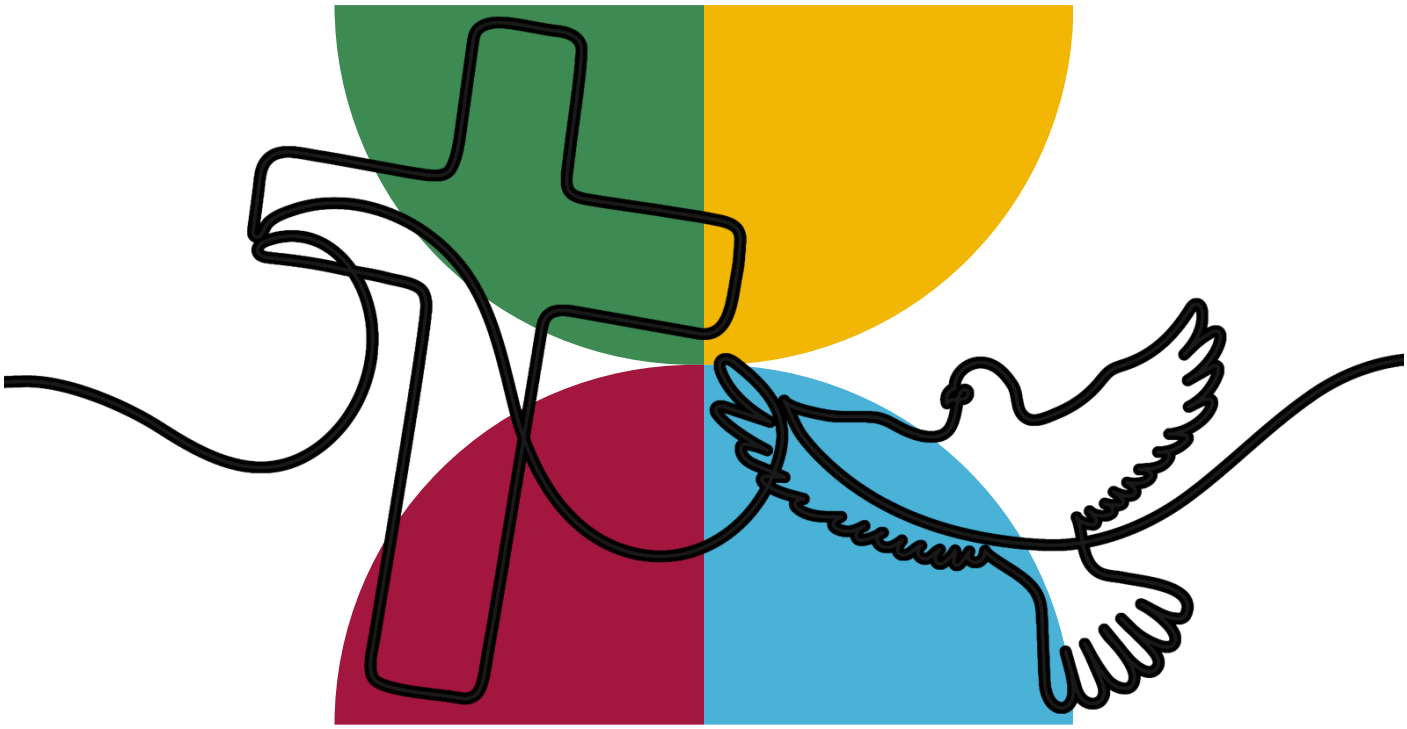
ARTISANS OF PEACE

SPIRITUAL



ITINERARY

A six month prayer guide

Introduction

This "Spiritual Itinerary on Peace" is a simple companion for prayer, reflection, and action across the liturgical year, rooted in the Word of God and the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. Month by month, it explores how Christ, the Prince of Peace, invites us to grow in peace at every level of life: personal, interpersonal, social, economic, political, and ecological. Each guide follows a common pattern: a brief theme introduction, a call to reflection using Bible passages and Church teaching, a testimony or "voice of the poor," an international or contextual focus, concrete attitudes or actions to nourish peace, and space for group sharing, art, and music.

From Advent to the Feast of the Sacred Heart, the itinerary moves from contemplating the Nativity and the "peaceable kingdom," through social and political reconciliation, education and inclusion, inner peace (with special attention to young people), care for creation, the witness of Sophie and other peacemakers, and the Christian duty to foster human rights and dialogue. In this way, it seeks to help individuals and communities "widen their hearts," listen to the cries of those who suffer, and open themselves to the Spirit who makes peace possible in our world today.

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December 2026

The Prince of Peace and the Kingdom of Peace



In December, we await the birth of Jesus, the coming of the Prince of Peace. In a sense, Christmas feels like our own feast, for deep within us we long for intimacy, joy, purity, and light. It is a blessed moment in time—a kind of "hour beneath a fortunate star"—when we can experience a profound sense of unity, not only with the Church and the Christian world, but with all people of goodwill. At Christmas, special attention is given to the Child who carries our hopes. God became a fragile infant, waiting to be held, cherished, and embraced. Yet once the feast has passed and the rhythm of ordinary life resumes, we often find ourselves gently setting Him aside, drifting away almost without noticing.

What does it take for us not to leave Jesus, the Son of God, alone, but rather to allow Him to become our companion in the ordinary days of our lives?

We are preparing for the feast of the Incarnation, the mystery in which God became human in Jesus Christ and entered the story of the world. The Incarnation proclaims that God desires to draw near to humanity, to share in our joys, our struggles, and our hopes. For this reason, Scripture calls Jesus the Prince of Peace, for in His coming He restores and renews the relationship between God and humankind.

The Child of Bethlehem does not arrive in power or majesty, nor through force or conquest. He comes as a vulnerable and defenseless infant, a living sign of love and peace. His life and teaching reveal that true peace is not born of favourable circumstances, but of a heart transformed by grace. Jesus calls us to the path of forgiveness, mercy, and self-giving love– a path capable of healing wounded relationships and restoring broken communities.

The Kingdom of Peace begins wherever people become open to one another, willing to listen, to understand, and to help. It is not a geographical realm, but a living reality made present through love, justice, compassion, and reconciliation. Jesus teaches us that every human person possesses an inviolable dignity worthy of reverence and respect, regardless of origin, status, or circumstance. The pursuit of peace, therefore, is not a passive state but an active vocation, demanding courage, perseverance, and commitment. Through the mystery of the Incarnation, God reveals Himself not as a distant observer of human affairs, but as Emmanuel–God with us–walking beside us on our journey. The Prince of Peace continues to call us today to become builders of hope, justice, and love. In responding to that call, we help make ever more visible among us the Kingdom of Peace whose first light dawned upon the world in Bethlehem and whose promise still shines in every human heart that welcomes Him.

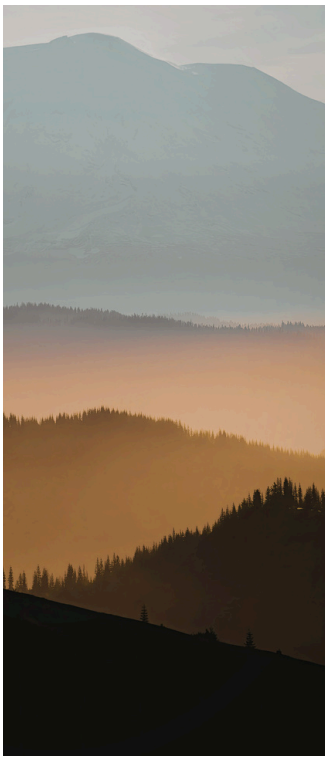
Word of God : Isaiah 52:7-10

7 *How beautiful upon the mountains*
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

8 *Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,*
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the Lord to Zion.

9 *Break forth together into singing,*
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

10 *The Lord has bared his holy arm*
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.



Orientations to meditate

As we draw near to Christmas, the prophet Isaiah gently leads us into the mystery of hope, inviting us to open our hearts to the Good News of salvation drawing near.



Chapter 52 of Isaiah begins with a powerful summons addressed to Jerusalem: Awake! Rise from the dust, shake off your chains, and clothe yourself in garments of beauty, for the Lord has come to redeem his people (vv. 1–3). Through the prophet, God utters a promise filled with tenderness and fidelity: "My people shall know my name; therefore on that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I" (v. 6). In these simple yet profound words—"Here am I"—God reveals his enduring desire to save, to accompany, and to dwell among his people. Jerusalem responds with a song of joy, as though the city itself had awakened from a long night. The Babylonian Exile is ending; yet what unfolds is far more than a political liberation. It is a spiritual return, a rediscovery of covenant and identity, a homecoming to the God who had never ceased to walk beside his people. No longer does the Lord seem distant or silent. He is present, faithful, and active, renewing his people from within. At the heart of this renewal stands the faithful remnant—the small community that survived the years of exile. They are those whose faith endured amid uncertainty, suffering, and darkness; those who continued to hope when hope seemed unreasonable. Purified by trial and sustained by trust, they are now granted the grace of witnessing the dawn of God's salvation.

It is at this point that Isaiah breaks into a magnificent hymn of exultation (vv. 7–10). We are invited to linger over these verses, for they proclaim the miracle of peace. Across the mountains runs the messenger, swift-footed and radiant, bearing good news: liberation, salvation, and the joyful proclamation that God reigns. The Lord has not abandoned his people.

