

BEVERAGES AND BIBLES

“Peace, be still.”

— Jesus, Mark 4:39

Introduction Question - Where/when do you feel the most at peace?

Question: How do you define peace?

- “Peace begins with a smile..” - Mother Teresa
- “Peace cannot be kept by force, it can only be achieved by understanding.” - Albert Einstein
- “Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without.” - Buddha
- “To forgive is the highest, most beautiful form of love. In return, you will receive untold peace and happiness” ~ Robert Muller
- “You find peace not by rearranging the circumstances of your life, but by realizing who you are at the deepest level.” — Eckhart Tolle
- “I really only love God as much as I love the person I love the least.” — Dorothy Day

Question: In the baptism vows of the United Methodist Church we covenant, “Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?”

What does it mean to resist while seeking peace?

- “Peace is the fruit of love, a love that is also justice. But to grow in love requires work -- hard work. And it can bring pain because it implies loss -- loss of the certitudes, comforts, and hurts that shelter and define us.” - Jean Vanier
- “Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.” - Desmond Tutu

- “I was once asked why I don’t participate in anti-war demonstrations. I said that I will never do that, but as soon as you have a pro-peace rally, I’ll be there.” ~ Mother Teresa
- “Don’t think that I’ve come to bring peace to the earth. I haven’t come to bring peace but a sword. I’ve come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. People’s enemies are members of their own households. Those who love father or mother more than me aren’t worthy of me. Those who love son or daughter more than me aren’t worthy of me. Those who don’t pick up their crosses and follow me aren’t worthy of me. Those who find their lives will lose them, and those who lose their lives because of me will find them.” - Jesus, Matthew 10:34-39

Question: What things are a threat to peace in people’s daily lives?

- “Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can’t practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage.” - Maya Angelou
- “The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world.” — Marianne Williamson
- “Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.” — Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Question: Ronald Reagan said, "Peace is not absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means." Martin Luther King Jr, said, "True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice." Many people are conflict averse, can we find peace without conflict?

- “No one won the last war, and no one will win the next war.” - Eleanor Roosevelt
- “Sometimes you have to pick the gun up to put the Gun down.” - Malcolm X
- “Do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” - Jesus, Matthew 5:39
- “A pacifist between wars is like a vegetarian between meals.” — Ammon Hennacy

Question: From prison, Paul writes, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7) What does it mean to guard your heart? How does scripture and what it says about God, Christ, and the gospel bring peace into your life?

- “War is over ... If you want it.” — John Lennon
- “Peace is the only battle worth waging.” — Albert Camus
- “Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars... Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.” — Martin Luther King Jr.
- “Instead of hating the people you think are war-makers, hate the appetites and disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed - but hate these things in yourself, not in another.” — Thomas Merton

More Quotes

- “Our faith obliges us to bind wounds, not to make blood run.” - Petr Chelčický
- “Love and ever more love is the only solution to every problem that comes up.” — Dorothy Day
- “I am not a committed pacifist. I would not hold that it is under all imaginable circumstances wrong to use violence, even though use of

violence is in some sense unjust. I believe that one has to estimate relative justices. But the use of violence and the creation of some degree of injustice can only be justified on the basis of the claim and the assessment-which always ought to be undertaken very, very seriously and with a good deal of skepticism that this violence is being exercised because a more just result is going to be achieved.” — Noam Chomsky

More Questions

- How can the church demonstrate or share the peace of Christ?
- Is it easier for you to avoid conflict or seek peace through conflict?
- With what you know now, if you could go back in time, what situation would you change for the sake of peace, either by avoiding a conflict or working through it?
- What does it mean to call a war just? What peace do we find through war?
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor killed by Nazi's near the end of WWII. He had been a pacifist, yet came to the conclusion that Hitler and the Nazi's must be stopped. When Bonhoeffer became part of a plan to assassinate Hitler, he maintained that murder is sin, but ignoring suffering and evil is too. What does it mean to do something wrong/sinful for the sake of doing something right/just/holy?

