

# Franciscan Spirit and Life

## Virtue: Peace & Justice

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**There are no specific definitions of “peace & justice,” so the definitions used for the Franciscan Spirit & Life Program will include individual definitions of “peace” and “justice.”**

#### **Definition of *Peace*:**

- 1: a state of tranquility or quiet as      *a* : freedom from civil disturbance      *b* : a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom
- 2 : freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions
- 3 : harmony in personal relations
- 4      *a* : a state or period of mutual concord between governments      *b* : a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity

#### **Definition of *Justice*:**

- 1: the quality of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness: *to uphold the justice of a cause.*
- 2: rightfulness or lawfulness, as of a claim or title; justness of ground or reason: *to complain with justice.*
- 3: the moral principle determining just conduct.
- 4: conformity to this principle, as manifested in conduct; just conduct, dealing, or treatment.
- 5: the administering of deserved punishment or reward.

**Taking each of these definitions into account, the basic idea of Peace and Justice is helping to find freedom from oppression in civil disturbances and personal relationships with peace being the ultimate goal.**

## Snapshot of a Priest who Exemplified Peace and Justice



In 1980, in the midst of a U.S. funded war the UN Truth Commission called genocidal, the soon-to-be-assassinated Archbishop Oscar Romero promised history that life, not death, would have the last word. "I do not believe in death without resurrection," he said. "If they kill me, I will be resurrected in the Salvadoran people."

On each anniversary of his death, the people will march through the streets carrying that promise printed on thousands of banners. Mothers will make pupusas (thick tortillas with beans) at 5 a.m., pack them, and prepare the children for a two-to-four hour ride or walk to the city to remember the gentle man they called Monsignor.

Oscar Romero gave his last homily on March 24. Moments before a sharpshooter felled him, reflecting on scripture, he said, "One must not love oneself so much, as to avoid getting involved in the risks of life that history demands of us, and those that fend off danger will lose their lives." The homily, however, that sealed his fate took place the day before when he took the terrifying step of publicly confronting the military.

Romero begged for international intervention. He was alone. The people were alone. In 1980 the war claimed the lives of 3,000 per month, with cadavers clogging the streams, and tortured bodies thrown in garbage dumps and the streets of the capitol weekly. With one exception, all the Salvadoran bishops turned their backs on him, going so far as to send a secret document to Rome reporting him, accusing him of being "politicized" and of seeking popularity.

Unlike them, Romero had refused to ever attend a government function until the repression of the people was stopped. He kept that promise winning him the enmity of the government and military, and an astonishing love of the poor majority.

Romero was a surprise in history. The poor never expected him to take their side and the elites of church and state felt betrayed. He was a compromise candidate elected to head the bishop's episcopacy by conservative fellow bishops. He was predictable, an orthodox, pious bookworm who was known to criticize the progressive liberation theology clergy so aligned with the impoverished farmers seeking land reform. But an event would take place within three weeks of his election that would transform the ascetic and timid Romero.

The new archbishop's first priest, Rutilio Grande, was ambushed and killed along with two parishioners. Grande was a target because he defended the peasant's rights to organize farm cooperatives. He said that the dogs of the big landowners ate better food than the campesino children whose fathers worked their fields.

The night Romero drove out of the capitol to Paisnal to view Grande's body and the old man and seven year old who were killed with him, marked his change. In a packed country church Romero encountered the silent endurance of peasants who were facing rising terror.

Their eyes asked the question only he could answer: Will you stand with us as Rutilio did? Romero's "yes" was in deeds. The peasants had asked for a good shepherd and that night they received one.

Romero already understood the church is more than the hierarchy, Rome, theologians or clerics—more than an institution—but that night he experienced the people as church. "God needs the people themselves," he said, "to save the world . . . The world of the poor teaches us that liberation will arrive only when the poor are not simply on the receiving end of hand-outs from governments or from the churches, but when they themselves are the masters and protagonists of their own struggle for liberation."

Romero's great helplessness was that he could not stop the violence. Within the next year some 200 catechists and farmers who watched him walk into that country church were killed. Over 75,00 Salvadorans would be killed, one million would flee the country, another million left homeless, constantly on the run from the army—and this in a country of only 5.5 million. All Romero had to offer the people were weekly homilies broadcast throughout the country, his voice assuring them, not that atrocities would cease, but that the church of the poor, themselves, would live on.

