

Peace Talk Series by Mary Gloria C. Njoku

Defining Peace

Traditional definitions identify peace as the absence of war or other violence. Over the past half-century observers have come to see peace as a much broader concept. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2304), fits this later model, holding that peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is "the tranquility of order." Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.

Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ, the messianic "Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:5). By the blood of his cross, "in his own person he killed the hostility," (Eph 2:16) he reconciled humans with God and made his Church the sacrament of the unity of the human race and of its union with God. "He is our peace." He has declared: "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Mt. 5:9).

People who renounce violence and bloodshed and in order to safeguard human rights, make use of those means of defense available to the weakest, bear witness to evangelical charity, provided they do so without harming the rights and obligations of other people and societies. They bear legitimate witness to the gravity of the physical and moral risks of recourse to violence, with all its destruction and death (CCH).

Injustice, excessive economic or social inequalities, envy, distrust, and pride raging among men, women and nations constantly threaten peace and cause wars. Everything done to overcome these disorders contributes to building up peace and avoiding war (CCH)

The question you should be asking yourself is: am I willing to overcome envy, distrust and pride? Am I willing to stop all forms of injustice, economic and social inequalities? Am I willing to give peace a chance? How do I instill peace in my life? What level of peace am I looking for? -personal peace in the midst of chaotic circumstances? or family peace? or national peace?

I do believe with the Church that if we can vanquish the disorders of envy, distrust, greed and their like, and if we support social and economic justice and come together in charity, the words of the Prophet Isaiah (2:4) will be fulfilled and then they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nations, neither shall they learn war anymore." Then, we shall indeed know peace. For now, we should be saying, let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.