

World Peace and Other Easy Answers

In speaking of peace today, I do so not as a commentator on politics, but as a Christian reflecting on our Lord's call to pray without ceasing, especially for those caught up in violence and fear.

World peace is one of two easy answers in life. It's the correct response when a beauty pageant contestant is asked what the most important thing is that our society needs: This response was made famous in the movie *Miss Congeniality*; the first easy answer is *world peace*. The other easy answer is *Jesus* in response to just about any children's Sunday School question. Interestingly, although these two answers should be one in the same, we too often find them further apart than the east is from the west.

The first reading takes us back 3000 years to a scene of war; the Amalekites came to Rephidim to fight with Israel. In the verses leading up to the battle, Israel had been faint and weary, grumbling for water. Amalek saw vulnerability and decided to strike. But Israel were the unlikely victors thanks to God's protection of his people through a miracle. When a frail Moses lifted his hands in prayer, Israel prevailed. So crucial was it that Moses' arms were raised, his friends Aaron and Hur held them up for the old man. The power of God through the steadfast intercession of Moses achieved the impossible. The episode reveals that God's people will always face attacks when they are weakest, and that victory comes through faith and prayer. Sadly, the outcome was not one of a lasting peace in that region, as we are all too aware today. And when Israel fell into disobedience and sin, their army was defeated at Hormah as told by the book of Numbers.

1000 years later, Jesus, whom the Church recognises as the New Moses, prayed: *may they all be one; as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us*. The unity of all was in the Lord's heart as his passion loomed. And like Moses, Jesus stretched out his arms in the cross, the nails keeping his arms stretched out. By his holy Cross he redeemed the world, and in his dying prayer said, *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit*.

Now, in 2025, a recent headline spoke of peace, with the striking claim that *it took 3,000 years to get to this point*. Ten days ago, an historic peace deal was agreed in Egypt, bringing an end to two years of all-out violence. That the killing has stopped, more-or-less, is a very positive development. That world leaders fly across the world to promote peace is noble.

But whether we are able to speak of a lasting peace in the Holy Land after 3000 years seems unlikely. Because the wounds of war go deep; will the displaced people who return to their

flattened neighbourhoods feel at peace; how peacefully do the loved ones of those murdered feel, or those losing their friends collaterally? Peace is more than a cessation of violence, but a conversion of mind and heart. Peace is a virtue.

The psalmist sings, *I lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall come my help?* It's a question born of longing and weariness, the same posture as Moses, whose arms were held high by the help of his friends. And the psalm's answer is clear: *Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*

That same help sustains us now. When we look to the mountains of division, or the valleys of suffering in our world, we too must lift our eyes in prayer. The psalmist goes on. The Lord neither slumbers nor sleeps; he guards our going and coming, our nations and our homes, even when peace seems distant.

Jesus, in today's Gospel, tells of the widow who never gives up, who prays and pleads and perseveres until justice is done. He tells it so that we *ought always to pray and not lose heart*. It is a parable for people like us, who long for peace but are tempted to grow tired. World peace is not an easy answer; it is the hard and holy work of love, and it begins in prayer, through, with, and in Jesus, whose peace is God's own gift.

Every time we gather at this altar, we pray as he prayed: *Peace I leave you, my peace I give you*. The signing of treaties can bring a fragile truce, as we've seen recently in the Middle East; deeper still is the peace of Christ, the peace of the Cross. And though world peace seems so far away, we hold to this truth: Jesus is the risen and victorious Son; his peace is unending. His pierced hands are still raised over the world in prayer.

So let us take up our part: to pray daily, persistently, for peace, as disciples who believe that God's justice and mercy will prevail. And as we do, we echo the prayer of Moses, the faith of the psalmist, and the perseverance of the widow, trusting that the Lord will indeed guard our world, now and for ever.

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles, "Peace I leave you, my peace I give you," look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will, who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen**

Lord Jesus, send your peace upon our world,
where war divides and hearts are wounded.
Make us instruments of your peace,
that your love may reign among all peoples.
Amen.

For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world. **Amen.**