

The Way of Peace

ISSUE 1

Building a Culture of Peace

This is the first in a series of eight articles offered by St Columban's Mission Society of Australia and New Zealand through the Columban Centre for Peace Justice and Ecology. In the face of the growing violence in our world, Christians are called to be peacemakers. This series will explore some manifestations of violence and offer ways of building a more peaceful world. Future articles will deal with:

- ✦ Racism and discrimination
- ✦ Destruction of the environment
- ✦ Poverty
- ✦ The arms race, militarism and the arms industry
- ✦ Structures of dominance and power, media and language
- ✦ Indigenous peoples
- ✦ Reconciliation and steps to peace.

- ✦ The United Nations has declared the first decade of the 21st Century as the "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World".
- ✦ The World Council of Churches launched the "Decade to Overcome Violence" in 2000.
- ✦ In recent times Pope John Paul II has repeatedly called all people of good will to "build a Culture of Peace".

The expression "culture of peace" implies that peace means more than the absence of war. Peace is considered as a set of values, attitudes and ways of behaving which promotes mutual understanding and peaceful settlement of conflict. Developing a culture of peace means changing individual and societal attitudes which see violence as the only response to violence.

A culture of peace is based on trust and respect. This must be the goal at the personal, local, national, regional and international levels.

The Twentieth Century was the most violent in the world's history and the new millennium has begun violently. In today's dramatic global situation, humanity needs a new vision of people living together peacefully and sharing the responsibility for the care of each other and the Earth. We possess today sufficient economic, cultural and spiritual resources to introduce a better global order but achieving this begins in each human heart.

Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

Rom 14:19

"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy.

Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.

Through violence you may murder the liar but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth.

Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate...

Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.

Darkness cannot overcome darkness; only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

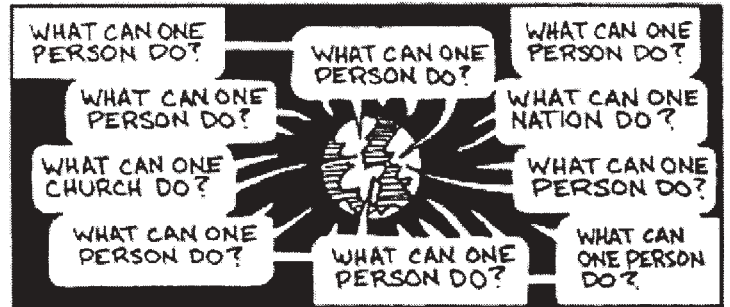
Martin Luther King

... Peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which we are part ...

from The Earth Charter www.earthcharter.org

'In our generation, which has been marked by the persistent and acute hardships and anxiety resulting from the ravages of war and the threat of war, the whole human race faces a moment of supreme crisis in its advance towards maturity... Thus the Gospel... shines anew in our times when it proclaims that the advocates of peace are blessed "for they shall be called children of God" (Mt 5:9)'. Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, 77 (1965!)

'The World is dangerous to live in, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and let them do so'. Albert Einstein



FACT FILE

Peace may be understood in many ways:

Negative peace

- ✚ Absence of war or violence
- ✚ Absence of structures which may cause violence to people, eg. economic structures
- ✚ Absence of cultural violence, eg. racial vilification

Positive peace

- ✚ Personal peace, eg. inner contentment
- ✚ Structural peace, eg. structures which allow development or collaboration
- ✚ Gandian peace or active non-violence in the face of oppression
- ✚ Cosmic or Christic peace, eg. sense of interconnectedness and solidarity with all living things and the Earth.

Violence comes in many forms:

- ✚ Verbal abuse or bullying
- ✚ Domestic violence
- ✚ Destruction of the environment
- ✚ Poverty and disadvantage
- ✚ War or threat of war
- ✚ Torture or slavery
- ✚ Sexual assault or harassment
- ✚ Denial of basic human rights
- ✚ Theft of labour...

Violence is that state of affairs in which there is a 'gap' between that which is, and that which could be – now. It is a consequence of a fundamental commitment to an acquisitive mode of being, thinking, doing.

Peace is an evolutionary process in which that gap is narrowed with a view to closing it all together, and at the same time, creatively seeking the communion of all beings. It is a process of fundamental commitment to a contributive mode of being, thinking, doing.

PROFILE OF A PEACEMAKER

Fr Cyril Hally, 82, a Columban Missionary priest, has worked tirelessly for decades to promote peace and non-violence in accordance with the Gospel imperative. In 1995, Fr Hally was awarded the inaugural Philia Prize by the World Conference for Religion and Peace for his vision and initiative in this field. In 2002, Fr Hally's 'dedication, commitment and hard work' were further recognised when he was awarded a Pax Christi Lifetime Achievement Award by Pax Christi International. Fr Hally is an inspiration to all, most particularly for his personal embodiment of the principles of peace. Fr Hally continues his work as a member of the Columban Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice.

USEFUL WEBSITES:

- www.nonviolence.org
- www.paxchristi.org.au
- www.worldpeace.org
- www.antiwar.com
- www.ploughshares.org.ca



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