"If some day they take away the radio station from us . . . if they don't let us speak, if they kill all the priests and the bishop too, and you are left a people without priests, each one of you must become God's microphone, each one of you must become a prophet."

By 1980, amidst overarching violence, Romero wrote to President Jimmy Carter pleading with him to cease sending military aid because he wrote, "it is being used to repress my people." The U.S. sent \$1.5 million in aid every day for 12 years. His letter went unheeded. Two months later he would be assassinated.

On March 23 Romero walked into the fire. He openly challenged an army of peasants, whose high command feared and hated his reputation. Ending a long homily broadcast throughout the country, his voice rose to breaking, "Brothers, you are from the same people; you kill your fellow peasant . . . No soldier is obliged to obey an order that is contrary to the will of God . . ."

There was thunderous applause; he was inviting the army to mutiny. Then his voice burst, "In the name of God then, in the name of this suffering people I ask you, I beg you, I command you in the name of God: stop the repression."

Romero's murder was a savage warning. Even some who attended Romero's funeral were shot down in front of the cathedral by army sharpshooters on rooftops. To this day no investigation has revealed Romero's killers. What endures is Romero's promise.

Days before his murder he told a reporter, "You can tell the people that if they succeed in killing me, that I forgive and bless those who do it. Hopefully, they will realize they are wasting their time. A bishop will die, but the church of God, which is the people, will never perish."

The twentieth century has been the bloodiest century in history. In what Jose Marti called the "hour of the furnaces," Oscar Romero, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Martin Luther King, Fannie Lou Hamer, Dom Helder Camara, Maura Clark, Dorothy Kazel, Ita Ford, Jeann Donovan, and Ella Baker accompanied those who were in the sights of the men with guns. They burned brighter.

## Prayers About Peace and Justice



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### A Morning Prayer

God of all times and places, you have brought us to the beginning of a new day. Surround us in the same with your all-embracing love, and grant that this day we turn not aside into sin, nor be overcome by adversity, but let our thoughts, words, and deeds, in some small way, make for the coming of your Kingdom on earth. Through Christ our Lord.



### An Urgent Supplication:

Almighty and Everloving God, yours are all things in heaven and in earth; mercifully hear the urgent supplications of your people, stay the hand of the violent, and grant us peace. Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy.

### An International Prayer for Peace

*Join people of all faiths around the world who are praying this prayer at noon each day:*

Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe. Peace, peace, peace. (Adapted from the *Upanishads* by Satish Kumar.)

## Prayers for Peace

1. Let us pray for peace with a greater justness in ours and every land: God of justness and mercy, we pray for an end to terrorism in any form. We pray for wisdom that will bring greater peace in our world. We pray for understanding and compassion that will safeguard the innocent and feed and find home for all refugees and all who suffer. We pray for companionship and strength for all who mourn. We pray in Jesus' love. *Amen.* (The Bishop of Los Angeles, October 7, 2001)

2. O God, who would fold both heaven and earth in a single peace:

Let the design of your great love

lighten upon the waste of our wraths and sorrows:

and give peace to your Church,

peace among nations,

peace in our dwellings,

and peace in our hearts:

through your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

3. Eternal Lord, whose kingdom knows only the sword of righteousness and justice, and where your only power is love, send forth your spirit so that all the peoples of the earth will join together as children of one Father, for yours alone is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. *Amen.*

## Prayers for Justice



1. Grant us, Lord God, a vision of your world as your love would have it:

- a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;
- a world where the riches of creation are shared, and everyone can enjoy them;
- a world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect;
- a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.

