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4th April 2009

Peace: be in it!

Welcome and Presentation

Prayer:

Come, Lord,
Change our lives, shatter our complacency.
Take away the quietness of a clear conscience.

Press us uncomfortably,
for only thus
that other peace is made,
your peace. Amen

1) What is Peace for you?

Write on a sheet of paper: what is for you...

- 1) Peace with oneself
- 2) Peace with the others
- 3) Peace with the Universe
- 4) Peace with God

We will then collect the papers and read them together in an anonymous way.

The participants wrote:

Peace is much more than an absence of war; peace is to be found in the depths of our humanity; our humanity is redemptive; we find we are made for others - for the universe; we are truly forgiven - given for; in the depths of our humanity we recognise those things for which we all yearn - we are at peace.

Peace with oneself: Serenity about who and what you are; self-acceptance. Contentment, quietness, joy, balanced, hope. Comfortable in my own skin; silence the voices of discontent. Self-acceptance. Inner peace; to be comfortable inwardly. Courage + truth. When I realise God is within me.

Peace with others: Being able to not judge, to truly accept the other as they are; compassion. Balanced, relationship, sharing, transforming, to something better, understanding and accepting differences. Allowing the other to be who they are created

to be. To be open and to listen. Essential to achieve peace inwardly; to make a conscious effort with others. Letting go + giving. When I recognise God within them.

Peace with the Universe: cosmic justice, forces in balance, equilibrium, connectedness with everything. Seeking a harmony between taking and giving. Feel content with our universe - flawed proven we may make it. Harmony + love. When I realise God is present in the whole world.

Peace with God: On one hand to have a relationship with God, that is uplifting; on another to be able to know that you have walked the path of life as consciously as possible; also??? Acceptance (God of me, me of God), relationship + connectedness, lifting of burdens and brokenness. Coming to a place where I know and trust God's goodness. To be grounded in his Love. The ultimate - to learn to accept God's free peace. Acceptance + curiosity. Free from sin.

Sharing

2) Peace with oneself

Jn 20:19

19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Mt 10:11-15

11 And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it, and stay with him until you depart.

12 As you enter the house, salute it.

13 And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

14 And if any one will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town.

15 Truly, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgement for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Es 9:2-6

2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

The word *peace* in Hebrew comes from the root which means: to finish, to accomplish -> to be complete, to be whole. Peace is therefore the quality of what is complete. *Integrity* has two meanings: *honesty* and *totality*. To be complete means maybe both.

To be in peace with ourselves, we need to look at ourselves as we are and to accept what we see. And even to love it. It is certainly not easy, because we have been wounded by the past events of our lives, and we feel incomplete; we are well aware of all the ugly aspects of our being. Despite them, we are in fact loveable, being unique creatures. We are ashamed of not being what we think we should be. We feel guilty because of the heavy mud in ourselves. Yet salvation means that we are ok as we are. We have therefore to learn to accept and love ourselves despite our many lacks and faults. Salvation is not so much about guilt; it is about acceptance and opening to being loved, because finally God's love doesn't depend on how we are. Love teaches us to open fully to life. Every day is a new day and a new start. Life is not in the accumulation of the past, but in the creation of the present moment when we open to God and to his action in ourselves. God can act in us and recreate us for the precise reason that we are so needy for his Grace. Our sinfulness makes us all similar and equal, and equally loved. Our faults bring us all together in our humanity.

The Messiah brings to us another reality: the kingdom of Peace. The call for peace, as in the text we read, transforms us.

It is touching to notice how much our own worst faults are so often narrowly linked with our best qualities. In order to investigate how much we can learn by looking at ourselves differently and peacefully, let's examine this link between faults and qualities. Choose one of what you think is one of your main faults and see how it is linked to one of your major qualities. Choose a pair of fault and quality, and examine the link between them.

Time of personal recollection:

15 min walk in the paddocks, around the house or sitting where you want. It would be good if you could share later something of what you have discovered about this link between faults and qualities.

Sharing

Writing on the white board as an offering to God and a healing prayer

3) Peace with the others

Mt 10:34-36

34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

36 and a man's foes will be those of his own household.

Gandhi I: a message to be lived (by E. Stanley Jones)

So I said to the Mahatma: "I am going to the West tomorrow, could you give me a message to the Western world as to how we should live this Christian life?". He thought a moment and said: "Such a message cannot be given by words of mouth, it can only be lived."

***Gandhi 2: to resign your post or to inflict on me the severest penalty*(by E. Stanley Jones**

To see the power and directness and simplicity of the method of non-violent non-co-operation let us look at the Mahatma Gandhi's first trial and imprisonment before a British Judge. (...) The Mahatma's statement: (...) "Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-co-operation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime, and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge, is either to resign your post and thus dissociate yourself from evil if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil, and that in reality I am innocent; or to inflict on me the severest penalty, if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country, and that my activity is therefore injurious to the common weal."

Conflicts are unavoidable. Jesus himself says he brings the sword, and not peace. What does it mean?

Recently I read about a lawyer who wondered how he could work in a different spirit at the court where conflicts are examined; how to be a defender and not an adversarial party? How to create harmony where everything is understood in terms of winning and losing? How to change the spirit of the practice of law in order to allow real justice to arise - not punishment, but peace.

