



# Peace Sunday

16 January 2022

**‘Education, Work and Dialogue between Generations:  
Tools for Building Lasting Peace’**

***Pope Francis—World Peace Message 2022***

Promoted by Pax Christi with the support of the International Affairs  
Department, Catholic Bishops’ Conference, England and Wales

*The 55<sup>th</sup> World Day for Peace will be observed in England & Wales on 16 January, 2022, the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. The suggested penitential act and scripture reflections have been prepared by Fr Rob Esdaile.*

## 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: ‘Education, Work and Dialogue between Generations: Tools for Building Lasting Peace’*. What could be a better image of the meeting of the generations than a wedding celebration, where young and old mingle, both at the meal-table and on the dance-floor; when old loves and hopes are re-awakened by the joy of seeing the bride and groom publicly pledge their love? It is at such a wedding party that we meet the Lord today, at Cana in Galilee.

As we gather for the Eucharist, we share in the joy of divine and human love but we also acknowledge that at times our wells of love run dry. Like the hosts of that ancient wedding feast *‘we have no wine’*. And so we rely on Christ’s mercy to renew our love, our peace and our joy.

Lord Jesus, Master of the Wedding Feast:

**Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, the Bridegroom who invites us to share in your joy:

**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, who turns the water of our efforts into the new wine of the Kingdom:

**Lord, have mercy.**

# Introduction to the Readings

## First Reading (*Isaiah 62.1-5*)

The Prophet Isaiah promises transformation to the battered city of Zion: *'You shall be called by a new name'*. Is it not time for us to learn our new name, which is 'God's delight' and the true meaning of Jerusalem, which is 'City Of Peace'?

## Second Reading (*1 Cor 12.4-11*)

In our culture aren't we tempted at times to imagine that we have all the answers? Isn't that a temptation also for the older ones here - to tell the young 'the way it is'? And isn't it the temptation of the younger ones among us to dismiss the old as knowing nothing and not understanding life? Paul's image of the Body shows how each of us needs the other, for each of us has different gifts. Only working together, across the generations, can we hope to find true peace, true flourishing. We must learn again to listen together to the Spirit in the lives of each of our brothers and sisters.

## Gospel (*Jn 2.1-11*)

Who are the most important people in the extraordinary events of the Wedding Feast of Cana? Our reflex is to say: Jesus or Mary. But we should also acknowledge the servants who, despite all appearances of futility, dare to go about their work, *'doing whatever he tells them'* and taking what they know to be only water to the Steward. It is only through the ordinary day-to-day efforts of ordinary people, through the faithful witness of unsung heroes to the values of the Kingdom and the possibility of peace, that the miraculous happens and the new wine of the Kingdom is made available in abundance to the guests at the Wedding Feast.

## Homily Notes - First Reflection

Imagine! Jesus showed up at a wedding. No, I mean *really* imagine. Imagine the last wedding you went to. Imagine your own wedding. Look back through your album of memories. Where is Jesus? Sitting piously on the side-lines making polite small-talk or up on the dance-floor strutting his stuff, grabbing the mic at the karaoke, propping up the bar telling jokes ...? It's a good test of who we think Jesus is and what we think we celebrated a few weeks back on December 25 - Emmanuel, God with us, the Word made flesh among us.

But Jesus doesn't just turn up at the wedding reception. He shows up every day, in the best of times and the worst. In all the ups and downs, thrills and spills, angry words and hurts, splits and reconciliations that are family life, including all the misunderstandings and tensions that can come between the generations. He shows up when the wells run dry and someone whispers: *'They have no wine'*. He shows up when, against all expectations, something shifts and those jars of worthless water provoke the exclamation: *'The best has been saved till last'*. Miracles can happen. The interrupted party can be resumed; by grace, of course, but also by our own decision to cultivate trust rather than fear.

So what is our response in our lives to Mary's words: *'Do whatever he tells you'*? If our default position is hopeless cynicism, then we should fear for our domestic relationships - whatever pledges and promises we once made. Perhaps cynicism is the temptation of the old (or those with hearts prematurely aged by life). That is one special reason why the older ones among us need to listen to the young - as Pope Francis invites us on this *Peace Sunday* - and to work with them. We need to learn from them how to dream again. We need to hear their anger, too, at injustice, poverty and 'the robbing of their childhood' (as Greta Thunberg put it once) by ecological anxiety.

