

REFLECTIONS FOR ADVENT 2008

SISTER BRENDA WALSH, OP, RACINE DOMINICAN

WEEK ONE

Reflection:

This week take time to reflect on our call to be peacemakers. Name some ways that we individually and as a community can work to create a ***culture of peace*** wherever we are.

May we have the courage to speak out boldly against the war in Iraq and encourage faith communities, church leaders and others to do the same.

Peace begins in our minds, our hearts,

our homes, and spreads out to our communities, our nation and our world. May we claim the power of God's peace and overcome our fears and self-deception with the promise of God's presence and may we grow in awareness that our lives must reflect God's justice, generosity and peace by the witness of our lives.

"May God our Father and Jesus Christ bless you and give you grace and peace." 1 Cor. 1:3

Prayer:

God of our journey, as we begin our Advent walk this year, open our eyes, our minds and our hearts to your presence and enable us to be effective peacemakers in our time, both locally and globally. We grieve the state of our communities, our nation and our world, often filled with pain and violence. We remember especially our brothers and sisters in Iraq whose lives are devastated and filled with grief as a result of the horrors of war.

Give us hope to work for change and to resist the evils of war even in the face of opposition. Above all, help us believe that peace is possible in this time in our own lives, on our streets, our nation and in areas of conflict around the world. May we partner with you in our efforts to bring peace to the people of Iraq and may we help make Your dream for our world a reality, even in the face of opposition. As followers of Dominic and Catherine, let us work to bring Christ's peace to our world. Help us to see Your power at work in spite of the arrogance of nations, our weakness, resistance and failure. . May we find our hope and joy in Your Word in this Advent Season and always Amen.

Action:

Take time each day to reflect on our call to be peacemakers. Name some ways that we individually and as a community can work to create a culture of peace wherever we are.

Consider supporting the Water for Peace Project that will help supply a school or hospital with clean, fresh drinking water in Iraq. For information go to www.MPT-iraq.org. Write to Water for Peace, IARP, 1346 Westwood Hills Rd., St. Louis Park, MN 55426. Information on other programs can be found at www.lettersforpeace.pbwiki.com.



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WEEK TWO

Reflection:

The prophets of old challenged people to choose a new path and work to make God's dream for our world a reality. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said that "Those who love peace need to work as effectively as those who promote war. As they work for the war machine, we must work for peace."

As we move through this season of Advent, let us take time to remember God is already here. It is a question of our surrender to that presence, always and everywhere in our midst. Let us unclutter our minds and hearts to make room for God's vision, God's plan and God's call to each of us.

"A voice cries out in the wilderness, prepare a way for our God." Is. 40: 3

Prayer:

Ever present God, help us to hear your voice through the victims of violence and war, those close to us and those far away from us, especially those caught in the conflict in Iraq.

- Let us pray for all the children who suffer devastation, pain and death because others put their faith in weapons of war and violence as a way of solving problems. Emmanuel, show us the path to life.
- Let us pray for those who resist war and often lay down their lives in pursuit of that effort to create a culture of peace. Emmanuel, show us the path to life.
- Let us pray for all those who do not want war all around the world. Give them strength to support peace and to speak out boldly against war. Emmanuel, show us the path to life.
- Let us pray for our leaders who support war and violence and use the war industry as a means to keep our economy growing. Help us use the resources spent on war and destruction to support life and growth and hope for all people. Emmanuel, show us the path to life.
- Let us pray that we may share the pain and hopes of the people of Iraq and work to influence decision makers to work for an end to the conflict and to support families seeking asylum in other countries and our own, to start a new life for themselves and their loved ones. Emmanuel, show us the path to life.
- We pray that we may follow the path of Jesus, who sought and comforted the suffering and the lost and enabled them to find hope and meaning in their daily lives. Emmanuel, show us the path to life.

Loving God, as we walk with Mary and Joseph seeking "room in the inn", let us walk with the children and families from Iraq who are seeking asylum in our country and other places around the world, and encourage our leaders to do our fair share of enabling the victims of the Iraq war to find a safe and welcoming space and a means of supporting themselves in our nation. In Your Holy Name and in the Name of Jesus and the Holy Spirit we pray.

