

January 1: World Day of Peace 2008

In 1968, Pope Paul VI called on all people of the world to together celebrate the “Day of Peace” on January 1. Since 1968, each year that day has been celebrated by Catholics and non-Catholics alike and is marked by a special annual peace message from the Holy Father.

According to Church teaching, peace is built on a commitment to love and justice and flourishes when all realize their responsibility for promoting it. True peace can only be attained when the dignity of each human being is respected. The Church is called to be a sacrament and instrument of peace in the world and must work, along with its members, to promote peace and its foundations: love, justice, development, and reconciliation.



Words from the past. . .

“Men must always speak of Peace. The world must be educated to love Peace, to build it up and defend it.”
- Pope Paul VI, 1968

“If you want Peace, work for Justice.”
- Pope Paul VI, 1972

“Life is the crown of Peace. If we base the logic of our activity on the sacredness of Life, war is virtually disqualified as a normal and habitual means of asserting rights and so of ensuring Peace.”
- Pope Paul VI, 1977

“Paul VI’s phrase - ‘Development is the new name for peace’ - specifies one of the keys in our search for peace. Can true peace exist when men, women and children cannot live in full human dignity?”
- Pope John Paul II, 1987

“To say ‘peace’ is really to speak of much more than the simple absence of war. It is to postulate a condition of authentic respect for the dignity and rights of every human being, a condition enabling him to achieve complete fulfillment. The exploitation of the weak and the existence of distressing pockets of poverty and social inequality constitute so many delays and obstacles to the establishment of stable conditions for an authentic peace.”
- Pope John Paul II, 1993

“Experience shows that *disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence*, and vice versa. It becomes more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men.”
- Pope Benedict XVI, 2007

. . . and the Present

In this year’s message, “The Human Family: Community of Peace,” Pope Benedict XVI will focus on the one human family, conceived of by God as a community of peace. Each individual, the Holy Father writes, is called to recognize his or her place in the human family, and to work to bring about a world of peace. The full text of this year’s statement is expected to be available on Dec. 15 at: www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/index_en.htm. After reading the message, discuss:

- 1) *What does Pope Benedict XVI describe as the responsibilities of the global community?*
- 2) *How might adopting the Holy Father’s perspective about the human family change world relations and/or U.S. policies?*
- 3) *How does his message challenge you? How can you personally take up the challenge to bring about a community of peace?*

A Prayer for Peace

To the Queen of Peace,
the Mother of Jesus Christ “our peace,”

I entrust my urgent prayer for all humanity at the beginning of the year . . . to which we look with hearts full of hope, notwithstanding the dangers and difficulties that surround us.

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!
- Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace Message 2007



Suggestions for Parishes

In our parishes and communities, we can make Pope Benedict XVI's words and those of his predecessors come alive for Catholics by integrating their World Day of Peace messages into our parish life. Below are some suggestions for helping Catholics understand and respond to the Holy Father's message.

Prayer/Liturgy

As people of faith, our action should always flow from prayer and reflection. Prayer reminds us of God's presence within all of us, helps us to focus on what we know to be true, such as the dignity of every human person, gives us hope, and moves us to a concern for peace with justice in our world. Here are some ideas for integrating prayer for peace into parish worship and life:



- ⇒ Hold a special Mass or prayer service for peace on or around January 1.
- ⇒ Use Prayers of the Faithful in your special Mass, or in regular Masses, that emphasize the main points of Pope Benedict XVI's peace message.
- ⇒ Create prayer cards with the Prayer for Peace from page 1 and ask parishioners to use them during a specified time (e.g. the month of January).
- ⇒ Ask parishioners to participate in a Novena for Justice and Peace (See: www.usccbpublishing.org/productdetails.cfm?sku=5-237).
- ⇒ Encourage parishioners to pray for peace during Eucharistic Adoration. Provide copies of the Pope's message and the Scriptural Rosary for Justice and Peace (See: www.usccbpublishing.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=471).
- ⇒ At appropriate times, use the Eucharistic Prayer for Masses of Reconciliation II.
- ⇒ For models of prayer see The Sacramentary's "Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions," section II (For Civil Needs), "In Time of War or Civil Disturbance."

Suggested Prayers of the Faithful

- ⇒ For world leaders and all citizens of the world, that we might recognize the dignity of every human person and the sacredness of all life, even the lives of our enemies. . .
- ⇒ For national public officials, that they might support development and justice as necessary conditions for peace. . .

- ⇒ For the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan, that they might find strong support from the global family as they seek to rebuild their nations. . .
- ⇒ For our children and the generations to come, that they may be educated in the ways of peace. . .
- ⇒ For each of us, that we might become witnesses of peace in a world oppressed by violence. . .
- ⇒ For all members of the one human family, that we may experience solidarity with our brothers and sisters in every part of the world, and become a community of peace. . .

More sample intentions can be found at: www.usccb.org/liturgy/ashwednesday.shtml#petition.

Preaching/Teaching

- ⇒ Provide a context for this year's peace message by sharing a brief history of the message.
- ⇒ Share some of the inspiring themes from past messages (see page 1) to illustrate the Church's commitment to peace throughout the years.
- ⇒ Help people to be in solidarity with those in other parts of the world; emphasize that we are all part of the one human family.
- ⇒ Read Chapter 11 of *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* on "The Promotion of Peace" (Chapter 11). Visit www.vatican.va for an electronic version of the *Compendium*.
- ⇒ Encourage adult formation. Distribute copies of this year's peace message or use page 1 of this guide as a bulletin insert. Invite parish committees or small groups to read and discuss the message and Chapter 11 of the *Compendium*.



Advocacy

- ⇒ Encourage parishioners to learn more about the Church's engagement in issues of global peace and justice by visiting www.usccb.org/sdwp/international
- ⇒ They can also sign up for action alerts on legislative issues at www.usccb.org/sdwp/takeaction.shtml.

