

Attaining peace is goal of all world's believers

World Day of Peace Statement of Pope John Paul II

EDITORS' NOTE: This article was excerpted from Pope John Paul II's statement for the Jan. 1, 1992, observance of world peace day.

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — ... Twenty-five years will have passed since this celebration was begun, and it is entirely natural ... to look back at this period as a whole, in order to determine if the cause of peace in the world has actually made progress or not, and if the tragic events of recent months — some of which are regrettably still going on — have marked a substantial setback, revealing how real is the danger that human reason can allow itself to be dominated by destructive self-interest or inveterate hatred. At the same time, the progressive rise of new democracies has given back hope to entire peoples, inspired confidence in more fruitful international dialogue and made possible a long-awaited era of peace.

Against this background of light and shadows, this yearly message is not meant to offer either a progress report or a judgment, but only a new, fraternal invitation to consider present human events, in order to raise them to an ethical and religious vision, a vision which believers should be the first to live by. Precisely because of their faith, believers are called — as individuals and as a body — to be messengers and artisans of peace. Like others and even more than others, they are called to seek with humility and perseverance appropriate responses to the yearnings for security and freedom, solidarity and sharing, which are common to everyone in this world. ... A commitment to peace of course concerns every person of good will. ... Yet, this is a duty which is especially incumbent upon all

who profess faith in God and even more so upon Christians, who have as their guide and master the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:5).

The Nature of Peace

The longing for peace is deeply rooted in human nature and is found in the different religions. It expresses itself in the desire for order and tranquility, in an attitude of readiness to help others, in cooperation and sharing based on mutual respect. These values, which originate in the natural law and are propounded by the world's religions, require, if they are to develop, the support of everyone ... (B)earing witness to peace and working and praying for peace are a normal part of good religious behavior.

This also explains why in the sacred books of the different religions references to peace occupy a prominent place in the context of man's life and his relationship with God. For example, we Christians believe that Jesus Christ ... is "our peace" (Ephesians 2:14); for our Jewish brothers and sisters, the word "shalom" expresses both a wish and blessing in a situation in which man is in harmony with himself, with nature and with God; and for the followers of Islam the term "salaam" is so important that it constitutes one of the glorious divine names. It can be said that a religious life, if it is lived authentically, cannot fail to bring forth fruits of peace and brotherhood, for it is in the nature of religion to foster an ever closer bond with the Godhead and to promote an increasingly fraternal relationship among people.

The 'Spirit of Assisi'

... (F)ive years ago I wrote to the leaders of the Christian churches and the major world religions in order to



File photo
Pope John Paul II walked through Assisi, Italy, with a leaders of other world religions Oct. 27, 1986. The pope was joined in World Day of Prayer for Peace celebrations that day by 150 leaders of other faiths.

invite them to a special meeting of prayer for peace, which was held in Assisi. The memory of that significant event has led me to return to and suggest once more the theme of the solidarity of believers in the same cause.

At Assisi the spiritual leaders of the major religions from the different continents gathered together: the meeting was a concrete witness to the universal dimension of peace, and confirmed that peace is not only the result of skillful political and diplomatic negotiations or a compromise between economic interests, but depends in a fundamental way upon the One who knows human hearts and guides and directs the steps of all mankind. As people concerned for the future of humanity, we fasted together, meaning thereby to express our compassion and solidarity with the millions and millions who are victims of hunger throughout the world. As believers concerned with the events of human history, we went on pilgrimage together, meditating silently on our common origin and our common destiny, our limitations and our responsibilities, and on the prayers and expectations of all our many brothers and sisters who look to us for help in their needs.

What we did on that occasion by praying and demonstrating our firm commitment to peace on earth, we must continue to do now. We must

foster the genuine "spirit of Assisi" not only out of a duty to be consistent and faithful, but also in order to offer a reason for hope to future generations. In the town of St. Francis, the poor man of Assisi, we began a common journey which must now continue, obviously without excluding the search for other ways and new means for a solid peace, built on spiritual foundations.

The Power of Prayer

But before having recourse to human resources, I wish to reaffirm the need for intense, humble, confident and persevering prayer, if the world is finally to become a dwelling place of peace. Prayer is par excellence the power needed to implore that peace and obtain it. It gives courage and support to all who love this good and desire to promote it in accordance with their own possibilities and in the various situations in which they live. Prayer not only opens us up to a meeting with the Most High but also disposes us to a meeting with our neighbor, helping us to establish with everyone, without discrimination, relationships of respect, understanding, esteem and love.

Religious sentiment and a prayerful spirit not only help us to grow inwardly; they also enlighten us about the true meaning of our presence in the world. It can also be said that the religious dimension encourages us to

A new monthly calendar will appear in the Catholic Courier on the last Thursday of each month.

PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS

WOULD YOU PRAY FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY?

THE MONTHLY PRAYER

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Eternal Father, we lift up to you these and all the priests of the world. Sanctify them. Heal and guide them. Mold them into the likeness and holiness of your Son, Jesus, the Eternal High Priest. May their lives be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
(With ecclesiastical approval)

Mass
 Rosary
 Fasting
 Day Offering
 Eucharistic Adoration
 Divine Mercy Chaplet
 Or whatever the Lord inspires you to offer Him

JANUARY, 1992

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