A spirit of reconciliation and non-violence as well as the daily practice of these qualities are the way for peace in our relationships with others. How do we solve conflicts? How do we cope with any form of contract and requirement?

Time of personal recollection:

Let us think for 5 min about the following questions, and then share one with another:

- 1) What does it mean that Jesus brings the sword?
- 2) How do we solve conflicts in our daily lives?
- 3) What is the main quality which is necessary for the practice of non-violence?

Prayer of St Francis and free intercession

*Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,*

*and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.*

Sharing

Prayer: O God, you inspire in our hearts a dream for a better world where we can live in love and freedom. We give you thanks for those who keep the vision alive and ask you to help us keep our eyes on Jesus who is our way to accomplishing the task you have given each one of us. We ask this in the name of Jesus and all who died for the sake of peace and justice.

TEA

4) Peace with the Universe

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: 'I am', The Foundation of all Experience

***Questioner:** I hear you making statements about yourself like: 'I am timeless, immutable beyond attributes', etc. How do you know these things? And what makes you say them?*

***Maharaj:** I am only trying to describe the state before the 'I am' arose, but the state itself, being beyond the mind and its language, is indescribable.*

***Q:** The 'I am' is the foundation of all experience. What you are trying to describe must also be an experience, limited and transitory. You speak of yourself as immutable. I hear the sound of the word, I remember its dictionary meaning, but the experience of being immutable I do not have. How can I break through the barrier and know personally, intimately, what it means to be immutable?*

***M:** The word itself is the bridge. Remember it, think of it, explore it, go round it, look at it from all directions, dive into it with earnest perseverance: endure all delays and disappointments till suddenly the mind turns round, away from the word, towards the reality beyond the word. It is like trying to find a person knowing his name only. A day comes when your enquiries bring to him and the name becomes reality. Words are valuable, for between the word and its meaning there is a link and if one investigates the word assiduously, one crosses beyond the concept into the experience at the root of it. As a matter of fact, such repeated attempts to go beyond the words is what is called meditation. Sadhana is but a persistent attempt to cross over from the verbal to the non-verbal. The task seems hopeless until suddenly all becomes clear and simple and so wonderfully easy. But, as long as you are interested in your present way of living, you will shirk from the final leap into the unknown.*

We experience the world as a place of suffering: we cannot escape suffering in our own life and we are suffering all the time to see how much injustice happens around us. Yet there is in the world an evident harmony, despite the suffering. Harmony seems to be the law which commands nature and the whole universe. And the coming of the Kingdom.

Behind the screen of what we see, behind the screen of our thoughts, behind the screen of our representations of the world, there is another reality which remains eternally peaceful. How to access it? For Nisargadatta (Hindu sage) the exercise consists in concentrating on the word "I am", because it is the key to our deeper being.

On what do we concentrate: on our present way of living or on this immutable quality of being?

Time of personal recollection:

Let's have 10 min. of silence, concentrating on the word "I am". Sit relaxed and straight on your chair, as if suspended by the hairs on the top of your head, with your feet very stable on the floor. Breathe deeply and regularly. Repeat silently to yourself "I am" at each time you breathe in. Do not let your thoughts take you away. Every time you lose the track, come back to the same word.

Sharing

5) Peace with God

Jon 3:1-10

1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,

2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you."

3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth.

4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he cried, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

5 ¶ And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

6 Then tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, or drink water,

8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them cry mightily to God; yea, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence which is in his hands.

9 Who knows, God may yet repent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we perish not?"

10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it.

This story is about the power of conversion. Repenting is the way to reconcile with God. It is a change of mind, a change of road, a complete change of values and of behaviour. In Greek, it is called *metanoia*, it means a complete turn-around of our mind and attitudes. Repentance changes our life completely. It gives us access to real life. In what, as believers, are we living in a different way from the way non believers do? What makes the fundamental difference?

We can distinguish three levels in our life: being, doing and having. How does repentance fit in with each of these three levels?

- 1) Repentance about the level of being.
- 2) Repentance about doing.
- 3) Repentance about having.

Time of personal recollection:

Let's have 5 min of personal reflection before we share. How do we experience repenting and changing our lives on these three levels: being, doing and having? How does our faith lead us to experience these three levels in a different way from others?

Sharing

Intercession

O God, you make your dwelling place with us and give us the promise of your fidelity; in trust we proclaim:

You are the God of everlasting love!

- *enable all women and men to put aside their defences and weapons to make peace a reality*
Your dwelling place is with us in the midst of our struggles
- *give us the insight to recognise that you dwell with all your people and that each person has the right to human dignity.*
You, indeed, are our God; there is no other God but you;
- *help us to place our trust in you and to put aside the idols of consumerism, and all that keeps us from allowing you to be our God.*
You call us to a covenantal relationship as your people;
- *may all who experience brokenness in relationships find healing and forgiveness in their faith communities.*

Final Prayer

O God, Source of all blessings, we have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from you. May our Lenten path of penance open us to a renewal of life in the Spirit. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.