Pax Christi

Peace Sunday
17 January 2016

‘Overcome indifference and win peace’
Pope Francis
World Peace Message 2016

Promoted by Pax Christi with the support of the International Affairs Department, Catholic Bishops’ Conference, England and Wales
Ideas to help the celebration of World Peace Day in your parish

Before Peace Sunday

• Invite those who prepare liturgy / children’s liturgy, or confirmation groups to use the materials in the booklet. The resources can help in the preparation of Mass for Peace Sunday or to create a vigil or holy hour for peace. All of these materials can be downloaded from our website: paxchristi.org.uk/news-and-events/peace-sunday/

• The week before Peace Sunday (Sunday 10th January), put a notice in your parish newsletter/website to remind people of the day and theme.

• Arrange for Pax Christi prayer cards to be given out on Peace Sunday.

• 2016 is the Year of Mercy (celebrated from 8 December 2015 to 20 November 2016). More here www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va/

• Peace Sunday also coincides with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 18-25 January, but that can also be celebrated at other times during the year. The theme for 2016, Salt of the Earth, is inspired by the verses from Peter’s letter and Jesus’ metaphors of salt and light. Information and resources here www.ctbi.org.uk/

Please consider taking a collection to support the work of Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace.

Your help is essential to us.

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© Fr Rob Esdaile for liturgy and scripture reflections © Kate Treanery www.kateincolor.com for cover photo of Maurice Harron’s ‘Hands across the Divide’ sculpture in Derry. ‘Works of Mercy’ illustration on p.15 by Rita Corbin (for the Catholic Worker).
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‘Works of Mercy’ illustration on p.15 by Rita Corbin (for the Catholic Worker).

Timeline for 2016

January
17 Peace Sunday

March
8 International Women’s Day
24 Feast of Bl. Oscar Romero

May
1 St Joseph the Worker
Catholic Worker movement founded by Dorothy Day
15 International Conscientious Objectors’ Day
21 Feast of Bl. Franz Jägerstätter

August
6 & 9 Hiroshima and Nagasaki anniversaries

October
2 International Day of Nonviolence - Gandhi’s birthday
4 Feast of St Francis of Assisi
9 Prisoners Sunday

December
1 Prisoners for Peace Day
3 Migrants and Refugees
10 Human Rights Day

February
10 Ash Wednesday

April
18 Global Day of Action on Military Spending

June
4 International Day for children as victims of war
20-26

September
1 World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation
18-23 World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel
21 UN International Peace Day

November
13 Remembrance Sunday
20 ‘Year of Mercy’ ends

The 49th World Day for Peace, with the title, Overcome indifference and win peace, will be observed in England and Wales on 17 January, 2016, the 2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time (Year C). The readings for the Sunday Eucharist are Isaiah 62.1-5; Ps 96 (95) 1-3, 7-10 (resp. V.3); 1 Cor 12.4-11; Jn 2.1-11.
Introduction to the Liturgy

The Bishops of England and Wales invite us to make today a day of prayer for peace and to reflect on the theme Pope Francis has chosen for the annual World Day of Peace, with the title: Overcome indifference and win peace.

Let’s ponder the suggestion implicit in that title – that it is our lack of concern which is the biggest obstacle to peace in our world; that we have got used to accepting the ubiquity of distrust, discord and naked aggression; got used to the notion that violence is an acceptable way to solve problems; accepted that ‘might is right’ and that the rights of the vulnerable may be trampled on because it is more convenient for the powerful. And let us ask the Lord to change our hearts, so that all may share in the Wedding Feast of God’s Kingdom.

Lord Jesus, in you alone is true peace to be found. Lord have mercy.

Christ Jesus, if we will only listen to your voice and ‘do as you tell us’, you will give to us to share the new wine of the Kingdom. Christ have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you pour out your Spirit upon us, that we might become the sign of your love. Lord, have mercy.

