



January 1, 2023

Mary, the Holy Mother of God—Christmastime

World Day of Prayer for Peace

"The Lord look kindly upon you and give you peace!"

Numbers 6:26



Dear Friends,

The World Day of Prayer for Peace is celebrated each year on January 1, the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. For fifty-six years the popes have encouraged the church to play a greater role in the search for world peace. We are urged to work toward achieving peace by focusing on relationships: the relationship of an individual with other human beings; the relationship between individuals, the community, and the nation state; the relationship of nations with each other; and the relationship of individuals and nations with the worldwide community.

In this year's message Pope Francis focuses on the question "What lessons have we learned from the Covid crisis?" The pope writes,

"Certainly, after directly experiencing the fragility of our own lives and the world around us, we can say that the greatest lesson we learned from Covid-19 was the realization that we all need one another. That our greatest and yet most fragile treasure is our shared humanity as brothers and sisters, children of God. And that none of us can be saved alone. Consequently, we urgently need to join together in seeking and promoting universal values that can guide the growth of this human fraternity."

Not only have we learned that we cannot "go it alone," but that the patterns of our individual lives and society at large contribute to fragmentation violence and war. Francis continues,

"We also learned that the trust we put in progress, technology, and the effects of globalization was not only excessive, but turned into an individualistic and idolatrous intoxication, compromising the very promise of justice, harmony and peace that we so ardently sought. In our fast-paced world, the widespread problems of inequality, injustice, poverty and marginalization continue to fuel unrest and conflict, and generate violence and even wars."

We cannot solve problems without recognizing how we, nature, the economic and political systems (that we have created) are all interconnected. For example, shutting down borders will not solve the 11 million people seeking a better life elsewhere. We must ask, "why are people feeling the need to leave their homelands?" Is it climate change, drug cartels, or war? Maybe if their homelands could be healed, then so many would not feel compelled to leave their homes which they love. The peace we seek must be born of a new perspective and understanding.

Covid has changed everything and given us an opportunity to have a fresh look at ourselves and the world. Pope Francis invites us *"to let our hearts be changed by our experience of the crisis, to let God, at this time in history, transform our customary criteria for viewing the world around us. We can no longer think of carving out space for our personal or national interests; instead, we must think in terms of the common good...we belong to a greater community...we cannot continue to focus simply on ourselves; rather the time has come for all of us to endeavor to heal our society and our planet, to lay the foundations for a more just and peaceful world..."*

On this feast of Mary, the Holy Mother of God we commemorate that God chooses to dwell peacefully in our midst as one of us. The challenge is for us to dwell peacefully with one another.

Christ is born!

Fr Ron

Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: www.anne.church