When all appears lost, when faith becomes demanding and discouragement whispers that nothing has meaning anymore, a new word resounds across the landscape: God is doing something new.

The kingdom that he establishes is not founded upon power or conquest, but upon peace. He comes to bring freedom to the captive, consolation to the weary, and hope to the broken-hearted. And we, too, are called to become bearers of that hope, cooperating in the coming of a kingdom woven from light.

Like the messenger on the mountains, we are sent forth with urgency, for the world waits. Humanity hungers and thirsts for justice, truth, reconciliation, and peace. As our gaze turns toward Bethlehem, Isaiah's prophecy finds its deepest fulfilment. In the little Child lying in the manger, the least and most vulnerable of the earth recognize that God's promise has been accomplished. Wrapped in swaddling clothes and dependent on human care, this newborn Child contains within himself the saving power of God. The Almighty does not arrive in splendour and force, but in poverty, gentleness, and humility.

Christmas is therefore a feast that opens the heart. It invites us to welcome both the littleness of the Child and the immensity of the mystery he embodies. Here lies the wonder for which Advent prepares us: the astonishing nearness of God. The Child of Bethlehem reveals a God who chooses vulnerability over domination, closeness over distance, love over power. He is the God who sets aside heavenly glory in order to dwell among us, to share our human condition, and to draw near to every person. In the silence of Bethlehem, the promise spoken through Isaiah becomes flesh. The God who once declared, “Here am I,” now speaks those words not only through prophecy, but through the life of a Child. And in that Child, humanity discovers anew that it has not been forgotten, but eternally loved.

I widen my heart:

we can get inspiration from this artwork...





In Berlin's Bode Museum, medieval sculptures stand in quiet conversation with contemporary Ukrainian artworks, creating a dialogue that transcends centuries. Among these works is the poignant image of a mother cradling her child amid the horrors of war.

On February 25, 2022—the second day of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine—the Hungarian journalist András Földes captured a photograph in the Kyiv underground. As air-raid sirens echoed above the city, metro stations had become makeshift shelters for countless civilians seeking refuge from the violence. In one of these stations, Földes photographed a young mother nursing her infant. He shared the image on Instagram, and within hours it had spread across the world, touching hearts far beyond Ukraine's borders.

The photograph inspired the Ukrainian artist Maryna Solomennykova of Dnipro to create Madonna of Kyiv. For Solomennykova, the woman and her child came to symbolize all Ukrainian mothers who, in the face of war, sought only to protect the lives entrusted to them. The painting soon gained even greater recognition than the original photograph itself. Today, a copy hangs in a church in Naples, while the original is displayed in the exhibition Timeless: Ukrainian Contemporary Art in Times of War at Berlin's Bode Museum.

In the exhibition, Madonna of Kyiv is placed in dialogue with a remarkable artefact from Egypt: a fourth- or fifth-century funerary stone depicting a mother breastfeeding her child. Across the gulf of centuries, the two images seem to speak the same language. Their message is timeless. Maternal love, vulnerability, protection, and hope belong not to a single era but to the shared story of humanity. The image embodies both the profound humanitarian tragedy and the stark injustice of war. Many viewers have seen in the portrait a contemporary image of the Virgin Mary.

Just as Mary fled with the infant Jesus to shield him from the violence of Herod, so this young Ukrainian mother sought to save her child from the devastation of war. In her tenderness and courage, her vulnerability and fierce determination, one recognizes a modern reflection of the eternal motherhood that Christian tradition associates with Mary.

The story carries an added note of grace. The woman portrayed in the photograph, Tetyana Blizniak—the real "Madonna of Kyiv"—reached safety in western Ukraine only a few days after the image was taken. Yet her likeness remains, bearing witness not only to suffering, but also to the enduring strength of love. In a world wounded by conflict, the image reminds us that even amid destruction, the human capacity to protect, nurture, and hope continues to shine with undiminished light.

International focus:

Women, children, and persons displaced by armed conflict.

We pray for—and actively support—advocacy and intercession on behalf of individuals and situations within these groups.

"I open myself to peace"

The question appears simple, yet it reaches into the deepest places of the human heart: What can I do for peace? Peace is not merely the absence of war. It is a living reality that begins within the human heart and takes shape in our relationships, our communities, and ultimately in the world around us.

First and foremost, peace is built in the ordinary encounters of daily life. Whenever we listen attentively to another person, whenever we choose not to nurture resentment or seek retaliation, but instead embrace understanding and forgiveness, we become artisans of peace. Many conflicts do not originate in the halls of political power; they begin within communities, workplaces, and families—and it is there, too, that they can be healed. We can also serve the cause of peace by remaining open to those who think differently, who come from other cultures, or whose life experiences are unlike our own. Fear and prejudice raise walls between people, while encounter and dialogue build bridges. Every genuine act of listening creates a space where peace may take root. Peace also calls us not to turn away from human suffering. A charitable gift, a moment of volunteer service, support offered to a refugee family, or even a simple gesture of compassion can help make the world more humane. Such acts may seem small, yet they carry within them the power to restore dignity and kindle hope. For the deepest source of peace is God himself. Prayer, interior silence, and spiritual reflection are therefore far from passive pursuits. They shape our hearts and free us from being governed by fear, anger, or hatred. In the stillness of God's presence, we learn to see others with compassion and to become instruments of the peace that our world so desperately longs for.

We share in our group:

Let us take this question into our hearts and share it with one another:

During the past week, for whom have I been a sign of hope, understanding, and love? When did my presence bring light to someone else's darkness? When did I truly listen, offer encouragement, or extend compassion to a person in need?

For it is through such small acts of love that the Kingdom of Peace becomes visible among us, and the light of Bethlehem continues to shine in our world today.

Music : Dona Nobis Pacem – Mozart | Come Lord Jesus – Harpa Dei



Final prayer

Make me a channel of your peace

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;
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.

St. Francis of Assisi

Tornya Erika RSCJ
Province of CEI



January 2027

Peace, Justice and Reconciliation:
A path to personal and communal transformation



Embracing the longing for peace

We live in a world where peace is often spoken of, sometimes celebrated, but rarely fully lived. The thirst for peace runs through our societies, our communities, and our own hearts. Yet every time we seek peace without justice, we create forced silences, not true peace. And every time we demand justice without peace, we risk turning our outrage into inner violence.

Peace and justice are not opposed to each other: they call to each other. They are the two wings of Christian hope. What God has united, human history should not try to separate.

I take time to listen to and welcome this thirst for peace that dwells in my heart… "my soul thirsts for You" (Ps 62), Prince of Peace.

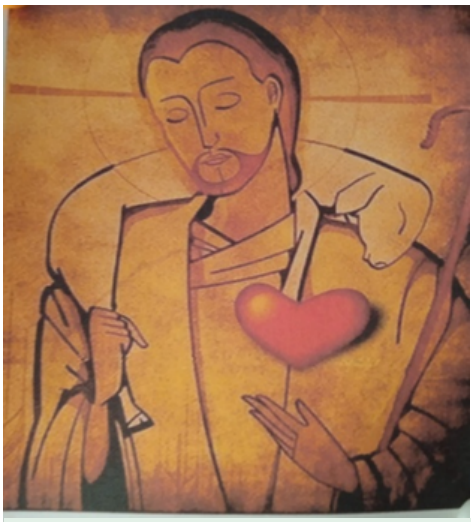
"Peace comes before all else 'from God, this God who loves us all, unconditionally.' It is a gift that Jesus gave to his disciples on Easter Day: 'Peace be with you!' It is the peace of the Risen Christ, a disarmed and disarming peace, humble and persevering."

"It was with these words that I greeted the Church and the world on the day of my election to the See of Peter. I wish to repeat them today and invite each person to pray for this gift. Let us never grow weary of praying for peace and committing ourselves to bringing it about in our relationships and in society."

Leo XIV, Magnifica Humanitas (§228), 2026

To go further, if my heart so desires:

- *What do I call "peace" in my daily life?*
- *Which situations in my life show that peace and justice must move forward together?*



"To be the heart of God in the world."

Peace: more than just the absence of conflict

The Bible speaks of peace as a profound reality: shalom, wholeness, harmony, and a right relationship with God, with others, and with oneself.

Peace as inner reconciliation

Peace begins in the depths of our being. It is not a relaxation technique, but the discovery that we are loved, unconditionally, by the One who is Peace himself.

"I leave you peace, my peace" (Jn 14:27).

This peace does not ignore inner struggle; it comes through accepting our truth, through forgiveness, through the healing of wounds.

I can take time to rest in the heart of God and to hear the profound blessing he addresses to me: "You are my beloved child."

To go further, if my heart so desires:

- *What is, for me, the difference between the peace of the world and the peace of Christ?*
- *What inner struggles are preventing me today from tasting this peace?*
- *What wounds need to be healed so that my peace may become more true?*

Justice: upholding the dignity of every human being

In the Bible, justice is a way of life. It means living in accordance with the covenant. It means respecting the dignity of every person. It means restoring relationships.

Justice that restores

God's justice is restorative, not punitive. It supports people, puts them on the right path, and opens up new possibilities.

I can meditate on the account of the woman taken in adultery. Jn 8: 1-11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple; all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and placing her in their midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, " Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus looked up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again."



