

PUT YOUR VOICE BEHIND PEACE...

... AND THE DEFENCE OF LIFE AND HUMAN DIGNITY!

“If you want peace, work for justice”

WEEK FOR PEACE 2005

4 – 11 September 2005

Introduction

“If you want peace, work for justice” was the slogan of the 3rd National Conference for Reconciliation, held in Bogotá from 23 to 25 May this year. At the event, a reflection and analysis of justice and its application in defence and promotion of human rights was carried out, guided by the word of God and the Social Doctrine. The analysis aimed to provide alternatives to current challenges and promote a just and negotiated peace.

Pope John Paul II, in his message for the World Day of Peace in 1999, stated that “no human right is safe if we fail to commit ourselves to safeguarding all of them. When the violation of any fundamental human right is accepted without reaction, all other rights are placed at risk. It is therefore essential that there should be a global approach to the subject of human rights and a serious commitment to defend them. Only when a culture of human rights which respects different traditions becomes an integral part of humanity’s moral patrimony shall we be able to look to the future with serene confidence.

In effect, how could there be war if every human right were respected? Complete observance of human rights is the surest road to establishing solid relations between States. The culture of human rights cannot fail to be a culture of peace. Every violation of human rights carries within it the seeds of possible conflict”.

During the Week for Peace, the Catholic Church together with different churches, REDEPAZ and other civil peace initiatives in the country, aim to continue their work in defence of life and human dignity.

Today more than ever, Colombia demands respect for the right to life, that is, a full and high quality of life. The voices and efforts of all social forces are needed to promote a culture of human rights which reverberates in our consciences as well as in creating public opinion, and consequently, in guiding citizens’ behaviour.

It is a time of choices, a time of hope, we need heralds for the dignity of humankind. It is our duty to safeguard the dignity of the poor and marginalised communities with renewed determination and recognise the rights of those who have none.

We invite you to follow this path during the Week for Peace. Your participation will be a homage to life. We are relying on you!

Monsignor Héctor Fabio Henao G.

Director of the National Secretariat for Social Ministry

GUIDE TO USING THIS BOOKLET

This educational booklet provides simple and practical material with which to put the core issues of the 3rd National Conference for Reconciliation into the context of different situations and sectors.

The booklet contains:

1. Seven issues for study and reflection:

- Celebration: a homage to life
- Defence of life: an urgent task...
 - ... to be able to live in dignity...
 - ... practising justice
 - ... promoting access to justice
 - ... listening to the voice of the victims
 - ... sowing the seeds of peace for the tree of life to flourish in Colombia
 - ... working with migrants and displaced people.

2. Methodological and educational route

- This route takes the current situation and needs of people, families and communities as a starting point.
- Themes will be tackled in four steps:
 1. **Illumination:** Guided by the Word of God or the Social Doctrine.
 2. **Reflection:** Confronting the messages we receive with reality, analysing causes, consequences and possible alternatives for solutions.
 3. **Tasks:** Carrying out individual and group exercises in order to contribute to the construction of a culture of human rights and peace.
 4. **Actions:** Putting into practice the knowledge we gain and the lessons we learn.

General Recommendations

- To use this booklet it is important that those responsible for the workshop review and read it right the way through prior to the event and establish a working schedule according to the needs and expectations of people, educational institutions, organisations and parishes participating in the celebration of the Week for Peace.
- The person responsible for dealing with themes contained within the booklet will do a better job if activities are adapted specifically to the people and places where the workshops are being held.
- Before working with a group it is important that the workshop leader reflects upon the following questions:

- What kind of group will I be leading? Take into account the different kinds of participants (children, young people, elderly people, rural inhabitants, professionals, teachers, parish communities, ecumenical groups, etc.)?
- According to the educational level of the group:
What adaptations will be necessary to the language?
What is the best way of carrying out the workshop?
What modifications or adaptations will be required with regard to the content or educational route?
- It is important to bear in mind communities' cultural traditions, material resources and human talent in order to make the activities within the Week for Peace more dynamic and more participative.