Introduction to the Readings

First Reading (Isaiah 62.1-5)
The Prophet Isaiah shows the very opposite of indifference in the face of the struggles of his people: ‘About Zion I will not be silent!’ he cries. And he counters the complacency of those around with a vision of the Holy City as no longer forsaken or abandoned: it is to become a jewel in God’s hand, a place of delight and peace.

Second Reading (1 Cor 12.4-11)
If ever we are tempted to think, ‘There’s nothing we can do,’ we need to hear Paul’s message in the First Letter to the Corinthians, reminding them how richly blessed we each are with the gifts of the Spirit – gifts which can change not just ourselves but our world, preparing the paths of peace and reconciliation.

Gospel (Jn 2.1-11)
‘They have no wine!’ says Mary in the first of Jesus’ ‘signs’ in John’s Gospel. It isn’t just about an absence of drink but about the lack of what the blessing cup signifies at a wedding – joy, abundance and hope for the future. That
lack of hope and lack of communion is the absence we must address if we are to build peace in our day.

Homily Notes - First Reflection

Anyone who has ever read anything by Pope Francis will have been struck by his mastery of the vivid turn of phrase - whether it’s the idea that pastors ought to have ‘the smell of their sheep’ or the insistence that evangelisers shouldn’t look like they’re on their way back from a funeral as they try to share the Good News! Ordinary people ‘get his drift’, whether they’re church-goers or not. The New York Times called his letter on the environment ‘an urgent, accessible call to action’¹ - and ‘urgent’ and ‘accessible’ aren’t the most obvious qualities of many Vatican documents!

Among Francis’ many choice phrases, some of the most hard-hitting ones are found in the middle of his letter on The Joy of the Gospel in which he laments the growth of a ‘throw-away culture’ and denounces ‘a globalisation of indifference’. It isn’t just that the poorest are exploited; rather they are put on the discard pile as ‘left-overs’. It is human lives that are being ‘discounted’ and thrown away. And, says Pope Francis, that impacts on the wealthy as well: ‘Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people’s pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else’s responsibility and not our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us’².

That is what Pope Francis is inviting us to take stock of today, as we in these islands reflect on the message of the World Day of Prayer for Peace: Overcome indifference and win peace. Indeed, how can we hope for peace while we tolerate indifference, letting ourselves remain unmoved by the dramatic situation of so many of our brothers and sisters, and if we do not seek to understand the causes of so much pain and difficulty?

¹ http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/18/world/europe/encyclical-laudato-si.html
We are all familiar enough with the litany of names of ‘trouble-spots’ that recur again and again in news bulletins - Libya, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Ukraine. But peace will only come when we ask ourselves and our political leaders why these conflicts prove so hard to resolve: whose interests are being served by their continuation?

Could the $1776 billion spent annually on weapons and war preparations\(^3\) have anything to do with it? We are aware of the flow of refugees into Europe and the few thousand congregated at Calais at any time. But what is it that has displaced 59.5 million people from their homes and driven more than 19.5 million of them beyond their homelands’ borders\(^4\)? Again, why do the poorest get increasingly left behind as the world’s wealth increases? How come a billion people still live on less than $1.25 per day\(^5\), that 32% of the world’s population lacks proper sanitation and that 663 million people have no safe drinking water\(^6\); a situation which Pope Francis has identified as itself potentially ‘a major source of conflict in this century’ \(^7\)? Not to ask these questions, to be content with the status quo on which our own relative prosperity is based, is itself indifference - and it eats away at the soul.

Today’s Scriptures offer us a different way of looking at the world and at the need around us. The Mother of Jesus notices the hidden need and the potential shaming of her hosts at the wedding feast at Cana: ‘They have no wine!’ she urgently tells her son. And she tells the servants in their turn to trust in him: ‘Do whatever he tells you’. She says the same to us. Do not turn away - and note that even Jesus was reluctant to get involved! ‘Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come yet.’ Yes, Lord, your hour has come. Our hour has come, too - the hour to dare to get involved; the hour to reject indifference; the hour to let ourselves be disturbed, touched, pained by the shaming, the neglecting, the discarding of our brothers and sisters, the last and least to whom the Christ was sent, the little ones of God. Let us cry out with the Prophet Isaiah: ‘About Zion I will not be silent, about Jerusalem I will not grow weary, until her integrity shines out like the dawn and her salvation flames like a torch!’

