

CALLED TO PEACE

— no peace without justice —



Following from the last unit, *Called to Action*, we find that it is part of our Christian duty to challenge injustice in our world and continually work towards peace. Jesus taught us as much, leading by example. Are you ready for the challenge Jesus presents us with and calls us to face?

Our Holy Father Pope Francis has demonstrated empathy for those most marginalised and those scapegoated by our society. On his first papal visit in 2013, Pope Francis visited an Italian island, Lampedusa, where many who fled war-torn countries landed after crossing the Mediterranean. Some lost their lives on the journey. Here Pope Francis wept for the dead and made migration a pro-life issue. He urged anyone listening to 'ask for the grace to cry for our indifference, to cry for the cruelty in the world.' Pope Francis declared a "day of tears" for the victims who had drowned. How might we too 'ask for the grace to cry for our indifference'? Seeing these issues, do we choose to look away and ignore them, or face reality and work towards justice and peace, for a fairer, safer and more sustainable world?

In Pope Francis' letter to young people, *Christus Vivit*, he calls us not to be bystanders – but to '**Get involved! Jesus was not a bystander.**' He makes clear that it is not enough to simply go about our lives as normal, even if we know ourselves to be good people. We are called to 'fight apathy' – meaning we must challenge indifference. We cannot live comfortably knowing that there is evil happening: we are called to stand in solidarity with others and uphold the dignity of all.

This unit will explore both what it means to work for peace in the world and inner peace.

Themes: fighting apathy and indifference, 'the throwaway culture', working against/setting aside the 'culture of comfort'

Reflections

For a short reflection:

Christus Vivit: 'Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!' – Pope Francis CV #1



How can I get more involved with issues of justice?
How can we challenge injustice in our world?
How can we help others to become agents of change?

For a longer reflection:

In his letter to young people, *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis speaks to us: 'You are the ones who hold the key to the future! Continue to fight apathy and to offer a Christian response to the social and political troubles emerging in different parts of the world. I ask you to build the future, to work for a better world. Dear young people, please, do not be bystanders in life. Get involved! Jesus was not a bystander. He got involved. Don't stand aloof, but immerse yourselves in the reality of life, as Jesus did'. Above all, in one way or another, fight for the common good, serve the poor, be protagonists of the revolution of charity and service, capable of resisting the pathologies of consumerism and superficial individualism' #174

What does Pope Francis mean when he asks young people to 'continue to fight apathy'?
What does the revolution of 'charity and service' look like?

Alternative reflections:

On inner peace:

Laudato Si' #225: An adequate understanding of spirituality consists in filling out what we mean by peace, which is much more than the absence of war. Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life. Nature is filled with words of love, but how can we listen to them amid constant noise, interminable and nerve-racking distractions, or the cult of appearances? Many people today sense a profound imbalance which drives them to frenetic activity and makes them feel busy, in a constant hurry which in turn leads them to ride rough-shod over everything around them. This too affects how they treat the environment. An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence "must not be contrived but found, uncovered."*

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**Can you relate to what Pope Francis is saying here regarding an 'imbalance', the noise and distractions that we often fill our lives with?
Have you ever experienced nature as 'filled with words of love'?
Do you think there is a connection between how people care for one another and how they care for the environment?**

On a way of being that embodies justice and peace, even in small acts:

Laudato Si' #229: 'We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it. We had enough of immortality and the mockery of ethics, goodness, faith and honesty. It is time to acknowledge that light-hearted superficiality has done us no good. When the foundations of social life are corroded, what ensues are battles over conflicting interests, new forms of violence and brutality, and obstacles to the growth of a genuine culture of care for the environment.'

**How do you feel about the statement,
'being good and decent are worth it'?**

Faith Sharing

John 14:27-31

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you.
Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.
You heard me say: I am going away, and shall return.
If you loved me you would have been glad to know that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.
I have told you this now before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe.
I shall not talk with you any longer, because the prince of this world is on his way.
He has no power over me, but the world must be brought to know that I love the Father and that I am doing exactly what the Father told me.'

Hours before Jesus was going to his death, by crucifixion on the cross, He had this message for his disciples. He is clearly concerned with the joy, peace and wellbeing of

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his followers. He wants us to have faith, and in turn **genuine peace**. How was it that Jesus lived His life exposing injustice, caring for the marginalised and needy, risking and ultimately sacrificing his life, but still had inner peace? What can we learn from Him?

