

Pope Francis' World Day of Peace Message 2019- "Good politics serves peace"

The second Sunday of Ordinary time, this year 20th January 2019, is when the Church in England and Wales celebrates Peace Sunday. On this day Pax Christi promotes the Holy Father's message for World Day of Peace (1st January). This year the theme is "Good politics serves peace".

In this assembly we will be reflecting on this message and what this means for us when we think about peace. From slides 6-10 (labelled as [6], [7] etc.) give students the statements first and get them to think about whether they agree or disagree (they could show you with a thumbs up, down or in the middle). It might be good to get some ideas why. Each statement is then followed by a quote from Pope Francis.

[2] You might remember last year there was a lot of tension between the USA and North Korea. In 1969 the world was facing a similar crisis. Many countries in the world were arguing and taking sides against each other. Worryingly, both sides had nuclear weapons and were threatening to use them. The USA found missiles belonging to the Soviet Union very close to them in Cuba and felt threatened.

[3] The President of the USA, President Kennedy, blocked ships from the Soviet Union from going to Cuba and the tension made nuclear war seem likely. President Kennedy asked Pope John XXIII to help to ease the tension. During the Pope's weekly audience he said: *'The Pope always speaks well of those statesmen, on whatever side, who strive to come together to avoid war and bring peace to humanity'*. The Pope sent a message to Moscow, the capital of the Soviet Union, asking for them to continue talking and negotiating for peace. President Khrushchev, the president of the Soviet Union, then felt he was able to have the authority to take the missiles away from Cuba and look like a peacemaker.

[4] Afterwards Khrushchev said: *'What the Pope has done for peace will go down in history'*. (Source: Taken from Peter Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII: Pope of the Council*, Geoffrey Chapman, 1984, pp 445-448)

This story is about two politicians who worked to achieve a peaceful outcome with help from the Pope.

[5] This year, Pope Francis' message for World Peace Day is about politics. He says "Good politics serves peace". There are many conflicts happening around the world, such as in Yemen and Syria, as well as closer to home, with divisions among different communities and even within families. Often political decisions can be at the root of these conflicts and so it is important to think a little bit more about peace and our actions to think about how we confront this in our lives.

I'm going to say some statements and I would like to know if you agree or disagree. The Pope might also have something to say!

[6] Peace is happy (*get some opinions*)

"Christian joy is peace, peace that is deeply rooted, peace in the heart, the peace that only God can give" *Homily, Casa Santa Marta, 28 May, 2018*

[7] Peace is about people (*get some opinions*)

"We learn that to bring about true peace, it is necessary to bring people together concretely so as to reconcile peoples and groups"

Pope Francis, Message to Pax Christi International gathering, Rome, April 2016

[8] Politicians have to work for peace (*get some opinions*)

“Political office and political responsibility ... challenge those called to the service of their country to make every effort to protect those who live there and to create the conditions for a worthy and just future.”

Pope Francis, message for World Day of Peace, 2018

[9] We all have to work for peace (*get some opinions*)

“Everyone can contribute his or her stone to help build the common home”

Pope Francis, message for World Day of Peace, 2018

“Peace involves work; it is not about staying calm and doing nothing. No! True peace means working so that everyone has a solution to the problems...in their society.” *Pope Francis, audience with children of the Peace Factory, 2015*

[10] I can help create peace (*get some opinions*)

“A better world can be built also as a result of your efforts, your desire to change and your generosity. Do not be afraid to listen to the Spirit who proposes bold choices.” *Pope Francis, invitation to young people to 2018 Synod*

[11] Pax Christi works to share the peace of Christ with our world. Our work is valued by the Vatican.

“Movements like yours are invaluable. They make people sensitive to any violence which destroys harmony between individuals... They take part in training consciences so that ...the foundations of lasting

peace may be victorious...” *Pope John Paul II, 1995, Pax Christi’s 50th Anniversary*

And in 2016 Pope Francis called on Pax Christi to “revitalise the tools of nonviolence, and of active non-violence in particular” in order to help create peace.

[12] Jesus says “Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). In his World Day of Peace message, Pope Francis recognises 3 parts to peace: “peace with oneself”, “peace with others” and “peace with all creation”. Let’s take a moment of silence to think of ways today in school that we could be peacemakers– perhaps acting in a more peaceful way, listening to others or doing something to make our school a nicer place. Offer this as a prayer for peace.

[13] Let us now all pray together a prayer of Pope Francis for peace, thinking of that call to be peacemakers in the psalms: “seek peace and pursue it” (Psalm 34:14).

Dear Lord,

“Grant us peace, teach us peace; guide our steps in the way of peace.

Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say: “Never again war!” “With war everything is lost”.

Instil in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.

Amen”

Pope Francis, 2014

For more information about the Pope’s peace message and Peace Sunday, visit the Pax Christi website at: <http://paxchristi.org.uk/news-and-events/peace-sunday/>. You can also find a link to the Peace message itself.

More information about Pax Christi and peace education can be found here: <http://paxchristi.org.uk/peace-education/>

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