**FOR PEACE TO BE LONG LASTING AND SUSTAINABLE IT MUST BE REINVENTED
CONSTANTLY...**

FIRST DAY

CELEBRATION: A HOMAGE TO LIFE

“To be worthy of life means not remaining silent, nor permitting so many repeated injustices... it is a virtue, it is dignity and it is the most defined attitude of identity... it is the same as welcoming truth and our own freedom...”

(Grupo Suramérica, from the song, *Honrar la vida*)

ILLUMINATION

Numbers 29, v. 12.

REFLECTION

... Celebrating is an assertion of the world and life: “True celebration is an affirmation, it is a yes to life, a favourable judgement of our existence and of the whole world. Therefore, to be able to celebrate, life must make sense. If existence is considered to be absurd, a mere frustration, then celebrating it will result impossible”. (J. Mateos, *Cristianos en fiestas*. Ed. Cristiandad. p 254.)

TASKS

The Week for Peace is an event which depends on both its preparation and the way it is carried out. Activities should be performed in a very festive manner, with greetings, music, games, messages, cultural events, forums, meetings, working groups, a fair of peace initiatives, hikes, marches, carnival parades, decorations, dedications, prayers and vigils.

On this first day, we invite you to celebrate life in two ways:

1. Talk to your grandparents, parents or other older people and ask them the following questions:
What did you celebrate when you were children?
What customs existed then that do not exist now with regard to these celebrations?
Do you think that celebrations strengthen life, family ties and solidarity within the community? Why?

ACTIONS

Organise a celebration with your family, friends, neighbours or colleagues to pay homage to life. Provide a welcome for the WEEK FOR PEACE 2005.

Celebration of mass, readings, bell ringing, vigil, moonlight vigil, concert, parade, marathon, hike, discussion, film showing and others.

“Everyone is invited to participate, join hands and voices in defence of live and human dignity”

SECOND DAY

DEFENCE OF LIFE: AN URGENT TASK

“Urgent message: we need a pacific, united and reliable army... people to make history... open hearts in a country ravaged by war... strong spirits... more workers and less people criticising... more citizens attempting to do something and less saying ‘it’s impossible’... we need defenders of life!!!”

ILLUMINATION

Christifideles Laici, 38

REFLECTION

The facts: ... the poorest countries, the poorest populations within these countries, men and young people are the principal victims of fatal shootings around the world. Sixty percent of deaths by firearms occur in only seven countries. Colombia occupies fourth place among these seven countries...

Testimony: The shot that put an end to a life

“My family is a victim of firearms. My little cousin, she was at the peak of her childhood, it was a week before her 12th birthday. She was coming home from school, walking quietly, when a young neighbour asked her to go to his house because he wanted to show her something...”

TASKS

To study this reflection in more depth, we will take examples from everyday life:

- Divide the group into two or four smaller groups, depending on the number of people present.
- Groups one and three should make a list of events, gestures and actions which put the lives of our families, communities and countries at risk. Then, choose one of these gestures or events and represent it by means of a role play.
- Groups two and four should make a list of events, gestures and actions which promote the defence of life in our families, communities and countries. Then, choose one of these gestures or events and represent it by means of a role play.
- Each group reads their list out loud and performs the role play. Then the workshop leader asks the participants to share lessons they have learnt as a result of this exercise.

ACTION

School in the park... We ask parents, teachers, employees and students to go out to the main squares or parks and carry out parades in fancy dress with banners and musical groups, to represent events, gestures and actions which promote the defence of life and put a stop to those actions which endanger life within our families and communities.

THIRD DAY
TO LIVE IN DIGNITY

Life makes no sense if we do not make sense of life!

ILLUMINATION

Genesis 1, vv. 26-28

REFLECTION

The dignity of every human being is a singular value which can easily be recognised. We can discover it in ourselves and we can see it in others. But we cannot give it to someone, nor is it in our power to take it away from someone else. It is something which is given to us. It precedes our willingness and requires a suitable and balanced attitude from us: either we recognise it and accept it as a supreme value (respectful attitude) or we ignore and reject it...