Give us the inspiration and courage to build it, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

2. Almighty God our heavenly Father, guide the nations of the world into the way of justice and truth, and establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteousness, that they may become the Commonwealth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

3. Almighty God, you have given all peoples one common origin, and your will is to gather them as one family in yourself. Fill the hearts of all with the fire of your love and the desire to ensure justice for all our sisters and brothers. By sharing the good things you give us, may we secure justice and equality for every human being, and a human society built on love and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

#### **For Victims and Perpetrators of Injustice**



For all those who have fallen victim to hatred and inhumanity, for those loved ones who are left behind to mourn, for the souls of those whose hearts are cold, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For the children who are being born into this world of conflict and violence, for women and mothers who suffer needlessly, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For all those who have been forced into unemployment, who long to return to work, for all those who struggle to support their families, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For the soldiers who are misguided in thinking that their bullets will bring about peace, for those who feel called to conscientiously object to military orders, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For the children who cry in their beds at night and wonder 'what have I done?', for the mothers and fathers who must try to explain the unexplainable, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For all the children who have died before their time, for the soldiers who allow their uniform to strip them of their humanity, for the healers who are denied the opportunity to use their gifts, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For the redemption of souls of both victim and perpetrator, for those who commit themselves to the forgiveness of sins, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

O God,

Open our eyes that we may see the needs of others;

Open our ears that we may hear their cries;

Open our hearts that we may feel their anguish and their joy.

Let us not be afraid to defend the oppressed, the poor, the powerless, because of the anger and might of the powerful.

Show us where love and hope and faith are needed, and use us to bring them to those places.

Open our ears and eyes, our hearts and lives, that we may in these coming days be able to do some work of justice and peace for you. *Amen.*

Source: Sabeel Center

## Prayers for Refugees



1. Almighty and merciful God,  
whose Son became a refugee  
and had no place to call his own;  
look with mercy on those who today  
are fleeing from danger,  
homeless and hungry.  
Bless those who work to bring them relief;  
inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;  
and guide the nations of the world towards that day  
when all will rejoice in your Commonwealth of justice and of peace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

2. O God:  
You bring hope out of emptiness  
energy out of fear  
new life out of grief and loss.  
As Mary returned to mourn  
yet found unspeakable joy,  
so comfort all who have lost their homes  
through persecution, war, exile,  
or deliberate destruction.  
Give them security, a place to live,  
and neighbors they trust  
to be, with them,  
a new sign of peace to the world. *Amen*

Source: Sabeel Center

## **A Prayer for Fridays**

This is the fast that pleases me:  
to break unjust fetters,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to share your bread with the hungry  
and shelter the homeless poor.  
If you do away with the yoke,  
the clenched fist, the wicked word,  
if you give your bread to the hungry  
and relief to the oppressed,  
your light will rise in the darkness.  
*Isaiah 58:6-7,10*

All praise be yours, God our Creator,  
as we wait in joyful hope  
for the flowering of justice  
and the fullness of peace.  
All praise for this day, this Friday.  
By our weekly fasting and prayer  
cast out the spirit of war, of fear and mistrust,  
and make us grow hungry for human kindness, thirsty for solidarity  
with all the people of your dear earth.  
May all our prayer, our fasting and our deeds  
be done in the name of Jesus. *Amen.*

Source: Archdiocese of Chicago, 1983

## **A Prayer of St. Anselm of Canterbury**

Almighty God, you teach us by reason that all the riches of the world are made by you for our common use, and that by nature not one of them belongs to one human being more than to another; direct us, we pray, in obedience to your will, that all things may serve all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

## **St. Michael the Archangel**

O most merciful and mighty God, your Son Jesus Christ was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary to bring us salvation and to establish your Commonwealth on earth: Grant that Michael and all your angels may defend your people against every evil, and that at the last we may come to that heaven-sent country where your saints for ever sing your praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Hymns

### **1. Let justice flow like streams.**

(Jane Parker Huber, 1984.)

Let justice flow like streams  
Of sparkling water, pure,

Enabling growth, refreshing life,  
Abundant, cleansing sure.

Let righteousness roll on  
As others' cares we heed,  
An ever flowing stream of faith  
Translated into deed.

So may God's plumb line, straight,  
Define our measure true,  
And justice, right and peace pervade  
This world our whole life through.

### **A Benediction**

Let us go in peace and proclaim to the world God's jubilee of justice and liberation; and may God's blessing be upon us now and forever. *Amen.*

### **A PRAYER OF CONSECRATION TO OUR LADY OF THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD AND THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS**

Our Lady of the Most Precious Blood, Queen of Justice and Peace, as a visible sign and witness of my consecration to your most immaculate heart and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I promise to live my life in solidarity with the poor and all who are despised and rejected. I will respect and protect the human dignity of every person, from conception to the time of natural death. As patron of this promise, I call upon St. Maximilian Kolbe, whose solidarity with the poor was even unto death.

