

VIGIL FOR PEACE: CONCLUDING SERVICE  
ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS  
9 JUNE 2012.

Being a peacemaker is a radical business. If we are to practice and build peace every day, in our own lives, then we have to look deeply at the roots of who we are. We have to know the devices and desires of our hearts. This is no easy task.

Calling others to peace is the easy part. But doing so has a hollow ring unless we are radically peacemakers in our own lives.

There are two keys to unlocking the doors of peace.

The first: the words of Jesus summon the peacemaker.

Often we call him Master, and rightly so. This morning we have listened to his words which are a manifesto for peace.

To appreciate them better, remember their context. The introduction to the words of the Beatitudes, which we have just heard, are these: 'Seeing the crowds he went up the mountain. There he sat down....Then he began to speak.'

The resonances of these words are clear. The mountain is the place of the meeting between God and his chosen ones. Remember the Psalm: I lift up my eyes to the mountains, from whence comes my deliverance? Solemnly sitting down is to assume the posture of the Teacher.

Jesus, seated on the mountain, gives us the teaching of God. This is our meeting with God. There are no lessons for the peacemaker more important than these.

And the words themselves. Let me highlight just one: 'Blessed'. This means receiving the gift of the Kingdom. The beatitudes

tell us when we are in the right place to receive the gift of the Kingdom: the Kingdom of justice, love and peace.

When we are poor in spirit; when we mourn, when we are meek of heart, pure of heart, persecuted and insulted for the cause of right – then we are in the right place to receive the gift of the Kingdom. And the Kingdom is the fulfilment of all our longings.

I salute so many young people – in this City – who desire peace, who work for peace on their streets, who practice peace in the goodness and virtue of their lives.

The second key is this: the person of Jesus sustains the peacemakers.

Peacemaking is rooted in the relationship between us and the Lord. And this relationship is expressed in prayer. I rejoice to know that the enclosed, contemplative nuns in the Tyburn Convent, near marble Arch, have kept this Vigil with us, and will pray throughout these 100 days for peace. So must we.

Peace arises within us, and in our society, when we acknowledge that our lives are lived in the presence of God; when we accept this is the crucial fact of life and when we rejoice in it, knowing that God is a God of love and compassion. This is the best and crucial source of the peace for which we all long. As Psalm 118 says: ‘Lovers of your law have great peace, O Lord.’

The Olympic Peace was a truce, an absence of violence. Our prayer is that these Games will indeed be free from violence, even as we remember that 40 years ago eleven athletes representing the State of Israel were killed at the Olympic Games. But our prayer is for more: that these Games will build peace and solidarity between the nations.

Let it begin with me.

+Vincent Nichols  
Archbishop of Westminster