We cannot do everything. But we can all do something: let us, like Mary, notice the need - ‘They have no wine’ - and make ourselves true friends and servants of the poor by listening to Christ’s voice in prayer, then ‘doing

\(^6\) UNICEF figures for 2015 at http://www.unicef.org/wash/  
\(^7\) Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si’* On Care for our Common Home (2014), nn.27-31
whatever he tells us’. It is inconvenient and hard at times, of course, to open our eyes and hearts; but infinitely worth it because, as Pope Francis promises us, beyond indifference is the prize we seek, the prize of peace.

Homily Notes - Second Reflection

Have you ever suffered from an ‘earworm’? Whether or not it’s a term you know, the chances are you have. An earworm is a catchy piece of music, a ‘hook’ (to use the jargon), which gets stuck in your brain. And the perverse thing is it’s quite likely to be a snatch of a song that you don’t even like, circling round and round in your head; a case of: ‘Sing an old song to the Lord,’ whether you like it or not.

But today’s psalm invites us to do something different, to escape from the hook and from the deadening pattern of repetition: ‘Sing a new song to the Lord!’ Choose, then, not just your tune but choose your words. Choose a sound-track for your life. And let it be a theme that is worthy of you, a song worth singing, a tune that won’t go flat after a few bars but will remain ever-fresh across a lifetime, ever-infectious for all who hear it. What’s your song to be?

The psalmist offers us advice on how to go about constructing a good song, what elements will make it not just a hit but an enduring one, never stale and always renewed: Bless his name! Proclaim his help day by day! Tell among the nations his glory and his wonders among all the peoples. Give the Lord the glory of his name. Worship in his temple and proclaim God as King, the one who judges with fairness.

We have a song to sing, we Christians. And, as our Bishops remind us on this Peace Sunday, our song is a song of peace - not soft-focus, lazy, trippy-hippy, conflict-avoiding peace; but a peace that is hard won, the work of integrity and struggle, the fruit of faith and hope and love. In our culture we don’t naturally think of peace as something we have to struggle for. We’d far rather buy some ‘peace and quiet’ than pitch in to fight for it. But the title of this year’s World Peace Day reminds us why it demands effort.

Pope Francis’ request to us this year is that we Overcome indifference and [so] win peace. In other words, dare to care; dare to be affected by the absence of peace and by the suffering that brings. The great Christian virtues are Compassion and the related theme of this whole year, our Year of Mercy. But compassion means
literally ‘to suffer with’; to undergo, hence share, the pain of our companion. That is the Gospel that the world needs most to hear, and to hear more by our deeds than by our words. Compassion and mercy, the risk of caring about another, is the gift most likely to bring the healing our world seeks. It is also the way that gives credibility to our faith: the proclamation of a God who judges justly, a King worthy to reign.

Overcome indifference: that means, firstly, overcome the resistance in ourselves which does not wish to know, to be disturbed, to think about the consequences of our actions, our choices, our lifestyle, both for the poor of this world and for the planet which we share as our common home. But it means then also challenging the discourse which says it is not our responsibility to do anything about the brokenness around us (or even the brokenness within us).

Sing, then, a new song, to the Lord - and make it joyful! For we are, as our readings today remind us, guests at a wedding feast, invited to rejoice in love; God’s love for his world; Christ’s love for the Church. The secret might be to begin with gratitude, therefore: ‘Tell among the nations his glory and his wonders among all the peoples’. And begin with little things, not great plans.

