

## Peace

“O God, make us children of quietness, and heirs of peace” – words of St Clement of Rome in the first century.

It is an obvious fact of modern life that we live in a busy and noisy world. Any haven of peace and quiet that we can find is a great blessing and we are fortunate that this church can offer that, even though the sounds of the outside world are not completely muffled.

We all need times of quiet, in order to relax, to rest, to take stock. But what do we mean by peace. For us as individuals there is a need for inner peace when we are able to face and hopefully resolve our personal concerns and inner conflicts. To be at peace with oneself is so important, though not always easily achieved.

There is then of course the desperate need for peace in our wider society and between and within nations. And so what are we asking for when we pray for peace?

Peace is much more than simply an absence of conflict. It is something much deeper. For Christians, as St Paul makes so clear in the reading we just heard, peace is the result of unity with God and unity with one another. It lies at the very heart of being human.

How to deal with conflict and create peace is of course very difficult. We can have no illusions about that. Indeed it is easy to make matters worse. Jesus needs to be brought into the equation. For it is Jesus who as Paul reminds us breaks down the hostility between us. For Jesus is indeed our peace.

There can be no lasting peace without Him who is peace. Bringing peace and reconciliation and closure to a conflict can be a slow and laborious process, constantly prone to failure. The reality is that sadly there are those for whom peace is against their vested interests, those who do not want peace, those who do not want to be reconciled. And that is a great challenge.

Yet we hope and pray that true and lasting peace is not just a pipe dream but, with God's help, can be achieved. The Anglican theologian John Macquarrie wrote these very wise words: “Where people are praying for peace the cause of peace is being strengthened by their very act of prayer, for they are themselves becoming immersed in the spirit of peace.”

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