

Second Week of Advent (December 7- December 13)

In this second week of Advent, you are invited to explore another dimension of peacemaking, interpersonal or one-on-one peacemaking. As the Advent journey progresses this week, you are invited to increase your awareness to help peace arise when two or more interact.



Opening Prayer for Each Day of Week 2:

Names of God (Saint Francis' Prayer in Praise of God, Given to Brother Leo)

You are holy, Lord, the only God, and Your deeds are wonderful.
You are strong.
You are great.
You are the Most High.
You are Almighty.
You, Holy Father are King of heaven and earth.
You are Three and One, Lord God, all Good.
You are Good, all Good, supreme Good, Lord God, living and true.
You are love.
You are wisdom.
You are humility.
You are endurance.
You are rest.
You are peace.
You are joy and gladness.
You are justice and moderation.
You are all our riches, and You suffice for us.
You are beauty.
You are gentleness.
You are our protector.
You are our guardian and defender.
You are our courage.
You are our haven and our hope.
You are our faith, our great consolation.
You are our eternal life, Great and Wonderful Lord, God Almighty, Merciful Savior. Amen.

Closing Prayer for Each Day of Week 2:

Blessing (Given to Brother Leo at LaVerna)

May the Lord bless you
and keep you;
may the Lord show his face to you
and have compassion on you!
May he turn his face to you
and give you peace!

Amen.

Personal Peacefulness Practice Items for Each Day of Week 2:



- In every conversation this week, regard the other person as if they are the most important person in your life.
- Try to ask someone why they feel how they do, with an open mind and without judging what they say.
- Listen to someone without thinking what you are going to say next.
- Say or show appreciation to one person in your life this week.
- Try fasting one day this week with the intention of being more peaceful on your fasting day. Fasting creates emptiness in a physical sense, but it also creates an opportunity for peacemaking. In this emptiness, try and connect in solidarity with someone with whom you have a conflict.

Sunday, December 7 (Second Sunday of Advent)

Scripture Reading (for Sunday and Monday of Advent Week 2)

A Reading from the Gospel of Mark

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

*Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;
he will prepare your way.*

A voice of one crying out in the desert:

*“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.”*

John the Baptist appeared in the desert
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

People of the whole Judean countryside
and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem
were going out to him

and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River
as they acknowledged their sins.

John was clothed in camel’s hair,
with a leather belt around his waist.

He fed on locusts and wild honey.

And this is what he proclaimed:

“One mightier than I is coming after me.

I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals.

I have baptized you with water;

he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” (Mk 1: 1-8)



Sunday Reflection Question: Who has gone before you in your life? How have they prepared your way to be more peace-filled?

Monday, December 8

Reading: Reflect again on the Sunday Scripture Passage

Monday Reflection Question: Whose way are you preparing in your life? Are there actions that you do to bring peace to their life?

Tuesday, December 9

Reading: *Nonviolent Intervention, Encounter, and the Third Way: St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio*
(Reflection Reading for Tuesday and Wednesday of Advent Week 2)

At a time when St. Francis was staying in
the town of Gubbio, something wonderful and

worthy of lasting fame happened. For there
appeared in the territory of that city a fearfully large

and fierce wolf which was so rabid with hunger that it devoured not only animals but even human beings. All the people in the town considered it such a great scourge and terror—because it often came near town—that they took weapons with them when they went into the country, as if they were going to war. Everyone in the town was so terrified that hardly anyone dared go outside the city gate.

While the Saint was there at that time, he had pity on the people and decided to go out to meet the wolf. But on hearing this the citizens said to him: “Look out, Brother Francis. Don’t go outside the gate, because the wolf which has already devoured many people will certainly attack you and kill you!” But St. Francis placed his hope in the Lord Jesus Christ who is master of all creatures. Protected not by a shield nor helmet, but arming himself with the Sign of the Cross, he bravely went out of the town with his companion...

Then, in the sight of many people who had come out, the fierce wolf came running with its mouth open toward St. Francis and his companion. The Saint made the Sign of the Cross toward it. The power of God checked the wolf and made it slow down and close its cruel mouth. Then, calling to it, St. Francis said: “Come to me, Brother Wolf. In the name of Christ, I order you not to hurt me or anyone.” As soon as he gave it that order, it lowered its head and lay down at the Saint’s feet, as though it had become a lamb.

St. Francis said to it as it lay in front of him: “Brother Wolf, you have done great harm in this region, and you have committed horrible crimes by destroying God’s creatures without any mercy... You therefore deserve to be put to death just like the worst robber and murderer. Consequently everyone is right in crying out against you and complaining, and this whole town is your enemy. But, Brother Wolf, I want to make peace between you and them, so that they will not be harmed by you anymore, and after they have forgiven you all your past crimes, neither human beings nor dogs will pursue you anymore.” The wolf showed by moving its body and tail and ears and by nodding its head that it willingly accepted what the Saint had said and would observe it. So St. Francis spoke again: “Brother Wolf, since you are willing to make and keep this peace pact, I promise you that I will have

the people of this town give you food every day as long as you live, so that you will never again suffer from hunger, for I know that whatever evil you have been doing was done because of the urge of hunger.