Amen.

Action:

Write to government officials and urge them to continue to keep our national commitment to accept families leaving Iraq as a result of the war, and enable them to find a peaceful way of life after they arrive at our shores.

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WEEK THREE

Reflection:

“Another World is Possible”

The founder of the Peace Institute, Georgia Kelly, reminds us the greatest threats to democracy are not terrorists and ineffective leaders or controlling special interest groups. They are apathy, hopelessness and cynicism. To counter these attitudes, there is a growing trend of individuals and groups making a conscious choice to engage in personal and social transformation, and demonstrate that “another world is possible”

Age, sex, or physical condition are not obstacles to making a difference in creating a culture of peace. I think of a 98 year old African American woman, Corrine Owens, who has devoted her whole life to working for racial, social and economic justice for people of color in our area and is known as the Rosa Parks of Racine, WI. Age is not a hindrance for her in living out her passion for justice and peace for all. In her mind, without a doubt, “Another world is possible.” Our age or condition need not be an obstacle to our involvement in creating a peaceful world.

“Remember, God has called you and will not fail you.” 1 Thes. 5: 24

Prayer:

Loving God, help us to embrace non-violence as a way of life and request that our legislators promote peace and not war. Strengthen us to act with justice which is the foundation for peace. Help us to reject cynicism about the possibility of creating a better future, a better world based on sound ethical principles and peaceful means of solving problems. May we adopt a new bottom line of love, forgiveness and solidarity rather than a model of domination and superiority of one nation or one group over another. Enable us to always find hope and joy in hearing Your Word and through Your power, to create a world of unity, peace, and love. May Your peace fill our minds, our hearts, our homes, our communities, our nation and our world, as we remember especially the people of Iraq. Gracious God, hear our prayer, Amen.

Action:

Meet with representatives of other faith communities to discuss how faith groups can support a culture of peace locally and globally.

Invite children and youth to create an artistic expression of a peaceful community, through art, poetry or music and share it with others.



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WEEK FOUR

Reflection:

Seldom do we hear of the plight of the more than five million Iraqi refugees displaced by war and the occupation in Iraq. They have been displaced by bombing kidnappings, and sectarian violence. Some seek shelter in abandoned buildings in their own country and others seek refuge in other countries around the world. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi citizens have died in Iraq as a result of the war, and many of them are children. Close to 5,000 US military have died in combat and thousands have returned home to the US and often lack resources to provide for their needs. Let us ask God to “Lead us from death to life, from war and conflict and division to peace.”

Recall the words of the late William Sloane Coffin who reminds us that “God comes to earth as a child so that we can finally grow up, which means we can stop blaming God for the ills of the world, as if we had been laboring to cure them, and stop making God responsible for all the thinking and doing we should be undertaking ourselves. God provides minimum protection, maximum support – support to help us grow up, to stretch our minds and hearts until they are as wide as God universe. God doesn’t want us to be narrow-minded and subservient, but joyful and loving, as free for one another as God’s love was freely poured out for us at Christmas in that baby in the manger.”

“Glory to God, who gives you the strength to live according to the Good News. Give glory therefore, to this God, through Jesus Christ.” Rom.16: 27.

Prayer:

Today, we remember those who have lost their lives in Iraq and in other areas of conflict. Let us also remember those who walk in fear every day of their lives and who grieve the loss of their loved ones. Let us challenge our political leaders who see war as a way of solving problems in order to retain our status of power and privilege in a broken and bleeding world.

God of the living, let us remember that Jesus came as seeker and life-giver to the lost and the broken, and offered them the Bread of Life. May Your power and grace working through us bring new life where there is death, and hope that another world is indeed possible. We know that you can help us cast out fear and cynicism and to listen to your voice that tells us “Do not be afraid.” This day we renew our belief that you will never let us walk alone as we step out in hope to work for a better world for all your people. In Your Holy Name and in the Name of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we pray, Amen.

Action:

Reach out to the grieving families of military personnel who died in Iraq. Contact your local Veteran’s Center and learn about ways you can help by connecting with families of wounded veterans who have returned from Iraq.

A Blessed Christmas Season to All!

