

July 31, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We live in very trying times with our basic faith and freedoms seemingly under constant attack. Tensions are high, and we are bombarded by daily news of violence, divisiveness and anger. I have heard the question many times in recent weeks, "What can I do? and How should I respond?"

Pope John Paul II gave a message on the 35<sup>th</sup> World Day for Peace on January 1, 2002, just months after the 9/11 tragedy, titled *No Peace Without Justice, No Justice Without Forgiveness*. While the circumstances may be different than what we are facing now, his words still ring true:

"...people throughout the world have felt a profound personal vulnerability and a new fear for the future. Addressing this state of mind, the Church testifies to her hope, based on the conviction that evil, the *mysterium iniquitatis*, does not have the final word in human affairs. The history of salvation, narrated in Sacred Scripture, sheds clear light on the entire history of the world and shows us that human events are always accompanied by the merciful Providence of God, who knows how to touch even the most hardened of hearts and bring good fruits even from what seems utterly barren soil.

This is the hope which sustains the Church...by the grace of God, a world in which the power of evil seems once again to have taken the upper hand will in fact be transformed into a world in which the noblest aspirations of the human heart will triumph, a world in which true peace will prevail." (n. 1)

St. John Paul II lived during times of Nazism and Communist totalitarianism and these experiences illuminated and formed his response to suffering and violence. He continues:

"I have often paused to reflect on the persistent question: *how do we restore the moral and social order subjected to such horrific violence?* My reasoned conviction, confirmed in turn by biblical revelation, is that the shattered order cannot be fully restored except by a response that combines justice with forgiveness. *The pillars of true peace are justice and that form of love which is forgiveness.*" (n.2)

So, what can we as Catholics do to bring about peace during these difficult times? First, we wait and have faith in God's Divine Providence, for He has the final word. Second, we do our part to grow in charity towards our neighbors through forgiveness. And finally, we must pray! This weekend we will begin 30 days of prayer for peace in our community, our state and our nation. At the end of our Masses throughout August, in place of our Stewardship prayer, we will join together in praying St. John Paul II's Prayer for Peace. Copies of the prayer will be available at the entrance/exits of the church, in the weekly worship aid, in the bulletin and on the website.

God bless you,

Fr. Javier Nieva

1 John Paul II, "No Peace Without Justice, No Justice Without Forgiveness-Message on the XXXV World Day of Peace." Vatican: the Holy See. Vatican Website.Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 8 Dec 2001.Web.; § 1.

2 No Peace Without Justice, § 2