

This past week we witnessed the desire for peace in the world as Pope Francis called for a day of fasting and prayer in response to Syria. We also remembered the victims of September 11, 2001, their families, and all those who heroically responded. Both these happenings, the civil war in Syria and 9/11, remind us all of the need to work for peace. But of how can we ourselves strive for peace? What difference can we make?

Striving for peace first begins with the individual person. It begins in our hearts with discovering that sense of peace which comes from growing in love for Jesus. From this we discover our desire to carry this love and peace wherever we go and whatsoever we may do, aiming to make a difference in the lives of others. Building peace in our own hearts is of course difficult. According to Pope Benedict in his message for the World Day of Peace earlier this year, "it involves complete commitment." It is peace in our relationship with God, peace with our self and peace with all people and creation. Each of us can think of ways in which our own desire for peace is interrupted or disturbed. Recognizing these struggles and shortcomings though, we can turn to the Lord through prayer, and work with Him to grow in our hearts a peace that is founded on love; for each person, for the world, for God. The path to peace in our family, community, state, nation, and the world ultimately begins in our heart, with God as our guide.

Our peace is then founded on love, on charity, the first principle of our order. Pope Benedict recites that "peace is an order enlivened and integrated by love, in such a way that we feel the needs of others as our own." All of us are called to overcome selfish ways and be a true Knight to everyone we encounter. Self-absorption has left its historic path. We can work for peace now by being kind and hospitable to all those we meet. We need to be there for our brothers in their time of need. We can forget about judging people and having the last laugh. As hard as it is, we must turn to forgiveness. As Knights, as peacemakers, we also have to work to defend life in all its aspects and oppose injustices that can never bring about peace in the world. And we must love everyone, even when it is hard, because as recited by Pope Benedict in his World Day of Peace message, "the attainment of peace depends above all on recognizing that we are, in God, one human family."

The peace that we ourselves can bring has the power to make a difference in the lives of others. Many examples abound but think of a father and his possible effect on his wife and children. A father with peace in his heart- where love reigns- who masters his emotions and is aware of each person's needs can be the lifeline of a family. He can be a comforter, a teacher, and reflection of God's love. Peace which comes from God does not stay only in the heart; it aims to work its way into everyone it encounters. Think then of what we can do together as Knights, bound by unity, when guided by God's love and the peace it plants in the heart.

Elements of the peace that God planned for creation are everywhere, despite the divisions and violence of the world. It can be the peace represented by parents huddled around their newborn baby or a bride and groom about to be united in marriage or two friends reconnecting after many years. It can be the picture of Pope Francis and a boy from a Vatican crowd

embracing each other. Or walking amidst the trees and hearing the sound of a gentle stream. Today the amount of peacemaking efforts in the world reflects how everyone yearns for peace. Pope Benedict called it “mankind’s innate vocation to peace.” We must make a commitment to ourselves and do our part as Knights to touch each person’s heart in a way that opens them to rekindling or discovering the presence and hope of God’s peace, and trust the receivers will then become messengers.