Thus Pope Francis reminds us in his letter on the environment, *Laudato Si’*, of the importance of saying grace at meals: ‘The moment of blessing, however brief, reminds us of our dependence on God for life; it strengthens our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation; it acknowledges those who by their labours provide us with these goods; and it reaffirms our solidarity with those in greatest need’. And from that simple act we can proceed to simple gestures of friendship to our neighbours; then to local initiatives that make our part of town a better place; and to choosing to commit ourselves to building up the parish, to reaching out to another faith community, to getting involved in politics or campaigning on a single issue; whatever the Lord tells us to do.

All of these little gestures and bigger choices move us beyond indifference, beyond apathy, beyond standing on the sidelines. And all of these move our world a little closer to the peace of Christ. So let us sing a new song to the Lord, a joyful and life-giving one. Who knows? We might even become someone else’s earworm - a hook they can’t get out of their heads; not this time because it irritates but because it fascinates and promises new life.

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8 Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si’* On Care for our Common Home (2014), n.227
9 Ibid, n.232
Prayers of the Faithful

Priest: At the Wedding Feast at Cana the Mother of Jesus noticed the need around her - that they had no wine. As we gather at the table of the Lord, let us acknowledge the need around us, in the Church and the world, and our own needs too, and let us entrust that need to Christ.

Let us pray for ourselves: that the Lord may lead us beyond indifference; that we may dare to get involved, listening to the Lord in our prayer and then doing whatever he tells us.
   Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

In this ‘Year of Mercy’, let us pray that the whole Church may become a parable of the Compassion of God, a place where all can find reconciliation and peace.
   Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for all married couples, especially for those who are experiencing hardships, misunderstandings or hurt, and for those who feel that ‘they have no wine’, no joy or no strength left in their partnership. May the Lord renew the covenant of their love, day by day.
   Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the young: may they have a passion for justice and work together for a world in which no one is excluded and no one is discarded as though they were mere trash.
   Let us pray to the Lord: Hear our prayer.

We pray today for reconciliation where there is conflict; for peace where there is fighting. We remember today especially [name a situation of oppression or violence in the news at the moment …].
   Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

We ask God’s blessing on all who work for peace and justice, on all who will not be silent in the face of injustice or human hurt; on all who take risks for peace. We ask God’s blessing today especially on the work of the International Catholic Peace Movement, Pax Christi.
   Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

Let us commend to God’s mercy all who are unwell (especially …………………), that they might be restored to health; and all who have died (especially………………………….). May they be gathered, with people of every race and language and way of life, into the joy of God’s Kingdom.
   Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.
In a moment of silence, let us place before the Lord our own thirst for peace ... 

**Final Prayer:** Put into our hearts, O God, our King, a new song, a song of joy and peace. Lead us beyond indifference to the love of your Kingdom and hear these prayers, which we make through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Suggested songs**

*L = Laudate (Decani Music)*
*CH = Celebration Hymnal for Everyone with Supplement (McCrimmons)*
*LHON = Liturgical Hymns Old & New (Kevin Mayhew)*

Servant Song, Richard Gillard - *L 924 CH 813 LHON 186*
Look around you, can you see, Jodi Page Clark - *L 936 CH 376 LHON 440*
For the healing of the nations, Fred Kaan - *L 886 CH 179 LHON 262*
Whatsoever you do, Willard F. Jabusch - *L 926 CH 799 LHON 726*
The Lord hears the cry of the poor, John Foley sj - *L 892 CH 704 LHON 658*
Tell out, my soul, Timothy Dudley-Smith - *L 880 CH 684 LHON 644*
Community of Christ, Bernadette Farrell, in *Go Before Us*
Alleluia! Raise the Gospel, Owen Alstott & Bernadette Farrell, *Go Before Us*
Rise Up, O People, Bernadette Farrell, in *Restless is the Heart*
This is what the Lord (Yahweh) asks of you, Mary McGann - *CH 734*
Prayers

Prayer for help in being peacemakers

One: With the help of God’s grace

All: We will struggle for justice.