But, my Brother Wolf, since I am obtaining such a favor for you, I want you to promise me that you will never hurt any animal or [human being]. Will you promise me that?” The wolf gave a clear sign, by nodding its head, that it promised to do what the Saint asked. Then St. Francis said: “Brother Wolf, I order you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to come with me now, without fear, into the town to make this peace pact in the name of the Lord.” And the wolf immediately began to walk along beside St. Francis, just like a very gentle lamb.



When the people saw this they assembled on the market place, where St. Francis said, “Listen, dear people. Brother Wolf...has promised me and has given me a pledge that he will make peace with you and will never hurt you if you promise also to feed him every day. And I pledge myself as bonds[person] for Brother Wolf that he will faithfully keep this peace pact.”

Then all the people who were assembled there promised in a loud voice to feed the wolf regularly. And St. Francis said to the wolf before them all: “And you, Brother Wolf, do you promise to keep the pact, that is, not to hurt any animal or human being?” The wolf knelt down and bowed its head, and by twisting its body and

wagging its tail and ears it clearly showed to everyone that it would keep the pact as it had promised. From that day, the people and the wolf kept the pact which St. Francis made.

Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi

Reflection for the Reading

The fangs of the wolf were real. The human beings he killed were real. The danger he posed to the town was real.

The fear that paralyzed the town of Gubbio was realistic. It was based on an actual, verifiable threat. It seemed eminently reasonable to fear the wolf and stay fearfully behind the city walls or, if one ventured out, to go out “as if one were going to war.”

The problem was that the mutual threat both parties posed to one another did not resolve this conflict. Instead, that threat only worsened it. The town and the wolf were locked in a spiral of violence that seemed sensible, inevitable, and without recourse. What else could either party do but continue on its path of violence and counter-violence; a path that left both sides resembling one another in their fear and ferocity?

Albert Camus wrote that the great challenge for the human person in the modern age was to be neither a victim nor an executioner. St. Francis, eight centuries before this French existentialist, proposed this “third way” to the town and the world. Both sides of this conflict had become simultaneously victim and executioner. The saint proposed this alternative not so much with his words as with his body. Rooted in the saving power of God, St. Francis crosses from one social setting to another in order to heal both.

From the point of view of the townspeople, Francis leaves the zone of presumed safety (but one saturated and paralyzed by fear) and crosses into a terrain of danger perceived to be a province of chaos and violence. From the point of view of the wolf, Francis is both another source of sustenance and another form of threat sent from the town that is making war on him. However, Francis’s risky action—his form of nonviolent intervention—subverts the perspectives of both parties. He reveals to the town that a spiritually-grounded openness to

the other can puncture the opaque veil of fear, revealing the “other” as both wounded and sacred, not simply destructive. He reveals to the wolf that the decision not to match ferocity with ferocity is confounding and disclosing of a different kind of power, power that unifies rather than threatens.

Grounded in the power of the nonviolent God, Francis’s unilateral initiative breaks the cycle of violence by affirming his oneness with the wolf (by calling him “Brother”), by truthfully naming the violence perpetrated by the wolf (his attacks on the town), by analyzing the root causes of the violence (hunger), by proposing an accord that would meet the needs of both parties and lastly by bringing both parties to affirm this mutually beneficial pact, which Francis offers to vouch for personally. With this resolution, there has perhaps also been an amelioration of a situation that caused the wolf’s hunger in the first place: the pressures of the growing human population of the Italian cities of the time.

This story depicts a dynamic we often confront in life: a very real threat provoking a counter-threat that reinforces a pattern or script which endlessly subverts the possibility for a just resolution. It also dramatizes a “third way” that creatively opens space for alternatives not previously seen or, if seen, not considered realistic. While it cannot promise success in every case, nonviolent peacemaking relentlessly pursues alternatives to the chronic impasse of dehumanization or destruction. It affirms the underlying connectedness between antagonists—no matter their differences, a conviction underscored in this story by the fact that this resolution is achieved between different species. This stresses Gandhi’s vision centuries later of active nonviolence striving for “difference without division.”

The town of Gubbio incorporated Francis’s peacemaking in its institutional memory. For example, in the 1970s Gubbio declared itself a “nuclear-free zone” and its city officials have been active in many campaigns for peace.



Tuesday Reflection Question: When have you been in a conflict where you have found a creative solution that achieved a win-win solution (in other words, you met at least some of your needs and the needs of the other person)?