To explore this further, if I wish:

- *When I talk about justice, am I more concerned with punishing or with restoration?*
- *Have I ever witnessed justice that heals rather than condemns?*
- *How can I, in my own limited way, help make justice more humane and more compassionate?*

Wherever there is injustice…

A peace that does not challenge injustice is not the peace of the Gospel. Jesus never sought a peace that ignores suffering.

He proclaimed a peace that liberates, that challenges, that provides them with a new perspective.

"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:20) "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former." (Mt 23:23)

To explore this further, if I wish:

- *Do I sometimes prefer peace of mind to the truth?*
- *What injustices around me call for me to take a stand?*
- *Where could I take greater risks in pursuit of true peace?*

Becoming peacemakers: a calling

Being a peacemaker is an active mission involving listening, healing wounds, building bridges and sometimes setting aside one's own interests so that others may gain dignity.

Peace as a daily practice of patience

It is built through small gestures, through faithfulness, through gentleness.

I can draw inspiration from these words of the Pope:

I would like to propose five paths toward daily and public responsibility: the need to disarm words, building peace through justice, adopting the perspective of victims, cultivating a healthy realism and reviving dialogue and multilateralism.

Leo XIV "Magnifica Humanitas" (§213), 2026

To explore this further, if I wish:

- *What small, practical step can I take to build peace today?*
- *In my relationships, am I more often a 'wall' or a 'bridge'?*
- *Am I able to set aside the need to be right in order to keep the peace?*

A spirituality of peace and justice

Peace and justice spring from contemplation of Christ. Nourished by prayer and rooted in the Eucharist, they transform daily life.

Once again, I can reflect on this invitation from the latest encyclical:

Building peace through justice

All of us, at every level, can contribute to building the foundation of peace, which is justice. We do not merely seek any kind of peace – such as an absence of conflict at any cost – but instead, the true peace born of justice. "There exists a very close connection between the justice of the individual and the peace of everyone." [190] Commenting on the psalm verse "justice and peace have embraced" (Ps 84:11), Saint Augustine wrote: "There is no one who shuns the desire for peace, yet not everyone is willing to practice justice... But perform the works of justice, keeping in mind that justice and peace have embraced; they are not at odds with one another. Why do you set yourself against justice? Here, for example, is justice telling you not to steal, but you pay no heed; not to commit adultery, and you turn a deaf ear; not to do to others what you would not want done to yourself; not to say about your neighbour the things you would not want said about yourself... Do you therefore wish to attain peace? Then practice justice!" [191] Let us never grow weary of seeking justice!

Leo XIV – "Magnifica Humanitas" (§215), 2026

To explore this further, if I wish:

- *In what ways can prayer help me to become a peacemaker?*
- *Which aspects of Jesus' behaviour inspire me the most in my quest for justice?*
- *Does receiving the Eucharist change the way I view people who are suffering or marginalised?*

Conclusion – A promise to be welcomed

Peace and justice are not utopian ideals: they are the real path to the healing of the world.

This journey starts with us, spreads to our communities and extends to the wider world.

"Love and faithfulness meet; justice and peace embrace" (Ps 85:11).

To explore this further, if I wish:

- *After this meditation, what particular call do I hear in my heart?*
- *What step would I like to take to foster peace and justice around me?*
- *Which of God's promises do I wish to share with those around me or my community?*

Closing prayer:

'God of mercy, grant that we may look with your compassionate eyes upon the long ordeal of humanity: the wars, the millions who are starving, the countless refugees, the disasters afflicting nations, the cruel and senseless deaths, our lack of humanity towards one another, and the failures and powerlessness of so many lives. Hasten the coming of that time when nations will be at peace, and peoples will live free from fear and want, when there will be no more pain or tears, in the certainty of your will and the assurance of your love, which have been revealed to us in Jesus Christ, Saviour of all mankind. Amen."

God our Father, goodness that surpasses all goodness, beauty that surpasses all beauty, in you are peace, tranquillity and harmony. Reconcile your servants who are divided amongst themselves; grant us your Spirit of unity and make us one. May we become one in the embrace of charity and the bond of affection; one with each other and with all others; one in the peace that comes from you and brings harmony to all things; one in the grace, mercy and tenderness of your beloved Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

We pray for the peoples of Asia, for Africa, for the nations and peoples of Latin America, for Europe, for the peoples of the North American continent and for the peoples of Oceania, that they may seek, in a spirit of peace and joy, a future and justice for all.

Eternal God, in your perfect Kingdom no sword is drawn save the sword of justice, no force is used save the force of love: send your Spirit with power so that all peoples may gather under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to him be power and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

(Excerpt from the Christian litany for peace recited in Assisi in 1986, during the Interfaith Encounter).

Suggested songs:
"When peace falls" – Psalm 85 · Umanî Spirit · Laurent Ghislain Fremal
Shalom – Loire en Gloire
Lord, my righteousness and my peace
The Lord is my light and my salvation

MJ Elonga RSCJ
Province of Africa



February 2021

Stepping Stones to Interpersonal Peace



My Peace I Give You (John 14:27)

Skellig Michael, a remote island, located 12 km off the south-west coast of Ireland is both inhospitable and spectacular. Its steep cliffs and rocky terrain make it difficult to traverse, yet more than a thousand years ago it became a centre for Celtic monasticism. From the eight to the twelfth centuries a small group of monks chose this isolated place to build a community focused on prayer and contemplation.

The desire to get away from noise and distractions is age old, and yet unsurprisingly current. In today's hyperconnected society many people long for a quieter pace of life and a deeper sense of meaning. This search is not about escaping responsibility but about renewing ourselves inwardly so that we can engage more peacefully and compassionately with the world around us.

Human beings are social by nature, and our attraction to solitude is counterbalanced by our need for community. Even in solitude we ponder our relationships and our responsibilities. Inner peace is therefore not merely personal, it shapes how we treat those around us. Qualities such as self-awareness and empathy grow from a reflective inner life.

Peace is found not only in remote places like Skellig Michael. It can also emerge in ordinary daily encounters: a patient response during conflict, a listening ear for someone in difficulty, or a willingness to forgive. These small acts of interpersonal peace are needed in a hurried and fragmented world. Even amid busy lives, we can create moments of calm and become peacemakers in our communities.

Peace in our World

Our Sacred Heart school communities were founded with a vision of nurturing and shaping a better world. The Constitutions of the Society of the Sacred Heart express this vision clearly:

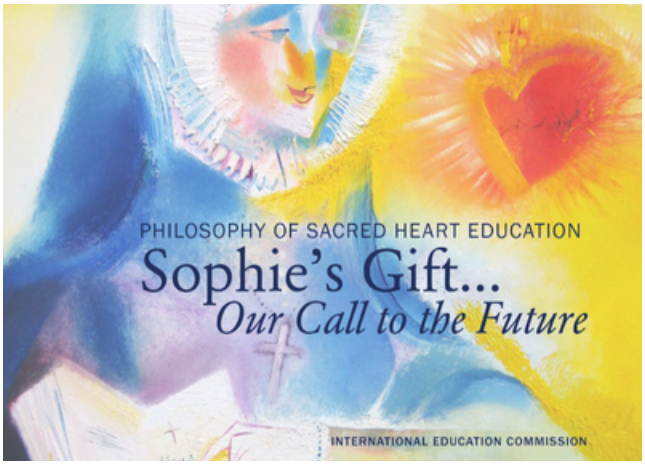
"We are sent by the church to communicate the love of the heart of Jesus. In Him all find their true growth as persons and the way towards reconciliation with one another. This we believe; this we want to proclaim."
Constitutions of the Society of the Sacred Heart #10

Although written for the Society, this mission statement speaks to the wider Sacred Heart family, and all those who respect its values and seek to live by its ethos. Since the time of Saint Madeleine Sophie, the Constitutions have described a path to living a deeply human and Christian life.

A sense of purpose and mission might be just what we need to feel grounded when the world feels volatile and uncertain, when familiar patterns are threatened. Many people move through life without a clearly defined philosophy or direction. Popular culture celebrates individualism and self-determination. Yet this may not sustain us in times of hardship. In Man's Search for Meaning, Viktor Frankl argues that those who discover meaning in their lives are better able to endure suffering and uncertainty. Purpose strengthens resilience.

Take time to consider what meaning you want to give to your life.

The Philosophy of Sacred Heart Education (2023) invites educators to deepen both their understanding of mission and their ability to live it through service, contemplation, and respect for human dignity.



This ideal of love in action lies at the heart of Christian tradition and Catholic Social Teaching. Every encounter offers an opportunity to affirm the dignity of another person and to contribute to a more compassionate world.

Christianity consistently calls believers to become instruments of peace.

The Word of God

In his letter to the Colossians, Saint Paul urges God's chosen people to clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience and forgiveness and above all, with love. Love is not simply one virtue among many. It binds all together.

Paul's image is both practical and challenging. Each day we decide what to wear outwardly. Now we are invited to choose the attitudes we bring into our relationships, workplaces, classrooms, homes, and communities. We may strive to be responsible or productive, yet Saint Paul reminds us that the truest measure of our success is the capacity to love. Without love, kindness can be superficial, patience can be a pretence, and forgiveness reluctant. Love gives meaning and depth to our actions.



For educators, this message carries particular significance. Teachers are not only instructors but community builders. Through their words and daily interactions, they help create environments where dignity is respected and relationships flourish. Schools can be places where peace is intentionally cultivated.

