

“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Lk 2:14). The multitude of the heavenly hosts with the angel finished their praise to God and departed. The Shepherds then went to see the infant Jesus in the manger. If they were awestruck at the sight of the angel, one can only imagine how inspired they were to see Jesus and Mary and Joseph. Their encounter with Jesus was transforming. They began to share the Good News with others. “For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord” (Lk 1:11).

- Jesus is the savior who rescues humanity from sin and delivers us from alienation from God.
- Jesus is the “anointed one” from the royal line of King David. While some believed that the Messiah would restore the kingdom to Israel and end foreign domination, this was not Luke’s intent. “The political overtones of the title are played down ... and instead the Messiah of the Lord or the Lord’s anointed is the one who now brings salvation to all humanity, Jew and Gentile” (Luke Note to 2:11).

In our Liturgy, we pray “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.” We also hear the Gospel and receive the Eucharist. God wants this to be a transforming experience for us so that like the shepherds we will leave the church and invite others to hear the Good News. Like the shepherds, we are to glorify and praise God for all we have heard and seen. At the end of Mass, we “Go in peace.” The peace is more than the absence of war, it also includes the security and well-being characteristic of peace in the Old Testament (Lk Note 2:14).

“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” On the 1st of January, we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary the Holy Mother of God and we also pray for world peace. Our times are marked by “indifference, waste and confrontation.” Amidst the pandemic which seems to magnify our worst fears, we have “seen a surge in various forms of nationalism, racism and xenophobia, and wars and conflicts that bring only death and destruction in their wake” (1). Pope Francis invites the world to pray for peace.ⁱ “We need to stop and ask ourselves what has led our world to see conflict as something normal, and how our hearts can be converted and our ways of thinking changed, in order to work for true peace” (7). Now more than ever, we need to cultivate a culture of care as a path to peace (1).

This past year as the virus has spread to over 83 million people, we see just how interconnected we are as a human race. What we do has an impact on others in our community, our state, our nation, and literally our world. Jesus taught us love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We must care for all of our neighbors on the planet. Justice finds its noblest expression in the way a community treats its weakest members. The Prophets “Amos and Isaiah, in particular, insistently demand justice for the poor, who, in their vulnerability and powerlessness, cry out and are heard by God, who watches over them” (3).

A culture of care calls us to respect the human dignity of every person. “Person always signifies relationship, not individualism; it affirms inclusion, not exclusion, unique and inviolable dignity, not exploitation... Persons are created to live together in families, communities and societies, where all are equal in dignity. Human rights derive from this dignity, as do human duties, like the responsibility to welcome and assist the poor, the sick, the excluded, every one of our “neighbors, near or far in space and time” (6).

To love our neighbor, we must commit ourselves to the common good. If I do something to help myself but it hurts my neighbor, then I am acting very selfishly. When a small ship is being tossed by a storm at sea and the boat is taking on water, every hand is needed to bail water to keep the ship afloat. Our current crisis highlights our need for everyone to work together for the common good. Let us invoke Mary the Mother of God and the Queen of Peace to help us reach out to those in greatest need on a daily basis in concrete and practical ways, “to form a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another” (9).

ⁱ Message for the 54th World Day of Peace.