

# Ten steps towards being a peacemaker

## 1. Acknowledge the dignity of every human being

All human beings are precious because we are all made in the image and likeness of God. So each human being has dignity and deserves to be respected by other human beings. Other people are not simply competitors whom we must defeat to gain the prizes of life. They are not obstacles that we must push out of the way in order to get what we want.

Consider how you have acknowledged the dignity of the people you meet each day.

## 2. Engage with others non-violently

Pace e Bene offers four steps for engaging non-violently. We are invited to meet others, including our opponents, face-to-face in a nonviolent way by:

- centring ourselves
- articulating and sharing our piece of the truth
- receiving the other's piece of the truth
- agreeing on a new way.

Putting each of these steps into practice can be simple or complex. It can be carried out in a moment, or it can take years; it can be used in interpersonal conflicts or in the process of arduous social change.

## 3. Forgive

All spiritual traditions speak of the value of forgiveness, but many people still find it to be a nearly impossible ideal. Just start somewhere! Look truthfully at one hurt you have not been able to forgive. Identify any feelings of anger, denial, guilt, shame, or embarrassment. Imagine what it would be like to live without feeling this offence. Other steps may be necessary for healing – letting go of past hurts, an admission of your contribution to the conflict, making amends, changing behaviour, a renewed commitment to the community.

## 4. Reject violence

Safe and strong communities reject violent language and action. Think about how you can respond in these situations. Speak and act kindly when there are disagreements or tensions. Speak up when you hear others make derogatory remarks about other ethnic or religious groups. Ensure fair play and reject violence in the competitive worlds of business, sport or politics. Object when you see another person bullied or demeaned. Stand by those people who have no voice when there are disagreements or conflicts.

## 5. Support and celebrate cultural diversity

The policy of multiculturalism has given vibrancy to our national identity. Our common humanity is strengthened where cultural diversity can be expressed. Be welcoming to those who are different, in your neighbourhood or parish community. Find ways to be supportive of newly arrived immigrants who may be experiencing difficulties adjusting to life in Australia. Extend the hand of friendship in the worship and social events of your community.

## 6. Provide a meeting place

How we engage with our broader community has a huge bearing on the common good. Where there is fear, intolerance or violence, the life of the community suffers. Without

dialogue, silence on issues of violence or the treat of it can allow feelings of retaliation that can beget more violence. In the face of violence in the community, parishes can provide a place for peace and reconciliation to begin. As well as creating a safe space where people are heard, community leaders can encourage and facilitate community efforts for peace.

### **7. Give help and seek support**

Emotional and physical violence cause tragic injury to individuals and destroy families. Often it can be difficult for people in these situations to reach out for help. Consider how the parish community can support those who are abused or caught in a cycle of violence in a way that respects people's dignity and is not intrusive or judgemental. Find supportive and non-threatening ways to encourage people to seek help. Use parish communications to publicise professional support e.g. Centacare and Catholic Social Services.

### **8. Cultivate an attitude of gratitude**

A nonviolent stance is one of deep gratefulness for our life and for all life. Take some time in a quiet place and think of five people who have given of themselves so that your life could be better. Call to mind their faces. Remember in some detail what they have done for you. Cultivate this awareness throughout the day, increasingly acknowledging how your entire life – and everything that passes through it – is a gift from God.

### **9. Attend to prayer and your spiritual development**

We can address violence in our lives and in the world around us in a way that is nonviolent. This brings us face to face with the challenges and hurts of our world and with a merciful God who is the source of love and compassion that transforms and heals all wounds. Prayer creates a renewed sense of the presence of God, and peace fostered in our hearts lifts our vision above the trivial to consider what really matters. Create space to be reflective about your life and the needs of your family and friends. Consider how your prayer and the prayer of your parish can change the world.

### **10. Reflect on your day as a peacemaker**

If you want to see how you are doing as a peacemaker, look at how you behaved during the day: at breakfast, on the way to work, at school, in your reaction to people around you, on the way home. Who were the people you encountered during the day? How did you respond to them? What moment in your day makes you feel good? What moment makes you feel some discomfort? Reflect on these moments and think about what will you do the same or differently tomorrow.