"Your example, more than your words, will be an eloquent lesson to the world."

Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat

Consider the scope we have to model the values and attitudes of the Gospel in our own lives. Which one is most meaningful?

Interpersonal Peace

Interpersonal peace begins not in dramatic gestures but in ordinary moments: a calm voice, an attentive ear, a compassionate look. Building on this we can be inclusive of those who think differently, we display openness and generosity. Peace is both a gift and a responsibility. It is grace at work within us, but it is also a discipline that requires continual practice.



In his essay *Something to Write Home About*, Seamus Heaney recalls the childhood experience of standing on a stone in a fast-flowing stream, feeling both exhilaration and fear as the current moved around him, neither bank within easy reach. With the stepping stone solid beneath his feet, the open sky above becomes a symbol of possibility and growth.

Heaney describes the tension between security and uncertainty as something central to human life. He finishes the essay by saying that the stepping stone "allows you to become alive to the open sky of possibility that is within you".

If we pause to imagine ourselves on the stepping stone, with the sensation of water rushing by, we too can calmly raise our hearts to higher things.

Our lives navigate tensions between calm and turmoil, security and challenge. In such moments, Saint Paul's call to clothe ourselves in love offers the way forward. The open sky of possibility calls us to act, to take steps to becoming peacemakers.

Like any skill, peace is not achieved without time and effort; it is cultivated slowly over a lifetime. We learn it through reflection, observation, study, and example. Families, communities, and schools all play a role in shaping this capacity within us. As educators, we are given a unique opportunity to nurture compassion and reconciliation in ways that can transform both individuals and society. We are called to be agents of change.

Take some time for personal reflection.

Why do you think people are drawn to silence, retreat, or simplicity?

Human beings are both drawn to solitude and dependent on community.

How do you experience this tension in your own life?

Can inner peace be found in ordinary life, or does it require stepping away from everyday pressures? What stepping stones towards peace can you find in your life?

Take time to pray.



Saint Paul speaks about "clothing ourselves with love". Help us each day to put on love, so that others may see God's love in our words and actions.

Help us to create bonds of friendship, building communities that care.

Bring us peace, so that in our quiet hearts we find the courage to become peacemakers.

Song: Deep Peace – Sara Thomsen

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- *Frankl book: (Frankl, 2006) or narrative: Frankl (2006)*
- *Philosophy/Sophie's Gift document: (International Society of the Sacred Heart, 2023)*
- *Bible passage: (New Revised Standard Version, Colossians 1:12–17)*
- *Heaney article: (Heaney, 1998)*

Noreen Heenan
Sacred Heart Network of Schools



March
2021

Peace Within

On Holy Thursday, across the world, following the reenactment of the Last Supper, our communities will be invited to sit in quiet prayer and reflection, to Watch and Pray as Jesus invited the disciples to do as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane before His arrest.



This invitation to Watch and Pray follows Jesus' reassuring words, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to 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)*

I wonder did these words give comfort to the disciples who would have been so troubled by the events taking place around them. Do they provide comfort to us today? How at peace are we, with spending time in quiet reflection or are we more comfortable with the noise of the online world, multitasking and endless 'urgent' notifications?

CALL TO REFLECTION:

We are called together in a brief time of reflection to consider our sense of INNER PEACE. How do we support one another and especially our young people in developing an appreciation for inner calm and for opportunities to listen to the still small voice of God?

St Madeleine Sophie Barat spoke often about the importance of the interior life, ***"Go to the Heart of Jesus and draw from it, and when you need more, go back to the Source and draw again."***

If we are to have the energy and stamina for the work of justice and peace for the transformation of the world, we must give enough time for the transformation of our interior lives.

I WIDEN MY HEART:

Many of our Sacred Heart schools have well-being rooms; thoughtfully decorated spaces, with soft lighting and furnishings and specialist pastoral staff who can support students who are struggling with their mental health and with accessing the curriculum. Educators who visit our schools, from all over the world, report similar challenges for many of their own students – from Mexico to Peru, from Hungary to Indonesia, so many young people are struggling to find a sense of peace within.

A 2023 UK survey identified that 1 in 5 young people experience a mental health problem each year[i] and multiple studies have explored the link between excessive screen time (an average of 5 hours per day for 15-year-olds) and the increase in mental health challenges for young people.[ii]

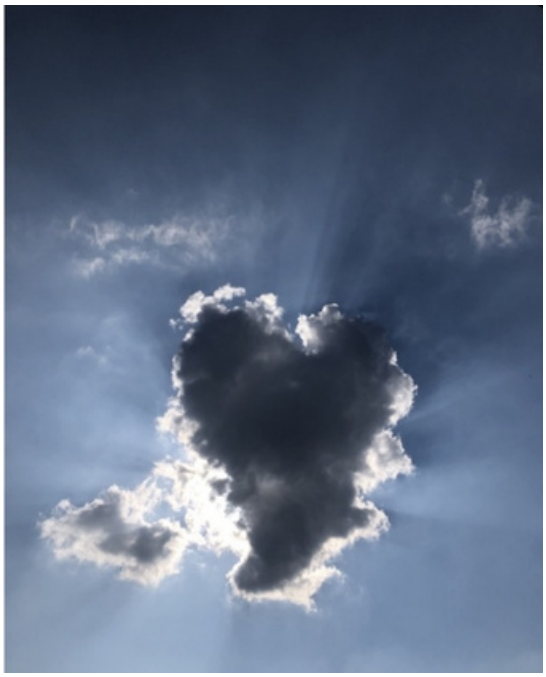
Anecdotally, many young people prefer to keep busy and distracted, than choose to spend screen-free time or spend time engaging in deeply reflective conversations with their peers, "It's not that deep!" is a common response to an invitation to a difficult conversation. One young person commented, "I love reflective activities, but if I start to talk about my feelings, where will it end? Better to keep busy and move on."

It seems our young people are living in a paradox – we have never been so connected, with hundreds of online interactions and yet never felt so lonely. Esther Perel, psychologist, tells us; *"Modern loneliness masks as hyper-connectivity – I have 1000 online friends, but no one who will feed my cat!"[i]*

If our young people are choosing to keep busy, choosing not to talk about the difficulties of life, how can they carry it all?

During the Easter weekend in 2020, when collectively we felt the sadness and loss of community, as we marked the Resurrection away from our churches due to the COVID pandemic, a beautiful cloud appeared, for just a few minutes over London:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."



WORD OF GOD:

Time and again, Jesus leaves the crowds and spends time alone in prayer. We follow His invitation and remember the words of Janet Erskine Stuart: ***"To go into the presence of God is like going out into the freshness of the morning air."***



And what words do we take with us, out into the fresh air, to build this sense of inner peace?

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23

I have everything that I need, God provides me with all that I need, in the time that I need it. Peace is with me.

I can meditate this psalm: **The Lord is my shepherd** or **Psalm 23 – Harp&Voice Stuart Townend**

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Psalm 139

No matter what the busy world is telling me, or what outrage I am touched by online, no matter how small and lonely I might feel, I am part of God's most precious and valuable creation. Peace is with me.

I OPEN MYSELF TO PEACE:

Whether my days are filled with service and the work of peace and justice, or filled with multitasking distractions, I commit to carving out some time for my interior life and my sense of inner peace. I can choose to set aside time in my diary to spend without distraction and out in nature when I can. I can model this for the young people in my life, for my students, for my family. I recognise that only if my roots are deep and nourished, can I grow wide branches under which others can shade.

WE SHARE IN OUR GROUP:

How do you nourish your interior life?

How can you make space for stillness and peace?

How can we build this capacity for our young people?



WE REFLECT TOGETHER:

I am Peace, surrounded by Peace, secure in Peace.
Peace protects me.
Peace supports me.
Peace is in me – All is well.
Peace to all beings, Peace among all beings, Peace from all Beings.
I am steeped in Peace, absorbed in Peace.
In the streets, at our work,
Having peaceful thoughts, peaceful words, peaceful acts.

(Buddhist meditation)

Music: Shepherd Me, O God – Marty Haughen | Carry this All – Alexandra Blakely

References:
[1]https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2023-wave-4-follow-up
[1] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmeduc/118/summary.html
[1] https://brenebrown.com/podcast/new-ai-artificial-intimacy/

Vicky Lorenzato
Sacred Heart Network of Schools



April
2021

Ecological Peace

CALL TO REFLECTION:

"What does the Spirit come to do! The Spirit comes to create. She is called "Creator Spirit' because her action consists of a creation she wants to effect in each of us." (St. Madeline Sophie Barat)



Every year, Christians celebrate the "Season of Creation" (September 1st to October 4th) as a time to raise environmental awareness and to promote ecological activism. In the context of this global movement, this step on our "Spiritual Itinerary on Peace" is taken to draw our consciousness toward the intersection between peace and ecology, and the "urgent moral need for a new solidarity." (Pope John Paul II, Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation, 1 January,1990, #10)

On our journey this month, this call to a "new solidarity" can be seen in an integral way when considering the four core elements of all of creation: air, water, earth, and fire. These elements of nature are both unitive and discreet, connecting all of creation into a magnificent cycle of life. Looking closely through the lens of our minds, hearts and spirit, we can hear the groaning of our planet in its ecological crisis and, hopefully, the responses that are essential for peace. (Ibid.)

