

January 1, 2008

Feast of Mary, Mother of God - World Day of Prayer for Peace

... Do we have an obligation to pray and work for peace?

... Can Mary help us to achieve world peace?

1. Sons and Daughters of God Through Mary Our Mother

- 1) We have been celebrating the birth of Jesus at Christmas.
- 2) Birth of Jesus has brought about our rebirth as sons and daughters of God (II R.)
- 3) Now we can call God our Father, because he has given his own life to us, as parents impart life to their children.
- 4) This has happened through Mary – this is what she has done for us.
- 5) By giving birth to Jesus, who is God, Mary became the Mother of God.
- 6) Mary is our mother too, through the life she has given us in Jesus.
- 7) Mary watches over each of us with motherly love and care, because we are all her children.
- 8) She is concerned about everything in our lives, as only a mother can be.
Her heart is filled with compassion as she sees the afflictions of her children: the wars, the conflicts, the suffering of children, the inequalities in sharing the resources of the world, with so many hungry, without clean water, without shelter.

2. Mary and Peace in Israel and Palestine.

- 1) Mary grieves over the conflict, the oppression, the terrorism that keeps going on in the land she knows so well, her own land of Israel and Palestine.
- 2) She is offering heartfelt prayers of intercession for all the people there, her own Jewish people, and the Arab people whom she looks upon as her children too.
- 3) She is praying for the leaders of Israel and Palestine that they will establish a new, peaceful relationship with each other.
- 4) Let us pray with Mary for the success of the peace negotiations now going on, that a permanent settlement may be reached.

3. World Day of Prayer for Peace

- 1) On the first of January, the Church around the world holds the World Day of Prayer for Peace.
- 2) Mary joins with us in praying for peace around the world: in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Sudan, Pakistan, Lebanon, as well as in Israel and Palestine.
- 3) With regard to Afghanistan, our Canadian Bishops have stated: “One thing is becoming clearer: there will not be peace in Afghanistan without a true peace process which involves all the parties. This is what Canada especially needs to promote.”

4. Inequalities

- 1) At the origin of many tensions that threaten peace are surely the many unjust inequalities still tragically present in our world, the inequality in access to essential goods like food, water, shelter and health care.
- 2) The extremely grave deprivation affecting many people lies at the root of violent reactions and this inflicts a terrible wound on peace.
- 3) As members of the world family, we must be concerned about the one-third of the world population living in dire poverty, trying to exist on \$1 or \$2 a day, while we in

the northern countries who number about one-quarter of the world's population, possess 65% of the world's wealth.

- 4) Here in Canada, 3.4 million of our fellow citizens are living in poverty caused by low wages, low welfare rates and lack of affordable housing.
- 5) We must regard the poor here and everywhere as we would regard members of our own family, as brothers and sisters suffering and in need.
- 6) Our foreign aid to poor countries has diminished greatly over the past years. Presently our foreign aid amounts to less than one-third of 1% of our country's yearly income when we have pledged .7 % to foreign aid.
- 7) We must keep pressing the Federal Government to increase foreign aid in the next Federal Budget.
- 8) The Ontario Government is putting a poverty reduction strategy in place, to coordinate the activity of all government departments that affects poverty, and to coordinate the action of the Ontario Government with the federal and municipal governments' action and all agencies working on poverty. Keep your eyes on the Ontario Government's action on this and support it. In Ontario 1.3 million live in poverty.

5. The Ecology of Peace

- 1) Humanity, if it truly desires peace, must be increasingly conscious of the links between respect for nature and for human life. Disregard for the environment always harms human co-existence and vice-versa.
There is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among people.
- 2) The close connection between these two ecologies of nature and of human life can be understood from the increasingly serious problem of energy supplies. There is an unprecedented race for available resources.
- 3) Destruction of the environment, its improper or selfish use, and the violent hoarding of the earth's resources cause grievances, conflicts and wars.

6. Human Rights and the United Nations

- 1) The UN set itself the fundamental task of promoting the human rights stated in its 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- 2) The Declaration is regarded as a moral commitment assumed by all people.
- 3) The rights described in this Declaration must be held to be based, not simply on the decisions of the assembly that approved them, but on people's very nature and their inalienable dignity as persons created by God.

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Pope Benedict says: "I wish to make an urgent appeal to the People of God:
 let every Christian be committed to tireless peace-making and strenuous defence
 of the dignity of the human person and his inalienable rights.
 May Mary show us in her Son, the Way of Peace, and enlighten our vision so that
 we can recognize Christ's face in the face of every human person, the heart of peace!

Mass:

1. We are gathered together in an assembly of peace.
2. We are joined together in Christ, who reconciles all of us, who unites all of us in himself.
No matter what our background is, our race, our language, our position in the world, we are all one.
3. This is why the Church has the Prayer for Peace and the Sign of Peace before Communion.
4. Christ by his Death and Resurrection has brought the power of his peace into the world.
He becomes present in the Mass to share his power with us.
5. Our Sign of Peace with each other expresses that we are at peace with one another, that we are one in Christ, all bound together. This makes us open to Christ as we receive him in Communion.
6. May we receive Christ and have him shape our hearts so that we extend his peace and forgiveness, his acceptance of everyone as brothers and sisters, so that we live in his Spirit.