

**'Seek peace, and pursue it.' (Ps. 34:14)**

In this psalm, David tells the people gathered before him of his joy and gratitude to God. He had experienced danger and anguish, but he called trustingly on the God of Israel and found peace again.

This hymn is primarily about God and his mercy, telling of his powerful presence alongside the poor and oppressed who call upon him.

Wanting to help others obtain salvation as he has done, David went on to suggest some inner attitudes to adopt: to avoid doing evil, but to do good always instead.

He emphasized the need not to malign others. Words, in fact, can lead to war.

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In biblical language, peace has several meanings, such as physical and spiritual wellbeing or harmony between individuals and peoples. Above all, however, it is a gift from God, through which we discover his fatherly presence.

That is why, in order to experience true peace, we need to be passionate and persevering in seeking God in our lives.

Searching for God is something wonderful in which we are asked to do our part by following the voice of our conscience. This always urges us to choose the path of goodness and not the path of evil. Often it is enough to let God find us, as He has been searching for each one of us for quite a while.

Through baptism, we Christians already have a close relationship with Jesus. He is the God who is near and who has promised us peace; he himself is peace. We have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who also helps us to share with others the fruits of God's peace that we have experienced. He will show us how to love the people around us and so overcome conflicts by avoiding baseless allegations, superficial judgments and gossip. In this way, our hearts will open to accept others.

We may not be able to silence all the guns that bring bloodshed to so many parts of the world. However, we can take the initiative in giving new life to wounded relationships, whether that is in our family, our Christian community, at work or in our towns and cities.

Wherever a small or large community is determined to witness to the power of love, it becomes possible to build bridges between social groups, churches and even political parties.

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A sincere search for peace will also help us identify practices that can protect creation, which is also God's gift to his children and is entrusted to us to care for responsibly for future generations.

In 1990, Chiara Lubich wrote to Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, founder of the Japanese Buddhist movement Rissho Kosei Kai: "If human beings are not at peace with God, the earth itself is not at peace. People of faith are aware that the earth 'suffers' when it is not treated according to the plan of God, but purely out of self interest and an endless desire to possess. This selfish desire contaminates the environment more than and before any other kind of pollution, which is merely its consequence. ... If we discover that all creation is the gift of a Father who loves us, it will be much easier to find a harmonious relationship with nature. If we also discover that this gift is for everyone in the human family and not only a few, greater attention and respect will be given to something that belongs to all of humanity, both present and future."

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