

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Mt 5:9).

St Matthew's Gospel begins its account of Jesus' preaching with the surprising proclamation of the Beatitudes.

Jesus proclaims "blessed", meaning completely happy and fulfilled, all those who in the eyes of the world are considered losers or unlucky: the humble, the afflicted, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the pure in heart, those who work for peace.

God makes them great promises. They will be filled and consoled by him; they will inherit the earth and his kingdom.

This is a real cultural revolution, which reverses our narrow and shortsighted way of seeing things. So often, we see these categories of people as marginal and insignificant in the struggle for power and success.

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From a biblical perspective, peace is a fruit of God's salvation. First of all, it is his gift. Peace is a characteristic of God himself, who loves humanity and all creation with a Father's heart, and has a plan for all people based on harmony and goodwill. For this reason, those who endeavour to bring peace bear some "resemblance" to him, like his children.

Chiara Lubich wrote, "Anyone who possesses inner peace can be a bearer of peace. We need to be peacemakers first in our own behaviour, all the time, living in harmony with God and his will. [...] 'They will be called children of God'. Being given a name means becoming what the name says. St Paul called God 'the God of peace' and when writing to Christians, he said: 'The God of peace be with you all'. Peacemakers show their kinship with God and act like children of God; they bear witness to God who has inscribed an order in human society, whose fruit is peace."

Living in peace is not simply the absence of conflict; nor is it a quiet life in which our values are adaptable so that somehow we will always be accepted. Instead, it is a distinctly gospel-based lifestyle, which calls for courage in making choices that go against the flow.

To be "peacemakers" means above all creating opportunities for reconciliation in our own life and that of others, at all levels. First, reconciliation with God and then with those close to us at home, at work, in school, in parishes and associations, in social and international relations. It is therefore a clear-cut way of loving our neighbour, a great work of mercy that heals all relationships.

Jorge, a teenager from Venezuela, decided to be a peacemaker in his school: "One day, when lessons were over, I realised that my classmates were organizing a demonstration, and they were going to use violence, burning cars and throwing stones. I thought this was not according to

my lifestyle, so I suggested that we write a letter to the Head Teacher, asking in a different way for what they wanted to obtain through violence. A few of us wrote the letter and gave it to the Head".

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Today, it is urgent to encourage dialogue and meetings between individuals and groups whose history, cultural traditions and points of view are different. It is a way of showing appreciation and acceptance of diversity as a source of enrichment.

Pope Francis recently said: *"peace is built up by the chorus of differences, and starting from these differences we learn from one another, as members of one family... We have one Father and we are brothers and sisters. Let's love each other as such. And if we argue among ourselves, let it be as brothers and sisters, who are immediately reconciled and always go back to being a family."*

We can also find out more about the seeds of peace and brotherhood that are already helping to make our towns and cities more open and humane. We can contribute to healing splits and conflicts by caring for these seeds and making them grow.

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