For Your Consideration

Praying With St. Francis, the Radical Christian Peacemaker

By Shane Claiborne

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Today (Oct. 4) Christians around the world celebrate the life of St. Francis of Assisi, one of the bright lights of the Church and one of the most venerated religious figures in history.

The life and witness of Francis is as relevant to the world we live in today as it was 900 years ago. He was one of the first critics of capitalism, one of the earliest Christian environmentalists, a sassy reformer of the Church and one of the classic conscientious objectors to war.

Francis was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant, born into a society where the gap between rich and the poor was increasingly unacceptable. It was an age of religious crusades, where Christians and Muslims were killing each other in the name of God. Sound familiar?

Francis did something simple and wonderful. He read the Gospels where Jesus says, "Sell your possessions and give the money to the poor," "Consider the lilies and the sparrows and do not worry about tomorrow," "Love your enemies," and he decided to live as if Jesus meant the stuff he said.

Francis turned his back on the materialism and militarism of his world, and said yes to Jesus.

One of the quotes attributed to Francis is a simple and poignant critique of our world, just as it was to his: "The more stuff we have the more clubs we need to protect it." It does make you wonder if he'd be on Wall Street protesting today.

With a childlike innocence, Francis literally stripped naked and walked out of Assisi to live like the lilies and the sparrows (and to become the patron saint for the flower children). He lived close to the earth, and like Jesus became a friend of the birds and creatures, whom he fondly called "brother" and "sister." In light of that, many Christians brought their pets to Church yesterday for an special all-pets-allowed service, an annual tribute to Francis. And many a bird-bath dons his iconic image. But it's easy to turn our best movements into monuments. His life was a powerful critique of the demons of his day, which are very similar to the demons of our day.

One of my favorite stories of Francis, was when he decided to meet with the Muslim sultan, during the Fifth Crusade. It was a tumultuous time. War had become a necessity and a habit, and was baptized by much of the Church. Francis was sent off as a soldier, but he could not reconcile the violence of war with the grace of Christ — and so he got off his warhorse and put down the sword. He pleaded with the military commander, Cardinal Pelagius, to end the fighting. Pelagius refused. Instead, Pelagius broke off all diplomatic relations with the sultan of Egypt, Malik al-Kamil. The sultan in turn decreed that anyone who brought him the head of a Christian would be rewarded with a Byzantine gold piece. Francis, however, pursued his vision in steadfast faith, surmounting all dangers in a journey to see the sultan. He traveled through fierce fighting in Syria and inevitably was met by soldiers of the sultan's army, who beat him savagely and put him in chains, dragging him before the sultan himself. Francis spoke to the sultan of God's love and grace. The sultan listened intensely and was so moved that he offered Francis gifts and money. Francis of course had no desire for the money, but he gladly accepted one gift, an ivory horn used in the Muslim call to prayer. He took it back with him and used it to summon his own community for prayer. Both Francis and the sultan were transformed by that encounter.

In an age of religious extremists, Francis offers us an alternative. We have seen religious extremists of all stripes — Jewish, Muslim, Christian — distort the best that our faiths have to offer and hijack the headlines with stories of hatred. We've seen Christian extremists burn the Quran, blow up abortion clinics, bless bombs, baptize Wall Street and hold signs that say "God hates fags." But Francis invites us to become extremists for grace, extremists for love.

Although the Church is prone to forget his witness or to make a monument of his movement, there is a whole world remembering his radical witness today. We celebrate his critique of an economy that left masses of people in poverty so that a handful of people can live as they wish. We rejoice in his love for the earth as we work to end the ravaging of our world. We remember his witness that

there is a better way to bring peace than with a sword. And we remember the whisper he heard from God, "Repair the Church which is in ruins."

Let us do a little something today as a tribute to old Francis. Maybe we can get rid of some of our stuff or spend some time with a homeless person. Maybe we can laugh at advertisements today that try to convince us that happiness can be purchased. Maybe we can hang out in the woods and spend some time with the lilies and sparrows. Maybe we can take an enemy out for dinner.

These are the words of the famous prayer of Francis. May they inspire us to become better people and to build a better world:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console

To be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.