

Witnesses of Peace

Reflection on Pope Francis' message for 4th World Day of the Poor

Advent Week 2



The second candle on the Advent wreath invites us to pray for peace. Peace is something we all long for.

But what is peace? Is it an absence of war...and absence of anxiety...or is it, as the dictionary says, 'Freedom from disturbance, tranquillity'?

Peace is all of these, and yet none of us lives a life without anxieties or disturbances. For many people Covid19 has heightened their anxiety; will they be alone over Christmas? Will 'Santa Claus' be able to produce the longed for presents?

These are realities that many of our sisters and brothers face as Christmas approaches. We could in a nice but pious way remind ourselves that 'Jesus is the reason for the season', but for a mum with only a few pounds in her purse and a child who is as excited and expectant as ANY child, or a person facing Christmas alone, these words don't offer comfort and peace of mind.

As Vincentians we will respond to any calls in whatever way we can, offering a little peace of mind to the lonely, the isolated, those struggling with life....it might just be a telephone call or dropping a line.

In his letter for World Day for the Poor, Pope Francis acknowledges that the present situation with the pandemic, '*has challenged many of our assumptions. We feel poorer and less-sufficient because we have come to sense our limitations and the restriction of our freedom.*' (7) This is true for us as Vincentians. We are unable to visit those who need our support because the restrictions forbid us going into house of people outside our 'bubble', or because age or illness prevent us going out and this can disturb us as we realise the needs of those we serve.

These are the moments we face our own vulnerability.

These are the moments we come face to face with our own poverties.

These are the moments when we have to admit we can't do things on our own.

St Vincent took comfort from these moments because he tells us that these are moments when we stand before God helpless making room for the Holy Spirit to work through us to reach those in need.

Let's pray this 2nd week of Advent for peace in our world and in the lives of every person. Let us also be grateful for our own poverties and allow them to make room for God to do what He wants through us.

How comfortable am I acknowledging my own poverties?

What peace do I need most from the Prince of Peace this Christmas?

What small ways can I offer peace to others during this time of Covid 19?