Each week of this month, we will focus our prayer, reflection and action on one of these rhythmic elements of nature, highlighting attitudes and actions that align with this holistic and harmonious view of God's luminous presence in our world.

Here is the first itinerary as part of our "Artisans of Peace" year, which can be completed over four weeks.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Melanie Guste, RSCJ, for writing this guide.

Opening Song:
All Creation Worships You or Creation Calls

Week 1 - Air

Constellations | Clouds | Atmosphere



The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands. (Ps. 19: 1)

For great is your love, higher than the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches to the skies. (Ps 108:4)

Context:

The air that we breathe is the breath of life, a force which regenerates our bodies with a rich flow of energy. Opening spaces within us, the air fills us with the rich bounty of God's gifts of centeredness, clarity and calm. Changing the atmosphere around us, the air creates a constant shift on the literal and metaphorical horizon of life. Attentiveness to the air that surrounds us and sustains us, accentuates our utter reliance on God– the God who works in mysterious ways which are utterly beyond our grasp and understanding.

Widening my Heart:

“Certain elements of today's ecological crisis reveal its moral character. First among these is the indiscriminate application of advances in science and technology. Many recent discoveries have brought undeniable benefits to humanity. Indeed, they demonstrate the nobility of the human vocation to participate responsibly in God's creative action in the world. Unfortunately, it is now clear that the application of these discoveries in the fields of industry and agriculture have produced harmful long-term effects. This has led to the painful realization that we cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations.

The gradual depletion of the ozone layer and the related "greenhouse effect" has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs. Industrial waste, the burning of fossil fuels, unrestricted deforestation, the use of certain types of herbicides, coolants and propellants: all of these are known to harm the atmosphere and environment. The resulting meteorological and atmospheric changes range from damage to health to the possible future submersion of low-lying lands.

While in some cases the damage already done may well be irreversible, in many other cases it can still be halted. It is necessary, however, that the entire human community - individuals, States and international bodies - take seriously the responsibility that is theirs.” *(Pope John Paul II, Ibid. #6)*



International Focus:

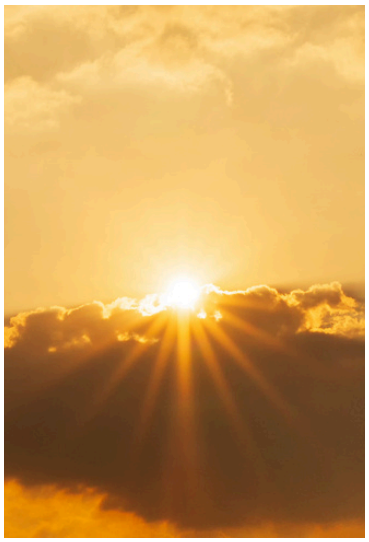
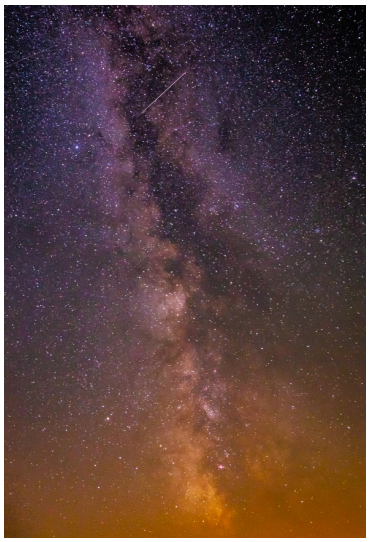
The World Health Organization data show that "almost all of the global population (99%) breathe air that exceeds WHO guideline limits and contains high levels of pollutants, with low- and middle-income countries suffering from the highest exposures. Air quality is closely linked to the earth's climate and ecosystems globally."

Reflection or Sharing in Group:

In what ways, do you encounter God's living presence in the air that you breathe? How would you describe the effect of this awareness on your life? To what does this gift of the air that we breathe call you?

Attitude to Nourish:

Wonder | Attentiveness | Gratitude | Artistry


Call to Action:

Become an artisan of peace through a specific commitment to **reducing one's carbon footprint**.

Closing Song: Sing Gently, Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir 6

Week 2 - Water

Seas / Rivers / Streams



Opening Song:
Oh, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus (ft. Fernando Ortega) Audrey Assad

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. (Psalm 23: 2-3)

Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." (John 7:38)

Context:

Water is essential for life and ecological balance. In its simple precise chemistry, we can discern its integral relationship to peace. Covering 71% of the planet's surface, water is vital to the future of earth, to all living creatures and to life itself. Water cleans, regulates, refreshes and sustains life on earth. As the source of life, we recognize the necessity of access to it and conservation of it.

Widening my Heart:

"Transformation and evolution are two intertwined forces that shape the cosmos, life, and human consciousness. They represent a dynamic of gradual change, slow and adaptative processes and growth. The image of the river travelling different landscapes from the source to the sea, spoke powerfully of the connection between the 'what' and the 'why' of our relationship with God and our call as persons of faith.

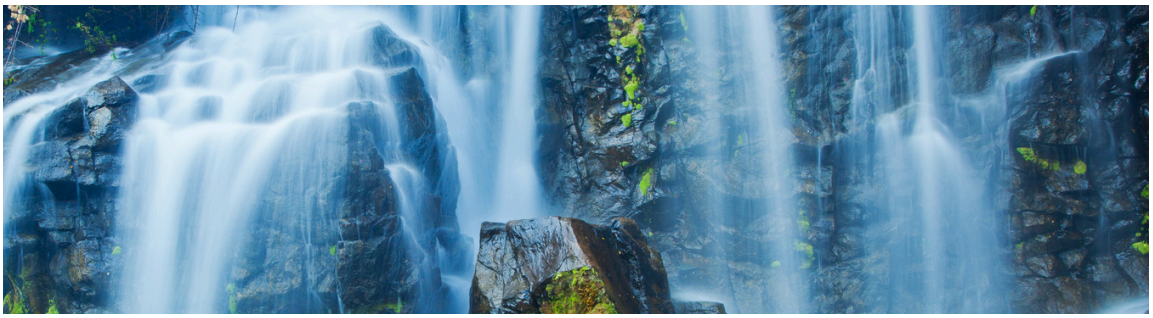
We recognized that in each of us there is a deep well, a source where God dwells. Sometimes the well is blocked with stones and gravel and God is hidden. In the same way, with our disordered attachments and resistances we prevent ourselves experiencing and responding to God's love. This experience reminds us of the words of Madeleine Sophie: 'In each one of us there is a spring, sometimes it's hidden under the bad weeds; all we have to do is remove them and the clear, limpid spring will spring up again.' (Madeleine Sophie Barat, Conference LXIX, Pentecost 1847) We prayed for the grace of inner freedom, recognizing that God is our source and final destination." *(General Chapter, 2024, p. 25)*

International Focus:

"...The world has already entered the era of Global Water Bankruptcy. This is not a distant threat but a present reality: many human–water systems are now in a post-crisis failure state where past baselines can no longer be restored.

Billions of people are living with chronic water insecurity. Around 2.2 billion people still lack safely managed drinking water, 3.5 billion lack safely managed sanitation, and nearly 4 billion face severe water scarcity for at least one month each year. Almost three-quarters of the world's population live in countries classified as water-insecure or critically water-insecure.

Recognizing this reality is uncomfortable, but it is also empowering. (**Global Water Bankruptcy: Living Beyond Our Hydrological Means in the Post-Crisis Era,** United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment, and Health, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada, 2026)



Reflection or Sharing in Group:

In what ways, have you encountered God's living presence in "the deep well?" How do you respond to moments when things seem blocked, stagnant, hidden, or unchanging–the opposite of "healthy water?"

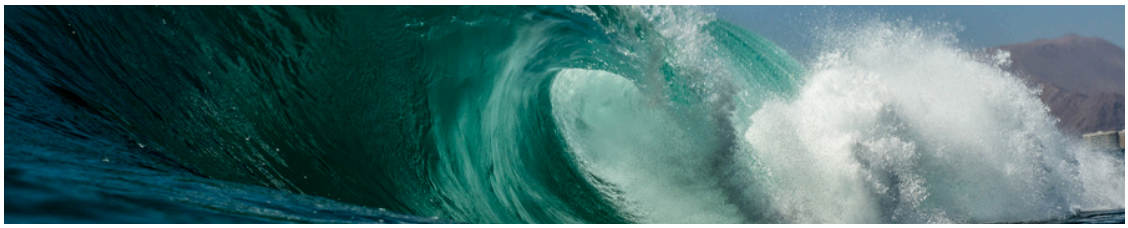
To what does the gift of the water that sustains you-and all others-call you?

Attitude to Nourish:

Flow | Fluidity | Openness | Availability







Call to Action:

Continue to do the work that is necessary to remove the "stones and gravel"–the attachments and resistances–that hinders you/us from recognizing God's presence in the created world. What is it that you are being called to move or remove? **Choose several actions-- among the many--that you and your community can do to conserve water.**

Closing Song: LET ALL WHO THIRST | Dan Schutte

Week 3 - Earth

Animals | Trees | Birds | Flowers | Food

Opening Song: Everyday God – Bernadette Farrell [Official Lyric Video]

Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you. (Isaiah 54:10)



You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. (Isaiah 55: 12)

Context:

The earth grounds us through the voracious and unrelenting pull of gravity to itself. Theologian Karl Rahner spoke about God as the "ground of our being." Offering substance and shelter, it nourishes all beings. It unites all beings in a web of inter-connectedness and inter-dependence; and in a relationship of true community and "kinship."