Our Lady of the Most Precious Blood, Queen of Justice and Peace, as a visible sign and witness of my consecration to your most immaculate heart and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I promise to work and live for justice. I will be just in all of my personal, political, and economic relationships. I will seek to create and participate in structures of justice and beauty in my culture and community. I will not be silent in the face of injustice and wickedness. I will speak truth to power and in your name question unjust authority. As patrons of this promise and consecration, I call upon St. Gaspar del Bufalo and Dorothy Day of New York..

Our Lady of the Most Precious Blood, Queen of Justice and Peace, as a visible sign and witness of my consecration to your most immaculate heart and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I promise service to all people through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. I will feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, protect the defenseless, raise up the down-trodden, comfort the sick, visit those in prison, and give water to all who are thirsty. As patrons of this promise and consecration, I call upon St. Vincent de Paul, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, and St. Louise Marillac.

Our Lady of the Most Precious Blood, Queen of Justice and Peace, as a visible sign and witness of my consecration to your most immaculate heart and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I promise to live in service to peace on earth and good will to all. I will practice peace and reconciliation in my personal, economic, and political relationships and will daily seek an end to war, violence, suffering and alienation. As patron of this promise and consecration, I call upon St. Francis of Assisi.

### **A PRAYER FOR ELECTION DAY**

Lord God of all creation, You rule and judge all nations, You scatter the arrogant of mind and heart, You cast down rulers from their thrones and raise up the lowly.

Today we elect those who will serve in our government: the voices that call us to go this way or that way are confusing, the signs of these times that we must discern are tragic and unjust, the culture of death that afflicts all people is powerful.

Open our eyes to see your Reign in history, our hearts to share your love with all people, our ears to hear the cry of the widow, the orphan, and the stranger among us. Send your Holy Spirit upon the people of this land: Teach us to make wise and prudent decisions. Increase our faith and hope. Help us to live the Gospel we profess.

May all who are elected this day: do justice, love goodness, and walk humbly before You and all people. We ask for these blessings, confident in your providence through all time, calling upon Mary our Mother and all the saints who have served the cause of justice,

through your Son, Jesus Christ, Redeemer and Savior, Amen.

### **A LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE AND SALVATION**

God of witness and memory -- Lord, have mercy Vindicator of the poor -- Christ, have mercy Spirit bearing justice -- Lord, have mercy.

Let us remember this day all people who are killed in wars (we will not forget) tortured in jails, disappeared in the night, starved for food, subjected to oppression, driven from their homes, unlawfully imprisoned, denied religious liberty, excluded from economic opportunity, marginalized by poverty, targeted by racial and cultural prejudices, silenced by violence and injustice.

**Response: Save us O Lord. . .**

From the marginalization of poverty, (Save us O Lord)

From the silence of the disappeared,

From the ruthless thirst for power and profit,

From the despair of homelessness,

From demonic structures of sin,

From economic exploitation,

From the culture of death,

From the lure of materialism,

From greed for money,

From covetousness of possessions,

From material wealth and power,

From alienation and anger,

From the politicization of all life,

From the exploitation of the maquiladoras,

From the demand for instant gratification,

From the lies of politicians,

From the scourge of war,

From the cruelty of transnational corporations,

From the denials of human dignity,

May we hear and remember the tragedy, joy, despair, and hope of the voices that call to us and to history for justice, reconciliation, and peace.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Amen.

### **NOVENA PRAYER FOR A WEEK OF NOVENAS FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, (title of Mary for the novena) help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor and peace to all nations; title of Mary for the novena, intercede for those who serve the poor and the Church; may we who keep this sacred commemoration experience the joy and love of the grace of your Son; may His most immaculate Heart, together with yours, pierced with sorrow for the evils of the world, be a sure refuge of hope in a time of trouble for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, My spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed, the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever.

### **A PRAYER FOR A POOR NEIGHBORHOOD**

God of Creation, Redemption, and Reconciliation. You call us to live together in peace. Your Word speaks of reconciliation. Your Spirit brings justice. Look upon us and judge what we have done with our stewardship.

