Peace Day 2016
Overcome Indifference and Win Peace

Overview

The third Sunday of January is designated by the bishops of England and Wales as Peace Sunday, a day of prayer for world peace. Pax Christi encourages schools to pray for peace in a special way around this time.

For Peace Sunday 2016 Pope Francis invites us to reflect on the theme Overcome Indifference and Win Peace. This assembly remembers the actions 20 years ago of three women who refused to be indifferent to the suffering of their brothers and sisters around the world.

The assembly needs a minimum of two voices – Andrea and a Narrator – but others voices for readings, prayers etc. is preferable. The person playing Andrea should be dressed in dark clothes, hat, gloves etc... Slide numbers are indicated in square brackets [x]

Other prayer and liturgy resources for Peace Sunday are available on from Pax Christi www.paxchristi.org.uk

[Slide 2] Andrea: The security patrol sped by for a second time. We knew they had only a few minutes. We picked ourselves out of the ditch in which we had been hiding – it was time.

[3] Using bolt cutters we fashioned a gateway in the fence and squeezed through. Heading directly for the hanger – we knew exactly what we were looking for. I broke a pane of glass… Lotta broke another… but we could not get the door open. Jo had slipped away for a moment as we continued to struggle – I have found a way in she whispered…

[4] Narrator: Around this time every year the Pope invites us to pray for peace in a special way. This year Pope Francis has invited to reflect particularly on the theme Overcome indifference and win peace…

[5] Andrea: Just before cutting through the fence the three of us held hands for a moment of silence, reflecting on what we were about to do, and why.

Images came flooding into my mind; young people, covered in blood, screaming in terror… a young boy stood defiantly before a banner shortly before he was shot – another victim amongst so many. A third of the population of East Timor had been killed.

Narrator: Twenty years ago this month Andrea, Lotta and Jo broke in to a weapons factory in Lancashire. Moved by the plight of the people of East Timor they simply had to do something…

Andrea: I thought of the promotional video we had watched about Hawk aircraft. Along with much gloating over the attack capability of the plane – the narrator declares that the Hawk ‘packs a healthy wallop’ – there are shots of a Hawk flying in low and firing a missile into a tank, which explodes in a ball of fire. Although it was obviously a scene created for the camera, it was impossible to watch it without thinking about the outcome if the target was a house in East Timor.

[6] Standing in that ditch, many thousands of miles from East Timor, I felt a great connection with the people who would be at the receiving end of these British weapons, and a great sense that what we were about to do was right and necessary.

Narrator: These Hawk aircraft were being sold by a British weapons manufacturer to the Indonesia government who were responsible for this oppression of the people of East Timor.

[7] On 29 January 1996, Jo Blackman, Lotta Kronlid and Andrea Needham broke into a British Aerospace factory in Lancashire and used household hammers to disarm a Hawk warplane bound for Indonesia. They were arrested, charged with £2.4m of criminal damage, and sent to prison to await trial. A week later, Angie Zelter was also arrested on her way to repeat the action.
Reading (from the Prophet Isaiah)
In days to come
the mountain of the Lord’s house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
Many peoples shall come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
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 any more.

Andrea: I believe that above all else in life, we are called to
love and to be human. I can therefore not stand aside and allow
the Hawks to be delivered without doing all that is in my power
to peacefully resist. I believe that to be silent in this situation is to
be complicit with injustice. I pray that what we do today in
disarming these planes will be a small ray of hope for our sisters
and brothers struggling for peace and justice in East Timor.

Narrator: Imprisoned, charged with causing and conspiring
to cause criminal damage, the women were tried at Liverpool
Crown Court in July 1996. As the foreman of the jury stood and
delivered the verdict there was a gasp around the court, Not
Guilty. The jury recognised the role of these peacemakers in
preventing a greater wrong, the death of the people of East
Timor.

It was a triumph of justice, a victory for disarmament and, above
all, an amazing day for the people of East Timor. The careful
disarmament of weapons such as the Hawk warplane with hand
tools is a step towards preventing potential acts of violence and
senseless destruction. Refusing to be indifferent to the needs of
others, these women planted seeds of hope for humanity.

Let us pray that we might be moved with compassion and
grow in determination to work for peace and justice for our
brothers and sisters throughout the world... (Please join in the
responses)

2 Films: How to destroy a warplane with a Hammer and SEEDS OF HOPE - Women Disarming for Life and Justice
I have found a way in! published in Peace News, December 2015/January 2016 edition

Links to all these resources together with slideshow for this assembly can be found at
http://paxchristi.org.uk/peace-education/assemblies/

Andrea Needham’s book, The Hammer Blow – how 10 women disarmed a warplane will be published by Peace News on 29
January 2016

This assembly script draws on these resources. Scripture quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version. The Prayer is by
Christian Peacemaker Teams (www.cpt.org)