Widening my Heart:

"Nature thus becomes a gospel which speaks to us of God: 'from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.' (Wis 13:5). Paul teaches us that 'ever since the creation of the world his [God's] invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.' (Rom 1:20). But this capacity for contemplation and knowledge, this discovery of a transcendent presence in created things must lead us also to rediscover our kinship with the earth, to which we have been linked since our own creation (cf. Gn 2:7). This is precisely the goal which the Old Testament wished for the Hebrew Jubilee, when the land was at rest and man ate what the fields spontaneously gave him (cf. Lv 25:11-12). If nature is not violated and degraded, it once again becomes man's sister." *(John Paul II General Audience of January 26, 2000, #5)*

International Focus:

The planet earth is groaning out loud. It is "grappling with a host of pressing environmental challenges that demand immediate attention and action. **Earth.org** documents the **16 biggest environmental problems of 2026** which--while painting "a stark picture of the urgent need for climate change mitigation and adaptation"--offer ways in which we all can create a more sustainable planet.



Reflection or Sharing in Group:

In what ways, have you encountered God's covenant of love and peace? In what ways are you discovering your kinship with the earth? To what does the gift of this kinship with the "blue planet" call you?

Attitude to Nourish:

Harmony | Balance | Relationships | Community





Call to Action:

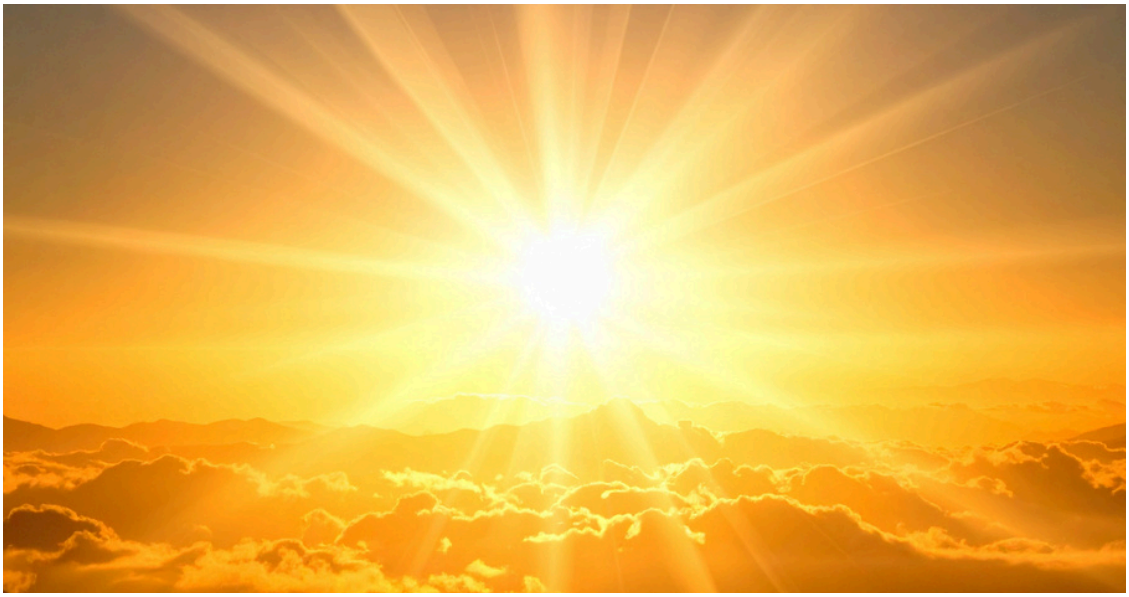
Take a walk, mindfully. Get grounded. Listen to the voice of the earth. Explore the social and cultural roots of your kinship systems, culture and relationships.

You can watch the video for "Via Creationis" or the corresponding prayers created in collaboration with the "Laudato Si" movement.

Closing Song: Everyday God – Bernadette Farrell [Official Lyric Video]
Canto della Terra. Andrea Bocelli. English lyrics

Week 4 - Fire

Energy | Light | Heat



Word of God: He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." (Daniel 3: 25)

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. (Isaiah 43: 2)

Opening Song: "You Are the Light" Sarah Hart

Context:

Fire may seem to be frightening to many of us, searing, burning, and devastating. Concomitantly, fire purifies and transforms landscapes to return nutrients into the earth, triggers growth, creates biodiversity, opens up new possibilities for all of creation. Fire is a reflection of God's transforming purifying presence. During "fiery" or intense times of pain and suffering, God's living presence manifests in perhaps invisible, incomprehensible, or anonymous ways, but His Love is regenerative and restorative.

Reflection or Sharing in Group:

In what ways, have you encountered God's living presence in "fiery" or intense times? How does God's presence in these kinds of times restore your energies, give you light and offer you peace? How do you describe God's puritive presence in your life?

International Focus:

"Fire seasons worldwide are getting longer: we will face more fires in the future, even in the territories where they did not happen before. Why? Fires and climate change operate in a vicious cycle: as the number of fires increase, so do greenhouse gas emissions, increasing the planet's overall temperature and the occurrence of extreme weather events, such as major droughts. And at the same time the drier and the hotter our climate is, the easier flames spread." (Global Fires Dashboard, Greenpeace, 2026)

Attitude to Nourish:

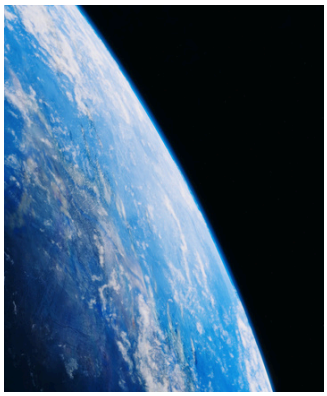
Hope | Trust | Surrender | Courage

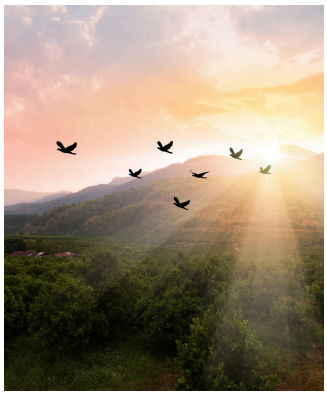
Call to Action:

Plant or donate a Tree. Commit to sustainable practices in your personal, professional and community life. **Take Climate Action Right Now** to slow down the climate crisis.

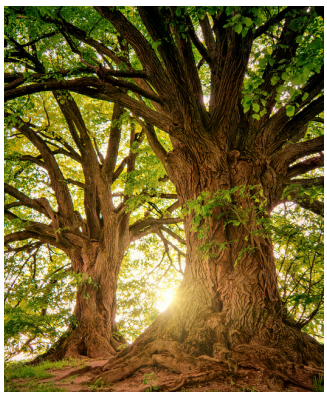
Closing Song: "You Are the Light" Sarah Hart











Closing Prayer :

A Prayer for our Earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one....

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. (Adapted: Pope Francis, Laudato Si', 2015)

Closing Song:
"You Are the Light" Sarah Hart

Melanie Guste RSCJ
ANAM Province

May
2021

Sophie's Quest for Peace



Drawing by Inmaculada Clavel, professor at Godella College

Her Context:

From the moment of her birth, Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat (1779–1865) yearned for peace on many levels: physical, social, interpersonal–both within and outside the community–and spiritual. Born prematurely amidst her mother's fear of fire, she later endured the terror of the French Revolution in Joigny, notably the imprisonment of her brother Louis. After moving to Paris at the age of 16 (1795–1800), she witnessed political upheaval and religious persecution. These experiences deepened her sensitivity but also fueled a profound longing for inner peace and a commitment to stand alongside women working to heal a violent society.

Sophie's vision extended beyond her family and her country to encompass all humanity, and was centered on the praise of God. She believed that worship and education would foster human happiness and peace. As head of the Amiens community (1802), and later as Superior General (from 1806), she travelled throughout France despite her frail health, founding communities and schools, and guiding the congregation through internal and external crises that shaped its identity (Constitutions of 1815; papal approval in 1826). Expansion across Europe and America brought new challenges, notably a crisis of governance (1839–1843) and tensions with the Church and the State.

Over time, Sophie came to realize that lasting peace depended less on structures than on hearts formed by the humility and gentleness of Christ. From 1843 onwards, her life bore witness to the conviction that only the love and peace of Christ – risen from his death on the cross at Calvary – could heal individuals, communities and societies. She completed her mission on Ascension Thursday, 25 May 1865.

Her Letters:

Sophie spoke of 'peace' repeatedly (more than 1,122 times), often quoting from the Holy Scriptures. She taught that peace is a gift from God, received through hope and the Holy Spirit, and that the peace of Christ surpasses human understanding.