Wednesday, December 10

Reading: Reflect again on the reading from yesterday, St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio.

Wednesday Reflection Question: What encounters with other people have invited you to a deeper level of peacemaking? Are there any current situations where there is conflict that might allow you to use some creative “Gubbio Solutions?”

Thursday, December 11

Reading for Thursday and Friday Reflection of Advent Week 2:

St. Clare and A Community Without Distinctions of Class or Wealth: Diversity and Inclusion

If, by divine inspiration, anyone should come to us with the desire to embrace this life, the Abbess is required to seek the consent of all the sisters...ⁱ

In the election of the Abbess the sisters are bound to observe the canonical form.ⁱⁱ

Likewise, if at any time it should appear to the entire body of the sisters that she [the Abbess] is not competent for their service and common welfare, the sisters are bound to elect another as Abbess and mother as soon as possible according to the form given above.ⁱⁱⁱ

She [the Abbess] should preserve the common life in everything, especially regarding all in the church, dormitory, refectory, infirmary, and in clothing...^{iv}

At least once a week the Abbess is required to call her sisters together in Chapter...^v There, too, she should consult with all her sisters on whatever concerns the welfare and good of the monastery; for the Lord often reveals what is best to the less [among us].^{vi}

To preserve the unity of mutual love and peace, all who hold offices in the monastery should be chosen by the common consent of all the sisters.^{vii}
The Rule of Saint Clare

Reflection in the Reading

When Clare of Assisi was beginning her way of life together with other women of Assisi and the surrounding area, she was given a rule to follow that was modeled on the rule for Cistercian women. This included the title of Abbess for the woman who would guide the community. While she was finally persuaded to accept this title, Clare disowned its accrued status thus she refused even the status of Abbess within a community committed to loving relationship without distinctions based in class, wealth or status. This is the basis to a nonviolent way of life and to the practice of active nonviolence. This radical departure for her time offers much for our consideration today.



In this community, embracing the poverty of Christ meant following Christ, who did not cling to the “status” of his divine nature, but rather embraced fully the human condition in all its beauty and in all its frailty. In such a community, the beauty and fragility of each person was to be embraced by all without distinction. The youngest, newest member of this community had the same right to speak in the weekly meetings as had every other sister.

Consensus was the way of decision-making. There were no servants, no special rooms or suites, no distinct classes of membership.

Neither Clare nor Francis used the terms “community” or “common life.” What they did speak about was relationship, concretely: brothers and sisters. More than “common life,” it was relatedness as sisters and brothers that they valued. And the way of life that each founder proposed, supported and protected this relatedness. Clare referred to herself always in the context of her

relationship with her sisters and brothers: as handmaid of the sisters; as a little plant of Francis; or, in letters, “...you make up most wonderfully what is lacking both in me and in the other sisters...” “...remember me and my sisters...”^{viii}

Clare could have remained within the walls of Assisi, within her own household and continued to lead the penitential life with family, friends and servants alike. In the end, she opted to move away from the city to live in a structure of inclusive, loving relationship with women from families of serfs, peasants, merchants and nobility, thus creating a new social structure for her times.

Much of the movement of active nonviolence today aims to create the social and economic structures that foster this same kind of inclusive, respectful relationship: diversity training; economic alternatives based in mutuality rather than exploitation; land reform that respects the earth and whole creation community, to name a few.

Thursday Reflection Question: What have your experiences in communities in your life taught you about peacemaking? What are the attitudes, emotions, skills... you need for peacemaking in community?

Friday, December 12

Reading: Reflect again on the reading from Thursday, St. Clare and Community.

Friday Reflection Question: Where have you experienced “unity in diversity” in your life? How has this made it easier to live the invitation to be a peacemaker? Has it added other challenges?

Saturday, December 13

Reading: None.

Reflection Question(s): Reflect on the week as a whole -- prayers, readings, reflections, and actions. As you integrate this week, what insights do you have?

Are there particular actions or activities, or points of reflection that will help you live differently in the invitation to peacemaking at an interpersonal level?

ⁱ Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., and Ignatius C. Brady, O.F.M. with a preface by John Vaughn, O.F.M. *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), p. 211. Chapter II, verse 1 from the Rule of Saint Clare.

ⁱⁱ Armstrong and Brady, *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, p. 215. The Rule of Saint Clare, Chapter IV, verse 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, Chapter IV, verse 5.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, p. 216. Chapter IV, verse 10.

^v *Ibid.*, Chapter IV, verse 11.

^{vi} *Ibid.*, Chapter IV, verse 13.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, Chapter IV, verse 16.

^{viii} Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., and Ignatius C. Brady, O.F.M. with a preface by John Vaughn, O.F.M. *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), pp. 199-202. vv.4 and 42, 3rd letter to Agnes.