One: With the compassion of Christ

All: We will stand for what is true.

One: With God’s abiding kindness

All: We will love even our enemies.

One: With the love of Christ

All: We will resist all evil.

One: With God’s unending faithfulness

All: We will work to build the beloved community.

One: With Christ’s passionate love

All: We will carry the cross.

One: With God’s overwhelming goodness

All: We will walk as pilgrims of peace.

One: With Christ’s fervent conviction

All: We will labour for truth.

One: With God’s infinite mercy

All: We will live in solidarity with all people.

One: In the end there are three things that last:

All: Faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love.

One: Let us abide in God’s love.

All: Thanks be to God.

*From Christian PeacemakerTeams (CPT sends teams at the invitation of local peacemaking communities that are confronting situations of conflict)*

God’s revolution of love

L: It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction.

All: This is true: I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly.

L: It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil that seek to rule the world.
All: This is true: to me is given all authority in heaven and on earth, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

L: It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the church, before we can do anything.

All: This is true: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and your old ones shall dream dreams and your young ones shall see visions.

L: It is not true that our dreams for the liberation of humankind and our dreams for justice, human dignity or peace are not meant for this earth and for this history.

All: This is true, the year comes and it is now, that true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth.

Adapted: Allan Boesak, Imaging the Word: an arts and lectionary resource

Make a difference in the world

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, superficial relationships, so that you will live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people, so that you will work for justice, equity and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that you will reach out your hand to comfort them and change their pain to joy.

And may God bless you with the foolishness to think that you can make a difference to the world, so that you will do the things which others tell you cannot be done.

Unknown. From A World of Blessing, compiled by Geoffrey Duncan
Stories

Pax Christi members overcoming indifference...winning the peace

Solidarity with refugees

Groups supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Coventry, including Pax Christi and the Deanery Justice & Peace group, gathered in the centre under the statue of Lady Godiva, known for her action for justice on behalf of the poor. They were joined by refugees from Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan and Libya. Speakers made the links between the arms trade, the wars in the Middle East and the refugee crisis. Passing shoppers stopped to listen and add their messages of welcome to the banner under the statue.

A ‘People’s Budget’

On the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima the Pax Christi group in Leeds set up a ‘People’s Budget’ stall in the city centre about the renewal of the Trident missile system (costing £100 billion). They asked people what they would spend the money on if it was their decision: tackling climate change, education, health etc. No one wanted to spend £100 billion on nuclear weapons!

No faith in war

Pax Christi members took part in public acts of prayer to challenge the largest arms fair in the world taking place in London. They drew attention to the global damage caused by the arms trade which is helping to create the current refugee crisis, and to plead with the organisers and the government to stop hosting this bi-annual fair.
How others have celebrated Peace Sunday in past years  
*These ideas can all be adapted to the theme for this year.*

Sr Bernie, Stratford, East London: Each candidate in our Confirmation group made a placard with a statement which could have been written by someone in a situation of slavery. They walked round the church, wearing their placards, to be seen by the congregation, to help us all to be more aware of the many hidden people suffering slavery in its many forms.

Anne in Abingdon: We displayed the word PEACE in a number of languages from the lectern. A Pax Christi member spoke at the end of all Masses about the main themes of the Pope’s message and the work of Pax Christi. Copies of the full text were made available to parishioners - from the Pax Christi website. Each parishioner, as they left church, was given a prayer card and a Pax Christi leaflet, together with a donation envelope.

Alan and Nan in York: We created an exhibition in the porch of the Church and displayed posters inside on the theme of peace. The Pax Christi peace flag was used to decorate the altar.

Anne from Newbold, Chesterfield: The young people used movement and fabric to create the idea of peace flowing like a river, during the Offertory procession. They call themselves the ‘SHY’ (St Hugh’s Youth) Group, which they certainly are not!

