

**9<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**6<sup>th</sup> August 2006**

2 Samuel 11:26 – 12: 13a; Psalm 51:1-12; Ephesians 4:1-16; John 6:24-35

Today, the 6<sup>th</sup> of August, is the 61<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the dropping of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. I remember visiting the sight of that bombing and seeing, burned into some stone steps, the shadows of two people completely destroyed by that blast. I can still see it clearly. It was so shocking.

Today, on TV screens and in the newspaper, again we see images of destruction; we see infrastructure ruined, children and adults killed or displaced. How do we make sense of it all? How do we connect? And the writer to the Ephesians urges ..... “I .... **beg** you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called (v.1) with all **humility** and **gentleness**, with **patience**, **bearing with** one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the **bond of peace** (v.1), speaking the **truth in love**” (v.15). This language is such a contrast to the violent images of war. What then is to be our response locally and globally?

The heads of Churches in Canberra this week (Bishop George Browning, Anglican Church; Bishop Pat Power, Roman Catholic Church; Reverend Peter Walker, Uniting Church), responded with strong words in the following statement:

“ ‘If these were silent the stones would shout out’. They continue: ‘We find it impossible to remain silent in the face of so much pain and suffering in the Middle East, both in Lebanon and in Israel’.

Where is the moral courage of our leaders? How can the leadership of the Australian Government and the Opposition not cry out for an immediate and unconditional cease-fire?

We are outraged that such unspeakable pain is being unleashed upon civilians, especially women and children, while the world remains largely silent.

We find it impossible to understand how the leaders of our own nation have remained so cowardly silent in the face of such brutality.

We have had enough of this so called war on terror. When will the governments of the world come to understand that peace can only be built on justice and fairness?

We urge all governments of the world to invest in the millennium goals as the road to peace and to immediately apply them for the peoples of the Middle East.

We can have no peace while violence is repaid with violence. It is a recipe for eventual annihilation.”

They conclude: “May God have mercy upon us all and may there still remain, somewhere in that battered part of the world, a seed which can one day grow into peace for the children who will soon become adults. May they not perpetuate the wrongs of the leadership of this generation.”

Perhaps we too can respond by uniting. We can pray. We can work for peace. In another response, Masahisa Goi, a Japanese poet, teacher and philosopher, who witnessed the terrible destruction of WWII thought that if people could only be invited to say a simple prayer for peace on a regular basis, there might not be another war (pg 82, *Seasons of the Spirit Congregational Life, Pentecost 1*).

Goi offered the world this simple prayer: “**May peace prevail on earth**”. He believed that such a prayer could be said by anyone regardless of their religious and spiritual heritage.

Perhaps the most visible signs of this simple prayer are peace poles. Over 200,000 of these exist around the world - on every continent and in over 180 countries. Usually peace poles are about two and a half metres tall. They stand in public places and have the message “may peace prevail on earth” in one or more languages ..... some of the more intriguing locations of peace poles are the magnetic north pole; Confucian Burial Site, Taiwan; Gorky Park, Russia; Robben Island, South Africa; Atomic Bomb Dome, Hiroshima; Jordan River, Israel; ..... and next to an olive tree (symbol of peace) at the Athens Olympics (p.69).

“May peace prevail on earth”. Focussing on peace and creating peace in our homes, in our community, in our world, is powerful medicine. Are we making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace? (Eph 4).

Masahiso Goi says: “We are facing an age where the politics of the world must be carried out by each individual. Every individual who repeats the words ‘**May peace prevail on earth**’, thus becomes a great force for realising peace in the world”.

In the Old Testament lessons we heard from Nathan. Nathan was called to be a prophet. He had to find a way to speak the truth to David ..... to challenge him for his orchestrated murder of Uriah and adultery with Uriah’s wife ..... By telling David a story, Nathan allowed David to accuse himself. The prophet was effective in bringing about change. David was called to be King, a leader of his people, but he had to atone for his behaviour. Ephesians speaks of a number of roles in the community of faith: teachers, evangelists, preachers. All of us are given gifts of God’s spirit ..... all of us have a part to play in building peace and love here and beyond ..... in the communities we associate with each day. This is not always easy – as the Heads of Churches statement shows; as Nathan’s words show; as the story of Jesus’ life and death show ..... but we can do it – with God’s love and the support of each other ..... ask for help if you need it.

What we do here contributes to the state of the world. (We contribute to peace and we contribute to war). We can build bridges, we can care for each other. Yet I encourage you to track your thoughts when you encounter 'the other' – someone different from yourself: socioeconomically; racially; different in age or gender or religion. How do you respond? We saw Mel Gibson's racial dark side in lights this week!

In times of stress we show our *hidden* selves. Notice how you respond. When do you psychically, physically, spiritually occupy others space or dominate others? When do you oppress – when is your love about control rather than freedom?

We need to be as self-aware as we can. We need to immerse ourselves and others so completely in God's love, that the places of darkness and horror, of ranting and destruction can be held in safety in that love – like a young child having a tantrum. Immerse yourself in love.

I return to the shadow of those two unknown people imprinted on stone. All that violence cannot erase the memory of their presence. **'May peace prevail on earth'. Amen**

Michael Leunig captures this hope .....out of the destruction – build reconciliation and peace. Leunig .....

From the Curly Pyjama Letters. Mr Curly writes to his friend the traveller Vasco Pyjama:

Dear Vasco,

Spring has come once more to Curly Flat and the roses are starting to bloom. How contented I feel as I contemplate the roses. How complete life seems in the presence of these ancient perfumes and petals. How liberated from the desire to 'better' myself and how sweetly intoxicated I am by these dear, precious moments of self-acceptance given to me, so generously, by the rose. Around me, in the morning sunshine, the bees hum and various unseen fowls warble old songs concerning the arrival of good, blue eggs. Along the shores of Lake Lacuna, over the water and from the small valleys around Curly Flat I hear the occasional pealing of the life-goes-on bells – simple declarations from the distance that life is worth living – a domestic prayer from an unknown household, rung out in thanksgiving for the morning now passing and announcing that the afternoon and its pleasures and duties are soon to begin – or perhaps a chimed observance that sadness has passed in a particular home and that relief and gratitude have begun – any of life's ordinary precious moments being honoured as they come and go by whoever is taken by the impulse to do so. How brave and reassuring are the bells of Curly Flat – bells of spontaneity; bells of acceptance; bells of joy and simple duty: **life-goes-on bells!** Perhaps you still hear them Vasco, ringing in your dreams; I hope so.

The sound of a bell and the perfume of a rose: these things cannot be improved – they are perfectly complete.

Warmest spring wishes.

Go well Vasco  
and ding dong!  
with love,

Mr Curly

..... Cowra breakout and peace Bell .....

**'May peace prevail on earth'.**