Witness the burned houses, meth labs, crack houses, drug dealers, slumlords, and prostitutes. See the emptiness and false promises, the alienation and despair, injustice and oppressions, that bring these tragedies among us. Hear the gunfire that breaks the peace! How many lives are swallowed up in these tragedies! How much pain and how much sorrow do they cause! Heal this

place, God of mercy and forgiveness. Send your love and grace upon all prostitutes, drug dealers, slumlords, loan sharks, bankers, lawyers, politicians.

Bring them to conversion of heart and life. Cause those who are responsible to cease from their oppressions, stop their crimes, and to keep the peace in our neighborhoods. Fill the emptiness that is the source of these sorrows, with love, peace, mercy, and justice.  
Give us courage, so that we may show them of your love,

Teach us to respect all people as human beings, not forgetting all prostitutes, drug dealers, slumlords, loan sharks, bankers, lawyers, and politicians.

These blessings we ask, in the name of the One who became poverty,  
who will judge the deeds of all humanity, on that great day when justice reigns in every neighborhood, on every street, and among all nations.

Amen.

#### **+ A PRAYER FOR ALL ANIMAL COMPANIONS**

Lord God, Compassionate Wisdom, Healing Spirit, In the beginning when you brought forth life, you committed the stewardship of Creation to our first parents. In your providence we see your love, and we find the beginnings and the endings of all journeys within your glory.

We recall with heart-felt gratitude the lives of the animal companions who have shared our days. In life they gave witness to your glory, In death they are memories of grace and beauty. May we find in this mystery of the rhythms of our lives, grace, wisdom, fortitude, and the peace that passes human understanding, so that we may see You more clearly, love You more dearly, and follow You more nearly.

May all Creation praise, reverence, and serve your Holy Name of beauty and justice. These blessings we ask, with confidence in your eternal love, entrusting all our animal companions to the care and protection of St. Francis,

through your Son Jesus Christ, Compassionate Lord, by whose wounds we are healed.

Amen.

#### **A PRAYER ON THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

God of life and creation, Word bringing peace, Spirit bearing justice. You delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt, answered the prayer of Hannah, rescued Daniel from the injustice of the king. You raise up the lowly, and cast down the mighty. Fifty years ago this day the nations of humanity in solemn assembly enacted as an everlasting memorial the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We give you thanks and praise for this witness of the dignity of the human person, sealed by the testimony of martyrs known and unknown throughout all human history,

In the millennium to come, may this Declaration be a firm foundation for peace and justice. Grant to the nations a spirit of wisdom and discernment so that respect for these rights becomes the way of all people. Bless those who create and sustain a culture of life and love with endurance, hope, and abundance.

May the candles we light glow bright with hospitality and hope, respect and love, peace and justice. We ask for these blessings, confident in your providence through all time, calling upon Mary our Mother and all the martyrs who were victims of injustice and oppression, through your Son, Jesus Christ, Redeemer and Savior, Amen.

Amen.

### **PRAYER FOR THOSE ABOUT TO BE KILLED IN WAR OR ECONOMIC CHAOS**

Our Lady of Sorrows,  
Hear our prayer for all those who will die today because of war and economic oppression, especially the children.

Prepare them for the agony, despair, and terror of the violence that is upon them. Comfort them and hold them close to the bosom of your most Immaculate Heart as they drink deeply of the bitter cup which is forced upon them. Wipe their tears, calm their fears, welcome them to peace and safety. Eternal rest grant to them, and may perpetual light shine upon them. May all rise in judgment against the wickedness that brings this violence upon the world.

Overturn the thrones of tyranny, scatter the unjust, cast down the bloody rulers who make the cry of the widow and orphan rise to heaven. Give us your grace and strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Grant that peace with justice will come to all the world. Amen.

## Quotations Related to Peace and Justice

1. Politics should be the part-time profession of every citizen who would protect the rights and privileges of free people and who would preserve what is good and fruitful in our national heritage.

*Lucille Ball*

2. The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens.

*Baha'ullah*

3. Usually, terrible things that are done with the excuse that progress requires them are not really progress at all, but just terrible things.