What is true in family life is true also on the world stage. Politics cannot be divorced from these basic dynamics of human relationships. Nor can we as Christians allow international relations to be left unaffected by our faith. That faith proclaims that we are all one human family living under one Abba Father. Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan to demonstrate that even our enemy is our neighbour - and could turn out to be our friend. When Mary says in today's Gospel: *'Do whatever he tells you!'* she means it. And what her son tells us is this: live the Beatitudes - be hungry for justice and actively work for peace; love your enemies and do good to those who hate you; break the cycle of violence, as I did on the Cross ... and take seriously - mortally seriously! - the commandment, *'Thou shalt not kill!'*

That sounds naïve, doesn't it? But we all know that the atmosphere at home depends on our little decisions day by day. Either we choose to live hope-filled lives together, young and old, in friendship ... or we are condemned to live together anyway in our resentment and hurt. The same is true of our life as a global family sharing this precious, fragile common home. On this Peace Sunday Pope Francis and our Bishops invite us to educate ourselves about the threats to peace and to our Common Home and to recommit once more to ensuring that all are invited to the great wedding banquet of God's Kingdom - because that's where Jesus put himself, at the heart of the party, rejoicing in human love, renewing our delight in the goodness of life and of each other.

## Homily Notes - Second Reflection

Do you know your own gifts? I'm not asking what you are exceptional at - although it is wonderful to see those who hone their skills to such a point that they excel, be that at sport, chess, knitting, dance, driving, cookery or any other human endeavour. I'm talking about your gifts in the sense in which St Paul understands the word - 'charisms', signs of *'the one Lord at work in all sorts of ways in different people'* - gifts which are given for the service of others and to build up community. Do you know those gifts and how to use them?

Once I realise that gifts are, of their very nature, for sharing and that the Spirit of God is at work in many different ways in many different people, I am freed from the loneliness of individualism - the notion that I ought to have all the answers; the illusion that my way is *the* right way to do things; the fantasy that I have nothing to learn and no need for others. This realisation does not make me an anonymous cog in a bigger machine. Rather, it assures me that I am a piece of the jigsaw. I contribute something irreplaceable to the bigger picture. I have insights and energies that no one else can bring to the party.

Wow! Did anyone ever tell you that that is the truth about you? Or were you taught, perhaps, the polar opposite - that you are not needed and have nothing to offer; that you are a nuisance or - worse still - 'a waste of space'? Each person bears the Spirit of God. In each encounter we have the possibility of meeting Christ. Yet so many people limp through life because they've never been told the glorious truth about themselves - that they are irreplaceably gifted.

The human family limps through life for much the same reason. We dismiss whole cultures as having nothing to teach us; we do the same between the generations - not seeing the giftedness of each stage of life and the insights that could be shared. We live from the certitude that we are right and they are not. And, in consequence of our lifestyle, great literal 'wastes of space' open up, those scars of climate change made visible by satellite - forests burning, rivers dying, deserts spreading. So too, whole populations are viewed with antipathy (as our 'enemies') or indifference (as if their exclusion were some law of nature).

Suppose instead we saw the potential of these, our brothers and sisters, to contribute their gifts to the human family? Suppose we recognised that our 'worldview' is lacking without their insights? This Peace Sunday Pope Francis is calling the generations to work together, educating each other for peace and

listening to the voice of the Spirit in each other's lives - what he calls the 'Synodal path'. It means 'being on the same road', 'walking together' on a shared journey, convinced that the Spirit is given to all the members of the Church (but at work also beyond our community) and that the Spirit still has fresh truths to teach us.

In the face of the threats to our common home and the very real geo-political consequences that will flow from water-scarcity, crop failures and increasing extreme weather events, the nations also need to be 'on the same road' and to learn 'to walk together', listening to what the Spirit is saying through the experience of each culture. On this Peace Sunday we are bidden once again to reach beyond our own little perspectives; to recognise others as our brothers and sisters; and to listen together with them for the voice of the Spirit, a voice that speaks of peace and brings unity in place of division.

## Prayers of the Faithful

*You may wish to include one or more of the following intercessions.*

**Priest:** As St Paul tells us in the second reading: *There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit*, the Spirit who brings peace, understanding and hope. In the power of the same Spirit, let us pray for ourselves, the Church and the world.

We pray that each one of us may discern our own God-given talents and use them as fully as we can in the shared service of others, and to build up community.

Lord, in your mercy: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

We pray for all those who work, in their different ways, to build peace, mutual understanding and reconciliation within families, between children and between different generations.

Lord, in your mercy: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

On this Peace Sunday, we ask God's blessing on all who work, whether locally or internationally, for peace and justice; on all who will not be silent in the face of injustice or suffering; 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 in our parish, that they might be restored to health; and all who have died, especially..... May they be gathered with people of every race, language and way of life into the fullness of God's love.

Lord, in your mercy: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

In silence, let us place before the Lord all that is in our hearts ...

### Final Prayer:

Pour into our hearts and into our world, O Lord, the Dove of Peace, the Spirit of dialogue and reconciliation. Hear our prayers and lead us all to the Wedding Feast of your eternal kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**