TASKS

1. Individually at first, carry out the exercise of defining human dignity: specify which ideas it holds and the importance which is assigned to it in our family, community or country.
2. Then in pairs, on a piece of card write down five ways to live with dignity and organise them in order of importance.
3. In groups of six, that is, in groups of three pairs, exchange cards. Each pair then decides what the order of the sentences on the other cards means to them. Discuss with each pair. Then, the group should choose the five ways of living with dignity considered most relevant or definitive and write them on a large piece of paper.
4. Lastly, fasten these sheets of paper on the walls of the room and compare what other groups have written.

ACTIONS

Go out to meet others from another side of life...

1. Choose an institution, neighbourhood or group of people whose human dignity has been infringed, or who live in extreme poverty, in exclusion or have been stigmatised (AIDS patients, street people, the mentally ill, prostitutes, the elderly, juvenile gangs, high risk neighbourhoods, prisons).
2. Visit them and organise a celebration where their value as children of God and their right to live in a dignified manner are highlighted. Make a commitment with them with regard to respect and fair treatment.

FOURTH DAY
PRACTISING JUSTICE

“An act of justice closes the book on a misdeed; an act of vengeance writes one of its own.”
(Marilyn vos Savant)

ILLUMINATION

Micah 6, v. 8

REFLECTION

Practising justice implies transforming unjust structures or simply the determination to make the world a fairer place for the poor. This coincides with interpersonal relationships (“love faithfulness”) as well as personal integrity and responsibility (“walk humbly”). Christian spirituality enriches the most profound parts of the human being and allows us to act with greater personal responsibility and integrity. Therefore, it helps us to have more authentic relationships with other people, to respect their personalities and find God even in those people who we find disagreeable. Relationships with other people must be more open in order to share deep-rooted experiences with them and transmit our personal integrity, that is, acting with openness. This means that we have to control our anger, our fears, our violence...

TASKS

THE JUSTICE MACHINE. This workshop combines creativity with reflection on the practice of justice as a educational tool.

Materials required: newspaper or magazine cuttings, photographs of situations where justice is practised and other materials provided by the workshop leader. The workshop will last for approximately two hours and will require the involvement of all participants.

The workshop aims for participants to present in a creative manner the components and structure they believe are required for justice to defend life and dignity. The workshop will be guided by the Word of God and other concepts developed as part of the reflection.

ACTIONS

- Identify situations of injustice that you have caused at personal and family level in the last two months.
- Write them down, describing what happened, analysing the causes and consequences.
- Lastly, begin a course of action that will change your life: find the person with whom you were unjust and talk to them, ask them for forgiveness, repair the harm you caused and enjoy the peace that comes from being just.

DAY FIVE
PROMOTING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

“The mark of your ignorance is the depth of your belief in injustice and tragedy” (Richard Bach)

ILLUMINATION

Isaiah 5, vv. 20-23; 10, vv.1-4

REFLECTION

Isaiah, the old testament prophet lived at a time which bears certain similarities to Colombia’s current situation. History is repeating itself at the moment in this country. We have a legal system which is immersed in corruption, impunity, lies and irresponsibility. Colombia is a country of laws and reforms which few are aware of and to which few have access.

TASKS

In order to study the above ideas in further depth, discuss the following:

- What knowledge do we have of the legal system in Colombia?
- Share this knowledge with your family and community.
- Do we know how to gain access to the legal system? Have we ever made use of the criminal, administrative or family legal system? Share your experiences.