*Russell Baker*

4. When someone steals another's clothes, we call them a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor.

*Basil the Great*

5. If you live alone, whose feet will you wash?

6. *St. Basil* Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul.

*Edward Abbey*

7. Peace comes from being able to contribute the best that we have, and all that we are, toward creating a world that supports everyone. But it is also securing the space for others to contribute the best that they have and all that they are.

*Hafsat Abiola*

8. Until lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunters.

*African Proverb*

9. Prayer begins where human capacity ends.

*Marian Anderson*

10. We cannot change the past, but we can change our attitude toward it. Uproot guilt and plant forgiveness. Tear out arrogance and seed humility. Exchange love for hate -- - thereby, making the present comfortable and the future promising.

*Maya Angelou*

11. Peace is the work of justice indirectly, in so far as justice removes the obstacles to peace; but it is the work of charity (love) directly, since charity, according to its very notion, causes peace.

*Thomas Aquinas*

12. Peace is not the product of a victory or a command. It has no finishing line, no final deadline, no fixed definition of achievement. Peace is a never-ending process, the work of many decisions.

*Oscar Arias*

13. Moral excellence comes about as a result of habit. We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.

*Aristotle*

14. The God of life summons us to life; more, to be lifegivers, especially toward those who lie under the heel of the powers.

*Daniel Berrigan*

15. Sometime in your life, hope that you might see one starved man, the look on his face when the bread finally arrives. Hope that you might have baked it or bought or even kneaded it yourself. For that look on his face, for your meeting his eyes across a piece of bread, you might be willing to lose a lot, or suffer a lot, or die a little, even.

*Daniel Berrigan, SJ*

16. Not out of right practice comes right thinking, but out of right thinking comes right practice. It matters enormously what you think. If you think falsely, you will act mistakenly; if you think basely, your conduct will suit your thinking.

*Annie Besant*

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17. The followers of Christ have been called to peace. . . . And they must not only have peace but make it. And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult. In the cause of Christ nothing is to be gained by such methods . . . . His disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others. They maintain fellowship where others would break it off. They renounce hatred and wrong. In so doing they overcome evil with good, and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate.

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer (The Cost of Discipleship)*

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18. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing that we know about living.

*General Omar Bradley*

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19. Better than a thousand hollow words,  
Is one word that brings peace.

*Buddha*

## Discussion Starter Stories on Peace and Justice

### Excuses, Excuses

The following is a collection of actual excuses for missing school that were turned in by students and reported in *Seventeen* magazine:

My son is under a doctor's care and could not take P.E. yesterday. Please execute him.

Please excuse Cynthia for being absent. She was sick and I had her shot.

Please excuse Tom for being absent on Jan. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33.

Please excuse Danny for being. It was his father's fault.

June could not come to school yesterday because she was bothered by very close veins.

Richard had an acre in his side.

Please excuse Timothy for being absent last week. He could not talk because of Larry and Gitus.

Please excuse Nancy for staying home. The doctor said that her lungs are too full to be outside.

Please excuse Margaret from Jim yesterday because she is administrating.

Please excuse Robert for being absent. He had a cold and could not breed well.

*People have all sorts of excuses for the things they do. Some are legitimate, some are not. A teenage boy in Washington was recently acquitted of murder charges on the grounds that he was "morally handicapped." It wasn't his fault—said the judge—that he shot and killed a fellow student. He had an excuse.*

*Life, perhaps unfortunately in some minds, doesn't work that way. Sooner or later we all have to take responsibility for who we are and what we do. We can't keep blaming our behavior on someone or something else.*

*Scripture teaches that we will be held accountable to God for our actions. (See Romans 3:19.) When we stand before the judgment seat of God, we won't be able to hand him an excuse from our mothers or from anyone else and expect to be released from guilt. As Jesus put it, "They have no excuse for their sin" (John 15:22).*

*Peace and Justice asks us to be accountable for our sins. Ultimately, acting just and speaking out against those who are not just leads to peace, in our world and inside ourselves. And this is the Franciscan understanding of this virtue.*

## **Not Again!**

Two young guys joined a construction crew commissioned to build a multistory office building. At lunch they sat themselves on an iron girder high above the ground and opened their lunch boxes.