- Ps 122,6 (May there be peace.) "I wish you peace! Go and draw it from the lovable Heart of Jesus, and when it weakens, find it there again. Pray also for me when you think of it." *(Sophie Barat to Philippine Duchesne, Poitiers, April 12, 1807)*
- Phil. 4:7 (May the peace of God guard your hearts...): "It is now a matter of preserving with the utmost care this peace, a gift from the Heart of Jesus, which must be so precious to you. Fidelity will be its guardian, humility its companion, and trust the one who will bring it back into your soul, should any self-absorption cause it to depart for a moment." *(Sophie Barat to Adrienne Michel, Paris, 10 July 1826)*
- Phil 4:7 (The peace of God, which far surpasses all human understanding): "Let us therefore look to God and to souls, and keep nothing for yourselves... With this attitude, Jesus Christ will act through you and within you. Ah! What a joy it is to be thus united with our God for the salvation of souls. Be faithful to the Holy Spirit even in the smallest details... You know well what the Lord wants, and you will enjoy that peace of which the Apostle speaks: 'The peace that surpasses all understanding.' *(Sophie Barat to Emilie Giraud, Niort, 24 July 1827)*

- John 14:27 (Peace I leave with you.): "All is peaceful (in Niort) and therefore the spirit of the Lord Jesus reigns there unchallenged. 'I leave you my peace; I give you my peace. Peace be with all people of good will!'... Oh! What virtues this peace of Jesus implies: self-forgetfulness, patience with one's neighbor, perfect charity that takes everything in good spirit, that excuses, etc... But then what are its fruits? Union with Jesus. 'As I am one with you, Father, may they be one with me, so that they may be perfected in unity.'... Let us hasten to draw him into our hearts; let us remove from them all that displeases him, that hinders him, that binds him –this 'I'! This 'I' that we detest and yet which still lives. Ah, let us sanctify ourselves." *(Sophie Barat to Emilie Giraud, Rome, 23 December 1841)*
- John 20:19 (Peace be with you.): "Continue, then, to give your heart completely and unreservedly; then these words of Jesus will resonate deeply within the depths of your soul: peace be with you. "For the Lord is always seeking hearts sufficiently open to him that he may give them this sweet peace: one need only appreciate it, desire it and ask for it ardently." *(Sophie Barat to Elisa de Bouchaud, Paris, 22 April 1846)*

Her Practical Counsels:

She constantly urged us to draw peace from the Heart of Jesus:

- Let us draw peace from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let us always return to it.
- Let us draw close to God, think only of others, and forget ourselves.
- Let us encourage and support our neighbours.
- Let us free ourselves from self-centredness.
- Let us be faithful to the Holy Spirit in even the smallest of tasks.



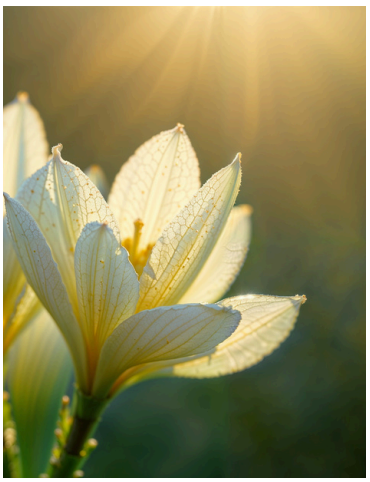
Her Message Resonates with Pope Leo XIV's :

Pope Leo XIV urged everyone to commit themselves daily to achieving peace, which is "possible when we choose to listen to the cry of those who are deprived of it" *(cf. Ps 85:9)*: "Even in times of conflict, peace is possible. Peace is not a theory to be tested in a laboratory, nor a naïve illusion, nor a matter to be pursued out of self-interest. Rather, it must be sought with a sincere heart. It is a daily commitment. Peace comes from justice and love. It is the harmony that unites families, peoples, communities and nations. Peace is always possible because it is a gift from God. His peace has a face – the face of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is Jesus who breaks down the walls of hostility and overcomes arrogance with humility. He redeems all creation from sin. The Holy Spirit is able to make possible what seems humanly impossible. True peace begins in a heart that loves: when people speak words of reconciliation and when we look upon the world with gentleness and wisdom. This is true strength, the strength of truth and love." *('Vatican News', newsletter written by Kielce Gussie, 30 May 2026)*

From an Asian Perspective:

1) Etymology and meaning of ***'Peace'*** in Chinese (Pinghé , 平和): - 'píng, 平' : ***Balance and Equality*** - 'hé, 和' (a combination of '禾, grain/food' and '口, mouth'): ***Harmony and Sustenance.*** It literally depicts 'food entering every mouth equally' and represents a state where everyone is well-fed, satisfied, and living in social harmony. In ancient Chinese characters, 'Peace (平和)' is not just the absence of war. Its true origin means a state of society where 'resources and food are shared equally without discrimination (平), allowing everyone to eat well and live together in perfect harmony (和).'

2) Four-stage path to Peace ('Xiūshēn Qíjiā Zhìguó Píngtiānxià, 修身 齊家 治國 平天下'): *1. self-cultivation* (修身), *2. family regulation* (齊家), *3. state governance* (治國), *4. bringing peace to the world* (平天下).



This four-stage path taken from the Chinese classic, The Great Learning or Daxue (大學), echoes Sophie's progression from inner union with Christ to the outward extension of peace. echoes Sophie's progression from interior union with Christ to extending peace outward. When applied to contemporary political leadership, this philosophy implies that those who aspire to negotiate global peace must first cultivate their own body and mind and properly govern their family and state before they turn to engaging in international deliberations aimed at achieving world peace.

Her Legacy: Cor Unum

Sophie's first community, made up of women from different social backgrounds—the poor, ordinary people and the aristocracy—all deeply scarred by violence, death, social upheaval and uncertainty, embodied a radical inclusivity based on equal dignity and a shared mission, in a world carefully structured along class lines. As the foundations of community life were gradually laid over the course of a long process, each person found her place and her rightful role within the community, sharing a common mission. (Ref: Phil Kilroy, The Society of the Sacred Heart in Nineteenth-Centry, France, 1800-1865, Chapter 1 'One Musical Ensemble'.)

At a time when a reorganisation of governance was needed, the leadership crisis (1839–1843) threatened unity; yet Sophie always sought the middle ground, a form of compromise to avoid becoming trapped in irreconcilable polarities. She placed Cor Unum at the heart of her journey towards peace and reconciliation. She mentioned it in her letters—14 times, particularly since the period of crisis—to pass on this precious legacy to the Society. Cor Unum thus became the fruit of her leadership for peace, and we still live by it today as our motto.

- *"The motto of the Society, as you know, is: Cor unum et anima una, and each one must make the greatest sacrifices to hold to the practice of this sweet precept which pleases the Sacred Heart of Jesus so greatly!" (Sophie Barat to Aloysia Hardey, Rome, October 30, 1837)*
- *"I know only that you received them with the tender charity that characterizes the cor unum of the Society, and I wished to thank you for it." (Sophie Barat to de Trannoy, Paris, May 10, 1860)*
- *"In the richness of our varying cultures and diversity of our commitments, these Constitutions will be a bond of love and unity placing upon the whole Body the seal of God's work. We shall form but one heart and one mind, thus giving reality to the words: Cor unum et anima una in Corde Jesus." (Constitutions 181)*



Her leadership for Peace: From Today's perspective

Sophie is now recognized as a model of peaceful leadership. She promoted a humble and compassionate devotion to the Heart of Jesus, laid the educational foundations for reconciliation, and trained women leaders capable of bridging social divides. Her spirituality of God's reconciling love remains entirely relevant in the face of contemporary conflicts, and it constantly echoes Pope Leo XIV's teaching on peace from his first Urbi et Orbi blessing *('a peace that is unarmed and disarming', as emphasized in This Peace That Comes from God).*

Words for meditation: *Psalm 85:9–14; John 20:19–23; Philippians 4:4–9.*

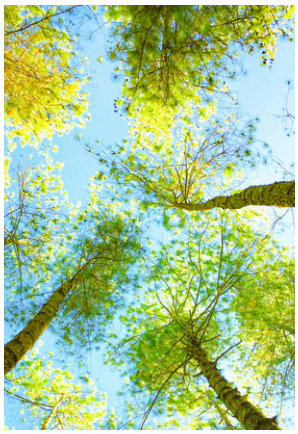
Reflection Points:

1. Have I ever felt a burning desire for peace? When and how?

2. Have I ever experienced reconciliation with myself, with others, or within a community? If so, what made it possible?

3. Am I aware of my inner dynamics when I am guided by the Holy Spirit and when I am not?

4. What do I learn from Sophie's leadership for peace and her practices?



Music:

Prayer of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat - Convent of the Sacred Heart High School Choir ℗ 2009 William Trichon
Deep Peace – Libera
Deep Peace - Shaina Noll
Concerto pour la paix - Omar Harfouch
Traditional Chinese Music, Guzheng Performance - **"Joy and Peace"**
Song for peace – les glotte trotters (Yiddish, Arabic, Rom)

Kim Hyo Seung RSCJ
NEANZ Province



June
2021

BUILDING AND WEAVING THE WORK OF PEACE TOGETHER

A commitment from everyone



For those of us who consider ourselves followers of Christ, peace is a constant pursuit, an imperative, an inalienable right, a human right, and at the same time an obligation to live in mutual responsibility. We must therefore acknowledge that there is such a thing as positive peace, which is not limited to the absence of war (negative peace), but rather a peace that stems from a desire to live together in harmony, to foster healthy, interdependent relationships based on respect, solidarity and mutual support.

For Christians, this vision ultimately becomes the utopia of the Kingdom, a calling that we believe can be built up day by day, even if it may never be fully attained, but which keeps us on the right path.

