

## **PEACE REQUIRES HARD WORK**

*2002 Christmas Message of AHRC*

Christmas time is traditionally known as a time of peace. But, peace as a wish and peace as reality are two different things. Wherever peace has been achieved, it has been due to hard work by people who are committed to its realization. The Christmas story is that of Jesus, who was born to spend a lifetime working for peace and even dying for it.

Hard work for peace requires that we:

1. Reach out and try to understand what seems meaningless, and even cruel. There is no way out of the cycle of violence without this first attempt to reach people beyond the boundaries, particularly the boundaries that stand against understanding. Every effort to avoid the destruction that results from conflict and war is worthwhile. Just even one life is worth all that effort.
2. Refuse to take sides in war and destruction. No party that seeks destruction and war can be right or deserve support. It is simply not true that there are problems that can not be solved peacefully.
3. Actively oppose the idea that war and destruction can result in some good, for example, that democracy can be built through war. Experience shows that war destroys every social base that is required to build democracy. It destroys legal systems, it creates cynicism about justice and it induces corruption. Only the corrupt benefit from war.
4. Gain experience by working hard for peace. Experience is essential. Each day of work, each effort will bring new insights. Even when efforts seemingly fail, we still gain experience and understanding. Experience can be the only basis for reflection.
5. Pool our experiences and create greater understanding on how to work for peace. Perhaps the best contribution to humanity is how to create and maintain peace. All of our collective mind and spirit must be utilized to this end.
6. Rely on and involve ordinary people. Peace efforts need to be based on ordinary people and be inspired by common sense. Folk wisdom far surpasses the opinions of experts.
7. Work with the view that every life matters and every life is worth saving. All work towards an absolute prohibition against killing, for whatever reason, contributes to human morality and a humane civilization.

"To suggest that war can prevent war is a base play on words and a despicable form of warmongering. The objective of any who sincerely believe in peace clearly must be to exhaust every honorable recourse in the effort to save the peace. The world has had ample evidence that war begets only conditions that beget further war." Ralph Bunche, quoted by President Jimmy Carter after receiving nobel price for peace on Dec.10, 2002.

"We pray every day that more and more people are beginning to realize how dangerous an attack on Iraq will be to the whole world: more terrorism, more violence in Israel/Palestine, a weakening of the United Nations, the growth of fundamentalists of all persuasions, higher risk of biological or nuclear war, a global depression, growing hubris and imperialistic notions in the U.S. and of course the unforeseen blowback this will all cause and the time we will spend trying to end what we didn't prevent. And what about the cost to our souls?"

LETTER FROM THE ROAD, IRAQ #5, from Elizabeth Roberts (Rabia) "Ed Bacon"  
<jeb@allsaints-pas.org>

"The road to peace, he (Pope John XXIII) taught in the Encyclical, lay in the defence and promotion of basic human rights, which every human being enjoys, not as a benefit given by a different social class or conceded by the State, but simply because of our humanity"  
MESSAGE of Pope John Paul II for World Peace Day 2003

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Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)  
23 December 2002, Hong Kong

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