"I can't believe it," groaned Joe. "Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I don't like peanut butter and jelly!"

With that, he crumpled his sandwiches and hurled them to the ground. Lunch on the second day was a repeat of the first—Joe became visibly upset with the sandwiches in his lunch. Once again, he hurled the sandwiches seventeen stories below.

Joe's buddy dreaded lunch on the following day. Sure enough, rather than enjoying a well-deserved rest, he was stuck listening to his new coworker complain. Day after day he silently watched Joe sort through his lunch, exclaim over the offending sandwich, and send it hurtling to the ground.

"I've had it with peanut butter and jelly!" screamed Joe once again. Angrily smashing the sandwiches in his hand, he thrust them to the ground below.

Unable to restrain himself any longer, Joe's buddy blurted out, "Look, if you don't like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, then tell your wife not to make them anymore."

"Hey, buddy, wait a minute," snapped Joe. "Don't bring my wife into this. I make my own sandwiches!"

*Sometimes we complain about the way things are when we have nobody to blame but ourselves. We are not mere victims of circumstance. We have the power to control what happens to us. But we need to do more than complain; we need to take action. "Be the change that you want to see in the world..."*

## Saved By Stirrups

When you think of the great inventions of humankind, you probably think of the wheel, the printing press, or the computer. You probably don't think of the stirrup.

While history books contain several accounts of how and when stirrups were invented, this version demonstrates the great impact stirrups had on human history.

In the year 1066, Edward the Confessor died, leaving no heir to the throne of England. Harold, Earl of Wessex, immediately took the throne for himself and held it for a tumultuous four weeks until William, Duke of Normandy, invaded England to take it from him. The fight that ensued became known as the Battle of Hastings.

When the English and Norman armies met at Hastings, their forces were evenly matched. But it was William's invention of the stirrup that turned the tide of battle in his favor.

Horses had long been a part of Middle Age military strategy, but their roles had been limited to that of support and transport. When the English arrived at Hastings, they came on horseback; when they prepared for battle, they sent the horses to the rear. Experience had taught them that an armored knight on horseback was too easily toppled in battle. Without a horse, a knight was harmless and vulnerable. The English, therefore, prepared to engage their enemy in the traditional style of warfare—hand-to-hand combat.

William began the battle with an artillery barrage from his archers and then charged with his infantry. When the English defenses held firm, William unveiled his secret weapon—mounted knights whose feet were secured to their horses with stirrups. From that secure platform, the knights were able to fight with a force previously unknown in military history. The English army was routed, and Harold was killed. Duke William of Normandy became William I, king of England, better known today as William the Conqueror.

As a result of William's conquest, England rose to influence and power and gave birth to many of the advances of Western civilization, including the United States of America.

*Christians are also engaged in a battle. As the apostle Paul described it, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12).*

*That's a pretty scary description of the enemy. It's no wonder many Christians, like the knights of old, risk being toppled in battle.*

*But God has given us an advantage over the enemy. He has given us a stirrup in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's presence in our lives enables us to fight against the powers of evil with a force that was previously unknown (Acts 1:8).*

## Take Me To Your Leader

An Austrian Army commander was ordered to lay siege to a small village in the Tyrol. His army had met stubborn resistance in that part of the country, but the advantage was clearly his. He knew that it was just a matter of time before he emerged victorious.

His confidence was shaken, however, when one of his prisoners remarked, "You will never take Tyrol, for they have an invincible leader!"

"What's he talking about?" the commander inquired of his staff. "Who is this leader of whom he speaks?" No one seemed to know, so the commander dismissed the comment. paid little attention to it. Being a cautious leader, however, he doubled his preparations for the attack on the village—just in case.

As his army descended through the pass in the Alps, the commander noticed cattle still grazing in the valley and people working in the fields as if nothing were going to happen.

"Either they are not expecting us, or this is a trap!" thought the commander. He continued marching towards the village with colors flying, horns sounding a challenge, and weapons drawn. Although the commotion brought women and children to their doorways, no one panicked. Instead, the people of the village quietly returned to their household chores as if the threatening army meant no harm to them at all.

