

# Committed to PEACE

In 1983, the U.S. Catholic Bishops published a letter titled “The Challenge of Peace.” In this pastoral letter, the bishops reminded Catholics in the United States, and all people of good will, that Christ calls everyone to seek peaceful solutions during conflicts and to avoid violence.

The letter states, “Because we have been gifted with God’s peace in the risen Christ, we are called to our own peace and to the making of peace in our world.”

One of the most basic characteristics of the Kingdom of God is peace. When the Kingdom of God is complete, all creatures will live in peace with one another.

In the Gospel of Mark, the evangelist knew the importance of emphasizing that God’s reign of peace is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus announced at the beginning of his ministry:

*This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.* MARK 1:15

## ▶ Why is peace part of God’s Kingdom?

When we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, we join with our bishops in praying for unity and peace. In doing so the Church promotes and prepares for the coming of the Kingdom.





**Disciple**  
**POWER**

**PEACEMAKING**  
Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). To be a disciple of Jesus is to commit oneself to actively working for peace in his or her circle of friends, family, and community.

### Mediating for Peace

Teens who belong to Prince of Peace Catholic Church make a committed effort to work for unity and peace. They attend a workshop in conflict resolution. Peer mediators help conflicted parties listen to each other and understand issues from other points of view. The conflicted parties do not always come to total agreement on the issues involved. But a resolution can come when both sides make sacrifices for the benefit of peace. And the conflicted parties are encouraged to pause and pray before they continue their discussions.

Peer mediators do not allow the parties involved to conclude the conflict resolution without—at the minimum—agreeing to act cordial to one another. The hope is that by changing outward behavior, internal behavior will eventually follow. The process of conflict resolution is about mediating for peace.

During the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass we pray for peace, and before receiving Holy Communion, we exchange a sign of peace. These liturgical actions represent our commitment to peace in the world. We, as disciples of Jesus, recognize that the source of our peace is Christ, who is the Prince of Peace.

## FAITH JOURNAL

How have you resolved an instance of conflict in your life? What more can you do to make peace?

Lined writing area for the Faith Journal entry.

▶ THE CHURCH FOLLOWS JESUS

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## Introduce

- ▶ Write the phrase *The Challenge of Peace* on the board.
- ▶ Read aloud Committed to Peace about the U.S. Bishops' letter, "The Challenge of Peace." Emphasize that we are each called to share the gift of God's peace in our own personal lives and in the world.
- ▶ Call on volunteers to complete this sentence: "God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of peace because [fill in the blank]."
- ▶ Suggest that resolving conflicts with our peers is a sign of striving for peace and unity.

## CATHOLIC IDENTITY

**Encouraged to Hope.** Pope Paul VI, in an address to youth on February 25, 1978 said, "If you wish really to be and remain always young, follow Christ! He alone is the Savior of the world. He alone is the true hope of all mankind." You can help encourage young people to look to their future with excitement and hope. The invitation to work for and prepare the way for the coming of the Kingdom of God is a source of hope for the future of all people. Focus on Jesus and his invitation and promise of the Kingdom as a model of hope for their future.



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**Reinforce**

- ▶ Invite the young people to form groups of four, and read *Mediating for Peace*.
- ▶ Have the young people share, in their groups, situations in which friends, family members, or other people have helped them resolve conflicts. Challenge them to identify one or two specific ways the advice they received helped to resolve the conflict.
- ▶ Have each group summarize by sharing highlights from its discussion with the large group.

**Connect**

- ▶ Read aloud the Disciple Power feature. Remind the students that working for peace includes being a peacemaker in the normal routine and situations of our daily lives—when with our families, with our friends, and in our community.
- ▶ Have students complete the Faith Journal activity.

**DISCIPLE POWER**

**Peacemaking.** To be true peacemakers, peace must come from within. Thomas à Kempis in the *Imitation of Christ* explains it this way: "Keep yourself at peace first, and then you will be able to bring peace to others."

This implies taking the time to be still and quiet, to be with God in prayer, and to hand to him our worries and concerns. This habit of quieting the spirit helps us become more peaceful. The worthy goal of world peace can seem somewhat overwhelming and even unattainable until we realize that we can achieve it by each having the peaceful hearts that see differences in others as gifts, and that refuse to succumb to pettiness, violence, injustice, and fear. Peacemaking is our responsibility as disciples of Jesus Christ.