Activity

Rank these non-violent activities in order of their effectiveness and explain your choice:

- Going on a protest march
- Praying
- Diplomacy - i.e. contacting those on the other side and attempting to discuss and collaborate/compromise on the issue. Definition: *the art of dealing with people in a sensitive and tactful way.*
- Education - i.e. spreading awareness of the issue, either in schools, your local parish, among your family and friends, and also educating yourself on it.
- Advocacy - definition: *public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy*
- Civil disobedience - definition: *the refusal to comply with certain laws considered unjust, as a peaceful form of political protest.* E.g. blocking streets, attending a sit-in, refusing to pay a tax.
- Lifestyle choices - e.g. boycotting certain products if they were not sourced in an ethical/moral way; choosing to consume less or live a low-carbon lifestyle.

Add your own ideas for non-violent actions and add them to your list in rank-order.

Activity

Next step: See if you can contact anyone in a movement of your choice (perhaps something that is directly affecting your own community) - do they have a website, social media pages, any contact details? See if you can get in touch with them and ask for an interview. Perhaps you could then write a blog or article for your local newspaper, school, or parish. Help raise awareness of the issue they are facing, amplify the voices of those marginalised in your own community and think: how might we be able to get involved to help their cause? You might choose an issue that is happening overseas or one closer to home.

A note on mental health, wellbeing, and 'burn-out'

As you work through this resource, the health and well-being of our young people is paramount, and we should be especially conscious of this as we encourage them to challenge injustice. The aim is not to feed anxiety, experience 'burn-out' or have a negative impact on their mental health. Instead we aim for them to be able to face reality so that they can be reconciled with it and actively work for change.

Our two-thousand-year-old tradition has a wealth of resources and practices to draw upon to sustain people in their service of others and action for the common good. This is why our series of resources began with an emphasis on meditation, prayer, daily spiritual practice and discernment, to help young people navigate the challenges of life aware that they can hand over their struggles to God, leaning on Him in times of need.

Prayer

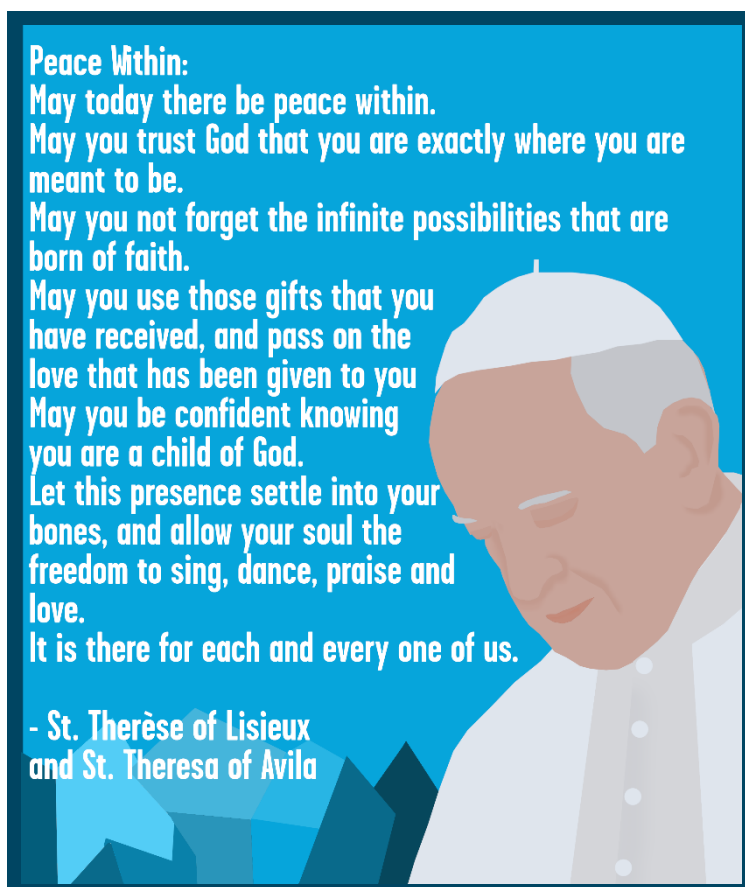
A Pax Christi Prayer for Peace:

Help me to find my role in building a path to peace.

Teach me to ask the question 'who is my sister, who is my brother?' with the same love and passion as Jesus.

Give me the courage to speak up and act for my sisters and brothers whose lives are broken by violence.

Find more here: <https://paxchristi.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Prayers-for-Peace.pdf>



Further resources

Watch this SPARKSocialJustice episode on Setting up your own Social Justice Action Group: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koHAXuTw7gc&t=396s> (40 minutes 52 seconds)

Pax Christi have a wealth of resources on non-violence and peace-building: <https://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/nonviolence-in-action/>

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