As the Sacred Heart Family, we firmly believe that peace is like a piece of craftsmanship, woven and constructed, by each and every one of us.

Texts for reflection: The Social Teaching of the Church

According to Gaudium et Spes, from the Second Vatican Council:

"Peace is never a finished task, but a perpetual endeavour... the pursuit of peace demands the commitment of every one of us... all Christians are urgently called upon to pray for and work towards peace." (GS 78)

Peace is seen as a gift from God, granted by Christ, and at the same time a task that requires diligent effort, based on key principles such as Love, Justice and Fraternity.

"With the help of Christ, the author of peace, ... (May Christians) ...work together with all people to build peace on justice and love, and to provide the means for peace." (GS 77) "The practice of solidarity is necessary for building peace. Thus, peace is also the fruit of love, which surpasses all that justice can achieve." (GS 78)

This peace, which springs from love and is nourished by justice, can only be given by Jesus.

Voices from the present that challenge us:

Since 2022, a broad-based initiative known as the 'National Dialogue for Peace' has been taking place in Mexico, organised by the Church—namely, the Mexican Episcopal Conference (CEM), the Conference of Religious Men and Women, and the Society of Jesus.



In early 2026, the second meeting of the National Dialogue for Peace was held in Guadalajara, where Monsignor Ramón Castro, president of the CEM, emphasised that building peace requires listening, discerning and acting; it is the vocation of every person to seek a social order of harmonious relationships, placing victims at the centre, in the conviction that peace can only be achieved if there is truth, justice and reparation. Therefore, all social partners must share ethical responsibility, building on a culture of mutual care and striving for an organised and persistent hope, recognising that peacebuilding is a long-term endeavour that needs to be sustained in the face of difficulties, and that it requires prophetic and creative courage to confront adversity.

Pope Leo XIV

The first year of Leo XIV's pontificate has been marked by a ceaseless call for peace; from the very beginning, he has emphasised a desire for peace that involves all of humanity as a shared responsibility.

He expressed this view at the prayer vigil for peace he organised on 11 April 2026, when he said that men and women from different countries have a responsibility to reject war, not only in words but in deeds. He went on to say that "prayer commits us to transforming whatever traces of violence remain in our hearts and minds: let us turn towards a Kingdom of peace that is built up day by day, in our homes, in schools, in our neighbourhoods, and in our civil and religious communities, by countering controversy and defeatism with friendship and the culture of encounter...Everyone has their place in the mosaic of peace!"He reiterates that there is indeed a "craft of peace" that involves us all, as Pope Francis pointed out in "Fratelli Tutti" # 231.

Throughout the world, we hope "that every community may become a 'house of peace', where we learn to resolve conflict through dialogue, where justice is practised and forgiveness is fostered". 'Today more than ever, indeed, we need to show that peace is not a utopia' (Message for the 59th World Day of Peace, 1 January 2026).



In his first encyclical, "Magnifica Humanitas," he clearly states: "All of us, at every level, can contribute to building the foundation of peace, which is justice. We do not merely seek any kind of peace – such as an absence of conflict at any cost – but instead, the true peace born of justice." [215]

Let us love justice and peace! The same technologies that facilitate communication and access to resources can also support models that exploit the most vulnerable, create new forms of slavery and derive profit from conflict. At the same time, practical ways of fostering fairness, participation and care for creation must be found... those who believe are committed to ensuring that a greater justice will take the place of inequality, and that the industry of war will be replaced by the craft of peace. [240]

Commitment to peace in the Society of the Sacred Heart

The document "Artisans of Hope" (2019) states: "As Sacred Heart educators, we are convinced that 'to educate is in itself an act of justice', , and we take to heart the call to 'orient all our educative endeavours toward creating relationships of equality, inclusion, non-violence and harmony, believing that to have life, and life in abundance, is the deepest desire of God." (P. 10)

Let us reflect on the Word of God

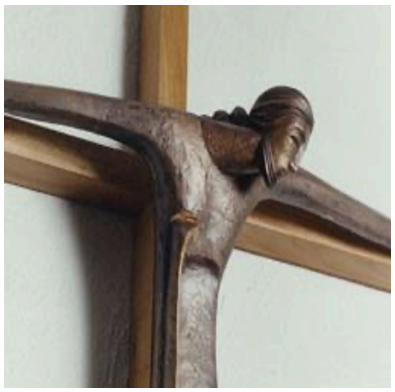
"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!" (Isaiah 2: 4-5)

This prophecy from Isaiah is a highly relevant call for us to work towards a peace that is both unarmed and disarming, as Pope Leo XIV invites us to do. Where young people are no longer trained for war but instead receive an education for peace. Where technology serves life, not the interests of the powerful. Finally, let us walk together as members of the same people and family, because we are all children of God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."
(Mt 5,9)

To the extent that we are peacemakers—that is, that we see others as our brothers and sisters—and that we are able not only to think or imagine this, but to act in truth from a deep solidarity with our neighbour, especially with the victims, the poor and those who suffer, then the Beatitude of being called children of God is fulfilled, because we recognise and live from the conviction that we all have one Father, who is God.

In 2027, the Gospel for the Feast of the Sacred Heart (John 19:28–37) shows us the piercing of his side. "Blood and water flowed from his side…", teaches us how Jesus is our role model, and how we learn by reflecting on him. "They will look upon the one they have pierced"; thus, in his open Heart we find the source of peace, the One who gave himself without reserve, down to the last drop of life, and who is able to reconcile the world through his death.



We learn from Him, as our Constitutions state: “This contemplative attitude permeates our whole being, helping us to live ever more united to Christ in our relationships, our tasks and our ministry; it becomes a powerful force of conversion and transformation for mission. In welcoming God's word Mary gave Christ to the world. In receiving the life of Jesus, we give ourselves with Him so that all may have life.” (Const. #22)

“ For Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us... So, he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.” (Eph 2: 14,17) As we know, in Christ there are no divisions; rather, we are all brothers and sisters, as the title and content of Pope Francis’s encyclical “Fratelli Tutti” make clear.

Saint Rose Philippine also affirms that God is our peace when she writes: “May your heart find refuge in God alone, for He is your true peace and your joy.”

Opening Our Hearts: Testimonies from Women Artisans of Peace on the Border.

Here we look at the stories of young women who, through their service, bring life to the community.

How do you help build peace by volunteering at a migrant shelter?

Through humanitarian work at the border, welcoming and supporting migrants, peace is promoted by listening, showing empathy, and providing support and care to meet their needs.

By providing safe spaces to recharge and carry on, we aim to be an oasis for people amidst the complexities we are facing globally.

By providing comprehensive support and sharing strategies to help them integrate into the community–above all, by showing love so that, as they feel welcomed and respected in their own journeys, they in turn can live with the sense of love that they have so often lacked, in the hope that they may find it here and also come to believe in themselves. It is important to feel a sense of freedom and to share hope, knowing that God is with us and remains by our side always.

(Contributions from Alma, Anny, Karla, Laura and Maricruz).

An international approach to peace: Migrants' Rights Campaign



By emphasising that migrants' rights are human rights, and that human rights are non-negotiable, in May 2026, a campaign was launched as a civil society organisation, led particularly through the Coalition of Religious Leaders for Justice at the UN to: (1) resist the erosion of migrants' rights, (2) restore the power and dignity of all migrants, and (3) achieve a world where migration policies are based on justice, humanity and hope. The aim is to send a strong message to policymakers: civil society is present, vigilant, organised and we will not remain silent.

We recognise that the most effective way to defend rights is not through individual voices alone, but by the power of a collective voice—of people working together towards a common goal.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- How can I, given my circumstances and situation, be a peacemaker?
- What can I do to promote peace and live out the Beatitude of being a peacemaker?
- What experiences of unity, reconciliation, solidarity and justice have we experienced that lead us to peace?
- Do we know any individuals or groups in our community or elsewhere who are builders or artisans of peace?

Call to action:

- I'm making a small commitment this week as a builder and weaver of peace.
- Perhaps building stronger ties within the community, or perhaps joining an initiative or organisation that works for peace, whether in person or even online.
- It can also mean sharing with others and spreading the word about something that is being done to keep hope alive.

Closing Prayer :

God of Peace,
The peace You planted in this world
is overshadowed by suffering and injustice.
Yet we believe, O God, that Your peace is not lost–
It is waiting to be reborn again in us.
Make us instruments of Your peace.
Grant us the courage to be peacemakers, to be artisans of peace
in our homes, our communities, and our world.
Teach us to listen with humility and act with compassion,
To stand for justice with love.
Let Your peace flourish in each of us, Lord,
so that it may flow outward
and touch every wounded heart.
We ask this in faith and surrender,
trusting in Your eternal mercy.

JCoR India – Prayer service (April 10th, 2026)



Music:

"In the Days to Come" - Songs of Peace – Marty Haugen and Marc Anderson:
Watch here
"Peace Be With You" – Shaina Noll: Watch here
"Paz" ("Peace" / "Paix") – Cecilia Rivero Borrell rscj
Music: Watch here
Lyrics: Read here
"La Paz de la Tierra" ("The Peace of the Earth") – Traditional Guatemalan
Bilingual version: Watch here

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THANK YOU!



If you want to learn more about artisans of peace, visit

artisansofpeace.org

Design by Rena Bersola - JPIC Team
Images: Delphine Letrose