The commander found it increasingly difficult to maintain order within his troops. Some of the soldiers were answering questions from the children. One old warrior blew a kiss to a little girl standing on a doorstep. "She looks just like my little Lisa," he replied.

All his senses alerted, the commander still found no sign of ambush. When the troops stood in the open square at the center of the village, facing the town hall, he fully expected the battle to begin. An old white-haired man, apparently the mayor, emerged from the town hall, followed by ten men in simple peasant clothes. Carrying no weapons, the dignified group stood in the square, unimpressed by the huge armed force before them—the most terrible soldiers in the great and mighty army of Austria.

"Welcome, brother!" said the old man to the commander as he extended his hand. One of the soldiers immediately drew his sword, prepared to strike the man dead if he came any closer. But clearly the old man meant no harm.

"Where are your soldiers?" demanded the commander of the mayor.

"Soldiers? We have no soldiers?" replied the old man with a puzzled look, as if the commander had asked, "Where are your elephants?"

"But we have come to take your village!" shouted the commander.

"Well, no one will stop you," replied the old man.

"Are there none here to fight us?" asked the commander.

"No, there is no one here to fight. We have chosen Christ for our leader, and he has taught us another way."

The commander knew no military strategy for this kind of confrontation. After consulting with his lead officers, the commander retreated from the village with his troops, leaving it untouched.

The commander later wrote in his journal, "The village was impossible to take. Had I ordered my men to fire on those smiling men, women, and children, I knew they would not have obeyed me. Even military discipline has its limits. Could I command a soldier to shoot down a child who reminded him of his Lisa? I reported to headquarters that the town had offered unassailable resistance, although this admission damaged my military reputation. But I was right. We had been conquered by these simple folk who followed implicitly the leadership of Jesus Christ."

*The way of Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) still baffles people today. Yet his teaching hold true. Jesus taught his followers to love their enemies and to pray for them rather than to take up arms. Not many Christians have taken those words seriously. What do you think would happen if we did?*

### **Amy Carmichael**

As a young Irishwoman working in England in the late 1800s, Amy Carmichael decided to answer God's call to serve in the mission field. Twice rejected for medical reasons, she eventually found a mission agency willing to put her on a ship and send her to India. She arrived with a tropical fever and a temperature of 105. Some missionaries who met her believed she wouldn't last six months. But Amy recovered, and she never went home.

The young missionary soon discovered that the way to reach the Indian people was not through preaching but through sacrifice. She wrote, "If the ultimate, the hardest, cannot be asked of me, if my fellows hesitate to ask it and turn to someone else, then I know nothing of Calvary love."

So she reached out to the poorest, youngest, and most despised among them, especially the babies and children given to the Hindu temples who were forced to serve as slaves and were tortured if they were caught trying to escape. She said, "There were days when the sky turned black for me because of what I heard and knew was true. Sometimes it was as if I saw the Lord Jesus Christ kneeling alone, as he knelt long ago under the olive trees. And the only thing that one who cared could do was to go softly and kneel down beside him, so that he would not be alone in his sorrow over the little children."

Amy not only felt sorrow for the children, but she was spurred to action. She rescued them, built a home, and recruited a staff to care for them. The ministry became known as Dohnavur Fellowship, and the children called its headmistress Amma—the Tamil word for mother. To those who profited from the enslavement practices, she was known as "the white woman who steals children."

Amy Carmichael's mission trip ended 55 years later, when she died at the age of 83. During that time she rescued over 1,000 abused, abandoned, and enslaved children. And though her stories, prayers, and devotions filled 35 books back in Britain, not once did she return to hear the praises of her friends and supporters. To Amy anything that called attention to herself stole attention from the God she served. In fact in 1919, her name was published in a British honors list. When she found out about it, she wrote back to England asking to have her name removed. It troubled her to "have an experience so different from his who was despised and rejected—not kindly honored."

Ironically, the woman who wanted no honor other than that of being Christ's servant became famous nonetheless, as tens of thousands of readers in Britain and America were moved by her writings. Her example of sacrificial love has encouraged countless numbers of Christians to follow her into the mission field.

*Many around the world are crying out right now against injustice, poverty, and prejudice. As God's children we are called to carry each another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). Jesus himself told us that when we care for "the least of these," we do it for him (Matthew 25:31-46).*