Eleanor, from the same parish, was inspired to support Pax Christi after taking part in a conference. With her sister Anna, she began to make ‘Pockets or Purses for PEACE’ and to sell them in the parish. They put a peace message into each bag, and a sweet too. They made the vast sum of £82.17 and decided to donate this to Pax Christi. Eleanor continues to make and sell Pockets for Peace.
Activities to help explore the theme  
*Adapt some to use with children or young people.*

Working for mercy AND working for peace

*Peace is to be worked at... peace needs creativity... our indifference to others needs to be disturbed...* These are just some of the phrases that came with the announcement of the Peace Sunday theme *Overcome indifference and win peace.*

Use this graphic (*also available on the Pax Christi website*) to engage everyone in reflection on the works of mercy and the works of war.

How do we see the needs of people in our world today?

How do we see the works of war damaging people and our planet today?

How can we take simple steps to respond to these challenges?

You could perhaps create a similar graphic, using images or headlines from newspapers under these headings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The things that deaden us to the needs of others</th>
<th>The things that engage us in creating peace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘It is in the shelter of each other that the people live’

Pax Christi has a poster/card carrying this message - another way of saying we must overcome indifference, be available to and for one another.
Hang some of these posters in your church, putting a blank sheet below each one. Invite people to list ways in which they can help your parish community to be ‘shelter for one another’. This could include offering to visit those who are alone, or collecting for refugees, or supporting those who have experienced violence.

Why not make this the basis of a parish plan of action that goes beyond Peace Sunday? The timeline of events/special days might be of help here (see page 3).

Order copies of this card for your parish bookstall.

To win the peace we have to fund peace!

This activity aims to help people think about how we resource and pay for peace. A stall could be set up in the parish over a couple of weekends, starting on Peace Sunday, and the results shared later. This is an ideal activity to involve younger people. Why not pass on the challenge to a youth or confirmation group to set it up and run it?

What: The idea is get people to stop at the stall and invite them to vote for their priority. So, friendly encouraging people needed!

How: Create a simple stall. You need: buckets or jars, buttons or tokens, signs - a peace flag or colourful table covering - as in the picture, and blank sheets to record how many people ‘vote’. *(The bucket signs can be downloaded from the Pax Christi website.)*

Each person is given four buttons or tokens with which to vote. Keep a good record of the number of people who vote and then at the end of each day count how many votes have been given to each spending priority.
The results can be announced or printed in a newsletter and used to encourage more discussion on what it takes to make peace, win peace. You can find out how much money is spent on these different areas here: http://bit.ly/1LrU4bC (Government expenditure figures from 2015)

Activity to use with children

How I am a peacemaker

What you need: large copies of the cut-out shapes of children, coloured pens (or an A4 sheet of the cut-out shapes for each child)

What to do: Read again the Gospel of the day, the marriage feast of Cana. Ask the children to listen to what Jesus and Mary were doing. How were they helping people?

Remind the children that each week we hear about Jesus’ life and how he is always helping people, making life better for them, bringing peace. Maybe they can name some examples of these stories?

How do we do the same?
Invite the children to think about, then write-in around the cut-out shapes, responses to the following:

I / We use our eyes to...
   We use our brain to...
      We use our mouth to...
         We use our ears to...
            We use are arms and hands to...
               We use our heart to...
                  We use our feet to...

Prayer
Dear God, You never forget us.
You sent us your Son Jesus, who gave his life for us.
He cured sick people;
He cared for those who were poor and cried with those who were sad.
He forgave sinners and taught us to forgive each other.
He loved everyone and showed us how to be kind.

(Adapted from Eucharistic Prayer for Children 1)
Article for a parish magazine

Peacemaking in the Year of Mercy

by Fr Rob Esdaile, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes, Thames Ditton, Surrey

Pope Francis has asked the Catholic community to live 2016 as a Year of Mercy, inviting us to ‘contemplate the mystery’ revealed in Jesus Christ. He reminds us that Jesus’ parables of mercy show the nature of God to be ‘that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy;’ and that Jesus personified that mercy in his dealings with all, friend and foe alike.

