



## A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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**5 January 2017, 4:12 PM**

### **Being peacemakers in 2017**

Happy New Year! In the distant past, the Catholic Church celebrated on January 1st what happened 8 days after Jesus' birth, such as his circumcision or being given his name.

Vatican II, however, restored the ancient custom on January 1st of honoring Mary for her role of giving birth to Jesus. About that time, an additional January 1st custom was introduced: to ask Mary, the Queen of Peace, to pray to her son, Jesus, the Prince of Peace, for the gift of peace.

Peace is a blessing from God. In the Bible we read how God told Aaron to bless the Israelites with peace: The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!

But God can't force anyone to be at peace. And God's blessing does not somehow magically banish violence from our hearts, homes, or communities.

Rather, peace has to be something we want and work for, with the help of God. Peace is not the absence of war. It is instead the fruit of acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly. Justice acknowledges our duty to others, and to respect their dignity and their rights, especially their right to life, as well as to those things needed to live in dignity.

Mercy is an essential act of our Catholic religion, which leads us to say "sorry" and "I forgive you," instead of trying to get even. And humility teaches us that we are not entitled to anything, saying "thank you" for everything; and that we are not above serving anyone in any way, ready to say "how can I help?" and then to act. Peacemakers act this way toward others simply because it is wise to do so, whether the other is deserving, asks nicely, is aware, or even grateful for what we have done. Peace is also the fruit of quieting our desires. It's not hard to see how much violence is inspired by envy, greed, and selfishness – more for me at a cost to you!

Some think that the way to quiet your desire is by satisfying it. Others think that denying your desire will kill it and so quiet it. But there is a middle way, which is to moderate desires. As Jesus taught: life is more than pursuing what we are to eat, drink, or wear. Moderation is related to making the common good a priority over what's good for only me: we instead of I; you instead of me; ours instead of mine - sharing.

So, we ask Mary to pray to God that we might become nonviolent people, building nonviolent communities, that care for the earth, our common home. We can at least start by wanting to be peacemakers, learning how it is done, and trying, with the help of God.

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