Meditation: Meditation on Peace to honour the International Day of Peace- September 2020 – Reflections by Sr Marie

This reflection and meditation can be done without the Youtube video (recommend the use of Youtube if you can). For those who struggle with hearing, the text below can also be used to support the video. Our Youtube presentation is an invitation to spiritually join regular meditators at Wisdom Centre (presently isolated and meditating in their own homes). The tradition we meditate in is Centering Prayer which is fully inclusive of all traditions of Christian Meditation and welcoming of World Traditions.

The introductory text is on the screen with narration. A countdown timer is part of the presentation, and will sometimes be accompanied by music.

Welcome to Christian Meditation in the Centering Prayer Tradition: A very warm welcome from Fiona Jenvey, one of the group leaders of the Christian Meditation group at Wisdom Centre, Romsey. Our Meditation this week is led by Sr Marie. The whole session is about 50 minutes. We meditate in the Centering Prayer tradition, beginning with an opening prayer followed by reflections and then 25 minutes of silence. We hope you enjoy your meditation with us.

Good evening everyone, our meditation this evening is honouring the International Day of Peace which was observed around the world, as in every year, on 21 September.

We begin with an opening prayer: Eternal God, through our meditation may the ears of our hearts be attentive to your Word. May we seek and find you. Awakened to your presence may we be joyful, embodying peace, gentleness and self-awareness. May we follow your teaching, seeking also, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and Mothers. May we therefore, commit to community, love of earth, peace and justice making. Amen.

Introduction: Here are some excerpts introducing the International Day of Peace for 2020. 'This year, it has been clearer than ever that we are not each other's enemies. Rather, our common enemy is a tireless virus that threatens our health, security and very way of life. COVID-19 has thrown our world into turmoil and forcibly reminded us that what happens in one part of the planet can impact people everywhere.

In March, UN Secretary-General called on all warring parties to lay down their weapons and focus on the battle against this unprecedented global pandemic. While the message is intended for armed parties, solidarity and cooperation across borders, sectors and generations are also needed to win this new fight against the worst public health crisis of our time.

In these difficult times of physical distancing, this International Day of Peace is dedicated to fostering dialogue and collecting ideas. The world is invited to unite and share thoughts on how to weather this storm, heal our planet and change it for the better. Even though we may not be able to stand next to each other, we can still dream together.'

Pope Francis in his address to the world on the 1st January this year also had the same ideas in his theme: Peace as a Journey of Hope: Dialogue, Reconciliation and Ecological Conversion.

After a description of the present lack of peace in our world he writes: 'Setting out on a journey of peace is a challenge made all the more complex because the interests at stake in relationships between people, communities and nations, are numerous and conflicting. We must first appeal to people's moral conscience and to personal and political will. Peace emerges from the depths of the human heart and political will must always be renewed, so that new ways can be found to reconcile and unite individuals and communities.

The world does not need empty words but convinced witnesses, peacemakers who are open to a dialogue that rejects exclusion or manipulation. In fact, we cannot truly achieve peace without a convinced dialogue between men and women who seek the truth beyond ideologies and differing opinions. Peace "must be built up continually"; it is a journey made together in constant pursuit of the common good, truthfulness and respect for law. Listening to one another can lead to mutual understanding and esteem, and even to seeing in an enemy the face of a brother or sister.

The process of peace requires enduring commitment. It is a patient effort to seek truth and justice, to honour the memory of victims and to open the way, step by step, to a shared hope stronger than the desire for vengeance. In a state based on law, democracy can be an important paradigm of this process, provided it is grounded in justice and a commitment to protect the rights of every person, especially the weak and marginalized, in a constant search for truth. This is a social undertaking, an ongoing work in which each individual makes his or her contribution responsibly, at every level of the local, national and global community.

As Saint Paul VI pointed out, these "two aspirations, to equality and to participation, seek to promote a democratic society… This calls for an education to social life, involving not only the knowledge of each person's rights, but also the recognition of his or her duties with regard to others.'

Pope Francis continues 'Peace is a journey of reconciliation in brotherly/sisterly communion The Bible, especially in the words of the Prophets, reminds individuals and peoples of our Creator's covenant with humanity, which entails renouncing our desire to dominate others and learning to see one another as persons, sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters. We should never encapsulate others in what they may have said or done, but value them for the promise that they embody. Only by choosing the path of respect can we break the spiral of vengeance and set out on the journey of hope.

We are guided by the Gospel passage that tells of the following conversation between Peter and Jesus: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven" (Mt 18:21-22). This path of reconciliation is a summons to discover in the depths of our heart the power of forgiveness and the capacity to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters. When we learn to live in forgiveness, we grow in our capacity to become men and women of peace.

What is true of peace in a social context is also true in the areas of politics and the economy, since peace permeates every dimension of life in common. There can be no true peace unless we show ourselves capable of developing a more just economic system.

This journey of reconciliation also calls for listening and contemplation of the world we have been given, as a gift to make our common home. We need to change the way we think and

see things, and to become more open to encountering others and accepting the gift of creation, which reflects the beauty and wisdom of its Creator. All this gives us deeper motivation and a new way to dwell in our common home, to accept our differences, to respect and celebrate the life that we have received and share, and to seek living conditions and models of society that favour the continued flourishing of life and the development of the common good of the entire human family.

The journey of reconciliation calls for patience and trust. Peace will not be obtained unless it is hoped for. In the first place, this means believing in the possibility of peace, believing that others need peace just as much as we do. Here we can find inspiration in the love that God has for each of us: a love that is liberating, limitless, gratuitous and tireless.

Fear is frequently a source of conflict. So it is important to overcome our human fears and acknowledge that we are needy children in the eyes of the One who loves us and awaits us, like the father of the prodigal son (cf. Lk 15:11-24). The culture of fraternal encounter shatters the culture of conflict. It makes of every encounter a possibility and a gift of God's generous love. It leads us beyond the limits of our narrow horizons and constantly encourages us to a live in a spirit of universal fraternity, as children of the one heavenly Father.

May the God of peace bless us and come to our aid. And may all men and women who come into this world experience a life of peace and develop fully the promise of life and love dwelling in their heart.'

Preparing for Meditation:

Let us prepare now for our meditation. Notice any tightness in your shoulders and neck and allow any tension in your muscles to relax.

Allow your back to rest upright. Be conscious of where your body is touching the chair. Ground yourself and allow your breathing to settle, allow your body to slow down.

In this meditation, I am simply becoming aware of this moment. Becoming aware of my presence in this moment. As I notice any distractions, thoughts, judgments, decisions, ideas that cross my mind, I gently let them go for now, focusing instead on my moment-by-moment experience of being present to What Is. God's Presence and peace. If I have a sacred word, I repeat it slowly over and over.

Bell Sounds…25-minute meditations begins…Count down timer starts

Bell Sounds…Meditation ends

Closing Prayer: For Peace – John O'Donahue

As the fever of day calms towards twilight
May all that is strained in us come to cease.

We pray for all who suffered violence today,
May an unexpected serenity surprise them.

For those who risk their lives each day for peace,
May their hearts glimpse providence at the heart of history.

That those who make riches from violence and war
Might hear in their dreams the cries of the lost.

That we might see through our fear of each other
A new vision to heal our fatal attraction to aggression.

That those who enjoy the privilege of peace
Might not forget their tormented brothers and sisters.

That the wolf might lie down with the lamb
That our swords might be beaten into ploughshares.

And no hurt or harm be done
Anywhere along the holy mountain. Amen

Thank you for meditating with us, please join us again soon

Resources

https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-peace

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace.html

Benedictus – John O'Donohue

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