Mercy, the power of new hope

Our task, therefore, is to make God’s mercy visible in our world and to show the creative power of that mercy, as ‘the force that reawakens us to new life and instils in us the courage to look to the future with hope’. As a first step, everyone who visits a Christian home, parish, school or community should find there ‘an oasis of mercy’. But then, says Pope Francis, we have to take that mercy out beyond the confines of Church life, by opening our eyes to see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and to recognise that we are compelled to help them. And we must extend the quality of God’s mercy to the natural world as well, by the way we reverence creation in both its beauty and its fragility. The way of mercy must be a seamless robe, affecting all of life.

Overcome indifference to win the prize of peace

I hope you can hear the urgency in Pope Francis’ appeal, his ‘burning desire’ that we re-engage with the need around us, ‘re-awakening our conscience’ by practical actions and by prayer. On Sunday, January 17, the Catholic Church in England and Wales celebrates Peace Sunday, our annual day of prayer for peace, using the theme chosen by Pope Francis, ‘Overcome indifference and win peace’.

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10 Pope Francis, Misericordiae Vultus, Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (2015) n.2
11 Ibid, n.9
12 Ibid, n.10
13 Ibid, n.12
15 Misericordiae Vultus, n.15
That title shows the same sense of urgency as the Pope’s more general appeal that we become bearers of God’s mercy to the world. For how can we hope for peace if we do not reject the ‘destructive cynicism’ which says that nothing can be done to change the world? Yet this is an urgency born of hope: Pope Francis sees Peace as a ‘prize’ that is there for the winning; and the way to gain the prize is to choose (individually and collectively) a way of life dedicated to doing justice, God’s justice, a justice rooted in love.

**Working for peace every day of the year**

The Catholic peace movement, Pax Christi, which facilitates the Peace Sunday celebrations each year, works with a similar urgency to secure the ‘prize’ of a peace which is both merciful and just. This it does locally by linking together people who are committed to the work of making peace, providing resources, and fostering prayer and reflection regarding the meaning of the Gospel of Peace. But it also works internationally to build trust in troubled areas of the world and to speak out on issues of war and peace on the basis of Catholic ethics. Please consider joining Pax Christi and getting involved in its work.¹⁶

**Useful websites**

Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England & Wales: [www.catholicnews.org.uk](http://www.catholicnews.org.uk)
CAFOD: [www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)
Caritas Social Action: [www.csan.org.uk](http://www.csan.org.uk)
CAAT: [www.caat.org.uk](http://www.caat.org.uk)
Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel: [www.eappi.org/en](http://www.eappi.org/en)
Global Day of Action on Military Spending: [www.demilitarize.org.uk](http://www.demilitarize.org.uk)
Jesuit Refugee Service UK: [www.jrsuk.net](http://www.jrsuk.net)
London Catholic Worker: [www.londoncatholicworker.org/](http://www.londoncatholicworker.org/)

¹⁶ For more details of the work of Pax Christi, see [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk) or write to Pax Christi, Christian Peace Education Centre, St Joseph’s, Watford Way, Hendon, London NW4 4TY. Tel. 020 8203 4884
Faith in action

The Catholic peace movement Pax Christi is all about ‘overcoming indifference to win peace’. In 50 countries members are engaged in the day-to-day work of trying to make the Christian vision of peace an effective reality in our world. In England and Wales Pax Christi:

- promotes the Pope’s annual World Peace Day message in parishes around the country.
- supports teachers, chaplains and youth workers in developing a culture of peace amongst young people, and an understanding of how conscience applies to the dilemma of war.
- organises times for prayer and reflection, and information stalls on peacemaking and Pax Christi’s work.
- campaigns on a range of issues: challenging government spending on warfare rather than welfare, stopping the arms trade, the abolition of nuclear weapons, peace for Israel and Palestine.

Contact Pax Christi if we can help you to run an event in your parish, school, university, or diocese.