



# Apostles for Today

Prayer and Reflection - February 2019

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## Questions for personal and communal reflection:

1. Are you at peace with yourself, with God, with others? Where is your heart in need of healing, of being freed from bitterness, from stubbornness, from a lack of forgiveness, from closed-heartedness towards others?
2. Do you manage to forgive, at least to pray for, those who have done harm to you or to those who are dear to you? How might a proper balance be found between an authentic passion for justice and forgiveness, in order to serve true peace, especially when there may be some who do not recognise or admit the evil they continue to do?

## From the Writings of St. Vincent Pallotti:

*“Now, tell me, O child, will you have the courage to lose the infinite treasures of the Divinity by not giving peace to your neighbour, by not suppressing the first movements of resentment and of revenge, by not doing any violence to the rebellious passions of rage? Learn to be peaceful from your Brother (Jesus): he is your divine exemplar of peace, he proclaims and gives peace to all, and instead of brandishing the deserved arrows of revenge against his enemies, he implored peace and pardon even in his agonies. Remember... that in Jesus you not only have the divine exemplar to stimulate you to be peaceful, but you also find the grace, the power necessary to imitate him perfectly” (OCCC XIII, 590).*

*Fr. Jurij Sicinski, SAC  
Ukraine*

## Holiness: A Path Travelled Together

*Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.*

Who are the peacemakers of which Jesus speaks? Each of us can imagine who might be modern peacemakers. We all know well those soldiers who are well-armed, wearing bullet-proof vests and blue helmets. In fact, soldiers who have the mission to restore peace are to be found in many countries of the world where the fire of armed conflict breaks out.

But who were the peacemakers of Jesus time? The Lord speaks precisely of their mission in his preaching, since their task is not easy and is certainly very important not only for humanity, but also for the Kingdom of God; it is for this reason that they will be called sons and daughters of God. On the one hand, Jesus is conscious of the context of the Roman Empire which tended to reduce conflicts to the minimum and to proudly affirm the so-called *Pax Romana*. Nonetheless, it must be noted that this peace was guaranteed by the numerous legions deployed at the borders of the Empire. Therefore, Jesus could not have failed to see the many military garrisons overseeing keeping the peace in restless Judea.

The question arises however: Is Jesus speaking of these peacemakers? Or does he mean another type of peacemaker, of a different peace? The Lord addresses his disciples with the

words: “Peace I leave you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you” (Jn 14:27).

From the experience of the Church, we know that the peace which Christ gives is experienced in the “*purity of heart*” mentioned in the previous beatitude. Every peace which does not spring from forgiveness and which does not lead to love is artificial, like that which we know by the name *Pax Romana*, or by whatever other name we intend to give it. True peace is profoundly rooted in the human heart. Peace can be learned. True peace is given by God, because only He is the source of love and also of forgiveness. Every person has need of this kind of peace, and in a special way, those who find themselves in conflict zones, where hatred, lack of forgiveness and hostility are generated. For peace to reign in human beings, the Lord who is Love must dwell in their hearts. So that the Lord may dwell in our hearts, it is necessary for us to go out of ourselves to encounter Him. This is why the mission to preach the Gospel is extremely important in conflict zones. Therefore, the peacemakers about which Jesus speaks are those who carry the Good News, who show by their own life how to live.

A good example of a true mission to keep peace is that of the married couple Mrs. and Mr. Zavadsky, who went to western Ukraine where the military conflict persists with the consequent daily bloodshed. Deeply concerned and with great pain in their hearts because of the war in their own country, and as deeply believing people, they went to a conflict zone to proclaim the Gospel. The beginnings of their mission were extremely difficult, because they were accepted neither by the inhabitants of the place nor the military. Living in the basement of an abandoned house, they prayed every day and went from house to house to help people in small matters,

asking permission to pray with them for their intentions. Over time, other volunteers arrived: priests, nuns and lay people who supported them in their efforts to help the needy, to bring humanitarian aid and to proclaim the Word of God. And so, day after day, this initiative has taken off. Today the couple coordinates the work of many volunteers. Their main mission remains the proclamation of the Word of God. The mission they initiated has brought Christ into the hearts of tens or even hundreds of people, thanks to that peace which was present in the hearts of those two people who brought hope, encouraging others to do the same. The inhabitants of that region, as well as the young soldiers, are a living testimony of how the life of every person can change from the moment he or she hears the Gospel and understands the importance of forgiveness. What these people found most important was, as they themselves say, the peace experienced in their hearts thanks to the Word of the Lord preached by the volunteers in their daily reading with their families. Then, over time, people also went to Mass, receiving the Word become flesh in their hearts. “The Lord gave me hope and taught me to forgive and love and this brought peace to my heart. Now I am more calm and happy. I try to love those who have caused the bloodshed in my land. Today I understand: they have not yet met Christ, as I did a few years ago” - says Ms. Lyudmila, who recently approached the sacrament of reconciliation. The peacemakers of Christ continually expose themselves to the dangers of stray bullets, or even those intentionally aimed at them, shot in hatred and hostility. But despite the difficulties, these peacekeepers fulfil their mission step by step, bringing true peace to people's hearts.

Peacemakers are those who bring Christ, those who live for Him.