ACTIONS

1. Organise research visits in groups (maximum of five people) in order to find out more about the institutions which administer justice:
Attorney General’s Office or regional offices; Public Prosecutor’s Office; Supreme Court of Justice; Municipal Courts; Police Inspectorates; Family Attorneys, Community Mediation Centres, Legal Advice Centres at Universities; participation in public meetings.
2. Interview civil servants from the above institutions, using the following questions as a guide:
What services does the institution provide?
How is justice administered and applied?
What mechanisms exist for citizens to gain access to the legal system?
Are these mechanisms well known?
What strengths and weaknesses do they encounter as part of their institutions’ work?
3. After carrying out the visits hold a meeting with all members of the group to share experiences and draw conclusions.

SIXTH DAY
NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY
SEARCHING FOR TRUTH AND REPARATION FOR VICTIMS

“We look to them for strength, to listen to them so that they stop being victims. There is no such thing as a happy victim”. (Monsignor Luís Augusto Castro)

ILLUMINATION

Isaiah 49, vv. 15-16

REFLECTION

Testimony “They were killed on 19 November 2001, Enrique and Miguel were shot 15 times, they were members of the Ruiz Manrique family. They were tortured, kicked, insulted... they were murdered in front of their family, then their children were tortured in the same way.”

Today, on National Human Rights Day, we celebrate the feast of Saint Peter Claver, defender of the slaves forced to carry out back-breaking work and submitted to enormous outrages by the Spanish colonisers. His mission and testimony are a great example with which to strengthen and increase commitment to the task of assisting and accompanying victims of the armed and social conflict (either individuals or communities). A task which is carried out by churches and civil society organisations. It is our responsibility as educators for peace and defenders of life and human dignity to provide opportunities to listen to the voices of the victims and make the search for truth and integral reparation possible.

TASKS

1. Group reflection on the following questions:
Is it possible to make amends for the harm caused to victims in our country?
Who is responsible for doing so?
Do we know any victims in our community? Who are they? Have we supported them?
How could we support them?
2. Research and study the Justice and Peace Law and its contribution to peace processes in Colombia as a part of a debate, reflection and search for peaceful negotiated solutions to the armed conflict.

ACTIONS

Different activities are set out below:

- Murals painted by young people and school children representing defence of victims and the search for reparation.
- A silent march to demand truth and reparation for the thousands of victims created by the Colombian conflict.
- A prayer vigil for victims, demobilised armed actors... so that they may recognise their mistakes and start on the path searching for forgiveness and true reconciliation with honesty and sincerity.
- Celebration of the Holy Eucharist in homage to Saint Peter Claver and the victims within our communities.

- A theatrical representation showing a case of victimisation in order to raise awareness of the feelings of the victims and their needs.

SEVENTH DAY
DETERMINED PEOPLE NEEDED
FOR THE TREE OF LIFE TO FLOURISH IN COLOMBIA!

ILLUMINATION

Second Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 3, vv. 2-32.

REFLECTION

Over a whole week we have organised and performed many activities related to peace. The fundamental purpose of this event not only demands respect for life, but also asks children, young people, rural inhabitants, the elderly, the sick, prisoners, displaced and excluded people to exercise their right to live in dignity.

Our task is to continue tirelessly in search of the common good, social justice, a negotiated solution to the armed conflict and integral and sustainable reconciliation.

TASKS

1. In silence, each participant draws a symbol which reflects their decision and commitment to the defence of life, human dignity, justice, human rights and peace.
2. Then, in groups of four or five, show the symbols to other members of the group and explain their meaning. Finally, make a model together, with contributions from everyone, representing the group decision to continue strengthening actions in favour of peace. Use different materials such as paper, card, paint, Plasticine, clay, wool, glue, magazines, recyclable materials.
3. Finally, display models at a full session, draw conclusions and share gifts and refreshments with the participating groups.

ACTIONS

Remember, “You are, and always will be, letters of Christ, written with the Spirit of the living God, known and read by all men...”

What does it say in your letter with respect to life, dignity, justice and peace?

What do you want it to say?

Look for the person who is closest to you, the person you love most, or if you dare, the most lonely, excluded or alienated person you know and give them your message...

Colombia needs many letters expressing love, solidarity, comprehension and non-violence, not written on tablets of stone but in our hearts... so that the tree of life may flourish.