

14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)  
(Isaiah 66:10-14 / Luke 10:1-12.17-20)  
06.07.2025  
*Peace*

A few weeks ago, a group of Protestant and Catholic young adults from different countries came to the Abbey to reflect on the theme of reconciliation. At one point, someone uttered the word “peace.” Then, a Palestinian Christian in the group immediately asked, with deep emotion in her voice: “What does it mean to speak of peace while my people are being attacked and their very existence is under threat?”

There was something deeply valid in her question. What does it mean to speak of peace when so many people live in countries at war, when countless others are forced to flee their homelands due to poverty and violence, when political leaders wage economic warfare in the name of making their countries great again?

Moreover, what does it mean for you and me to speak about peace, when we know very well that many hearts in Northern Ireland are still filled with resentment, anger, and bigotry – whether against Catholics or Protestants – while others are filled with racism?

Does it make sense to speak of peace?

Allow me to answer this question positively. Yes, for us Christians, it is deeply meaningful to speak about, promote, and build peace—simply because we believe in a God whom St. Paul calls “the God of peace” (Rm 15:33). For us, the meaning of the Cross – as the overcoming of hostility between Jews and Gentiles – is central to the Gospel we are called to embody and proclaim. Peace and reconciliation go hand in hand. To be reconciled with God means to be at peace with God, with others, and with ourselves.

Today, peace is threatened on many fronts. There is a widespread crisis of trust in social and religious institutions, the breakdown of families, and increasing political and economic instability. Mistrust, division, and fear create fertile ground for conflict. They turn differences into threats, demonize others, and provide the justification for violence as a form of protection or self-defence.

Pope Leo recently reminded us that “non-violence, as a method and a style, must distinguish our decisions, our relationships, and our actions,” and that “the fostering of a culture of peace is entrusted to all.” (*Address*, 30.05.2025)

At present, many of us feel powerless in the face of the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, powerless as we think of the men and women still held hostage by Hamas, powerless in the face of rising religious extremism and political nationalism in various parts of the world. The danger is that we fall into despair. So we ask: What can be done? What can we do for peace?

Without pretending to offer a definitive answer, allow me to turn to the words of Etty Hillesum, a young Jewish Dutch woman who was killed by the Nazis in 1943 at Auschwitz. In her diary, written a year before her arrest, she observed: “I no longer believe that we can change anything in the world until we have first changed ourselves.” (cf. 19.02.42)

Etty reminds us that the struggle for peace must begin within. We can only give what we ourselves have received, what we carry as a treasure in our hearts. She became acutely aware that “every atom of hate we add to this world makes it still more inhospitable.” (cf. 23.09.42)

As Etty wrote, the challenge for you and me is “to reclaim large areas of peace in ourselves, more and more peace, and to reflect it toward others. And the more peace there is in us, the more peace there will also be in our troubled world.” (29.09.42)

For us Christians, “to reclaim large areas of peace in ourselves” is possible only when we allow Christ – who is our peace (cf. Eph 2:14) – to grow within us. The challenge is to be ever more conformed to Christ.

In some, this inner peace may overflow into political or diplomatic activism, or into the development of religious and secular ethics of peace that are attentive to diverse ethnic and cultural realities. But in all of us, peace must drive us to work for justice, freedom, mutual respect, and the common good.

As Pope Leo said: “The path to peace demands hearts and minds trained in concern for others and capable of perceiving the common good in today’s world.” (*Address*, 30.05.2025)

Just three weeks ago in Rome, Floribert Bwana Chui, a young Congolese man, was beatified. He was kidnapped and martyred in 2007 at the age of twenty-six because, as a Christian, he stood up to injustice and defended the poor and vulnerable. Blessed Floribert once said: “The Lord is preparing a new world, where there will be no more war, hatred will be wiped out, violence will no longer appear like a thief in the night (...), children will grow up in peace. Yes, it is a great dream. Let us not live, then, for what is not worthy. Rather, let us live for this great dream!”

With God’s grace, we are equipped to live for this great dream. In our families and communities, the choice is ours today: do we truly long for peace? Do we pray for it and work to prevent violence from appearing like a thief in our hearts and in our world? Do we genuinely desire that the next generations – here in Northern Ireland and across the globe – grow up in true and lasting peace?