

Homiletic Resources for Preaching Peace in Ukraine



CONGREGATION
of the **MISSION**

THE VINCENTIAN
WESTERN PROVINCE

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The following selections from the writings of popes and the Vincentian tradition are offered as resources for the preparation of the homily in the spirit of the gospel and the rich Christian and Vincentian traditions.

Robert Maloney, C.M., “A Vincentian Reflection on Peace”

St. Vincent witnessed many wars in his day. But he did not run from wars and their effects on the poor and other civilians: he worked hard to come to the aid of war refugees and in working for peace. The following are sections Robert Maloney’s “A Vincentian Reflection on Peace,” *Vincentiana*: vol. 48: no. 2, 116-127 at

<https://via.library.depaul.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3518&context=vincentiana>.

St. Vincent often speaks about peace and peacemaking, but usually in the context of community life or the giving of missions. In speaking about community he states: “The Spirit of Jesus Christ is a spirit of union and peace. How can you attract people if you are not united with one another in Him?” In speaking about the missions, he encouraged the members of the Congregation of the Mission to work at healing broken relationships. One of the important goals of missions was reconciliation. Missionaries were to attempt to settle disputes and divisions. In fact, they frequently reported to St. Vincent about their success in doing so.

But Vincent also addressed the question of war. In a repetition of prayer on July 24, 1655, he lamented that war was widespread: in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Poland, Ireland, Scotland, England. “War everywhere, misery everywhere,” he cried out. “So many people suffer!” he said in frustration ...

Besides his words, Vincent also responded to the devastating war in Lorraine with a massive relief effort. He asked the Ladies of Charity to take charge of the fund-raising. They managed to get large donations from the King, the Queen, and the Duchess d’Aiguillon, but the contributions always fell short of the needs. He sent 12 of his best priests and clerics at Toul to help in the relief efforts and sent brothers who knew about surgery and medicine. In fact, he drew up a rule establishing strict standards of conduct and administrative procedures among them. The missionaries distributed relief in seven strategic points: Toul, Metz, Verdun, Nancy, Pont-a`-Mousson, St. Mihiel, and Bar-le-Duc. Each center received a monthly allotment. Fr. Jean Dehorgny was named as regional visitor to supervise the relief work in 1640.

José Maria Román describes the help offered as follows:

Basic aid consisted of food, particularly bread and soup, medicine and clothing. The same method of distribution was followed in every place. Each week the missionaries would go round their districts and with the help of the parish priest they would draw up a list of poor people. Then they would give the priest, or some charitable lady, the flour needed for the week’s baking, and after the first distribution of bread they would gather the poor people together for a pious exhortation, catechise the children, and help those who were most seriously ill to prepare well for death.

Brother Mathieu Regnard became Vincent's emissary to Lorraine. He made 54 journeys back and forth, each time carrying with him between 20 and 30 thousand livres. He crossed battle lines, worked his way through bands of marauders and, almost as if in a novel, always managed to escape. He later described 18 incidents in which he nearly lost his life (and the money!). On one of his trips in September 1639, besides coming back himself, he brought along 46 girls and 54 boys to the capital.

In the 1650s war ravaged Picardy, Champagne and the Ile de France. This time Brother Jean Parr was Vincent's trusted envoy for Picardy-Champagne. There the Daughters of Charity were tireless in relief work and served as nurses in military hospitals. St. Vincent encouraged them eloquently:

The queen is asking for you to be sent to Calais to look after poor wounded soldiers. How humble this should make you feel; to think that God wants to make use of you in such a marvelous way! Oh Savior, men go to war to kill each other, and you go to war to repair the damage that is done there! What a blessing from God! Men kill the body, and very often they kill the soul if people die in a state of mortal sin; you go to bring them back to life, or at least to preserve life by the care you give to those who survive, and your efforts to show them, by your good example and your exhortations, that they should be resigned to God's will.

With the siege of Paris, the pain of war came to the capital. The sisters distributed food each day to 2,100 people in the St. Denis area and to 5,000 poor people in St. Paul's Parish. At St. Lazare, soup was distributed twice a day to 800 people. The number of those fed daily soon rose to 15,000. "We hear that you've spared nothing to save the lives of all the sick-poor in those places," he rejoiced in a letter to Brother Nicolas Sene. "If you need powder for purging, ask Monsieur Portail [...] If you have to bargain to get provisions everywhere, do so [...] Write to Madame de Herse asking for a little money to help those poor people harvest their grapes [...] And spare nothing to save the life of the souls and bodies of those poor people."

But it is often forgotten that in addition to his vigorous war-relief efforts, Vincent was also engaged in behind-the-scenes peacemaking. On two occasions he intervened personally, going right to the top.

At some time between 1639 and 1642, during the wars in Lorraine, he went to Cardinal Richelieu, knelt before him, described the horrors of war, and pleaded for peace: "Let us have peace. Have pity on us. Give France peace." Richelieu refused, responding diplomatically that peace did not depend on him alone.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church: The Gift of Peace

2304 Respect for and development of human life require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of

fraternity. Peace is "the tranquility of order." Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.

2305 Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ, the messianic "Prince of Peace." By the blood of his Cross, "in his own person he killed the hostility," he reconciled men with God and made his Church the sacrament of the unity of the human race and of its union with God. "He is our peace." He has declared: "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.
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https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P81.HTM

Pope Paul VI Address to the United Nations 1965: A Plea for International Cooperation to End Wars

Peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice.

And now We come to the high point of Our message: Negatively, first: the words which you expect from Us and which We cannot pronounce without full awareness of their gravity and solemnity: Never one against the other, never, never again. Was it not principally for this purpose that the United Nations came into being: against war and for peace? Listen to the clear words of a great man, the late John Kennedy, who declared four years ago: "Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind." Long discourses are not necessary to proclaim the supreme goal of your institution. It is enough to remember that the blood of millions of men, numberless and unprecedented sufferings, useless slaughter and frightful ruin are the sanction of the covenant which unites you, in a solemn pledge which must change the future history of the world: No more war, war never again. It is peace, peace which must guide the destinies of peoples and of all mankind. Our thanks to you, glory to you, who for twenty years have labored for peace and who have even suffered the loss of illustrious men in this sacred cause. Thanks and glory to you for the conflicts, which you have prevented, and for those, which you have brought to an end. The results of your efforts on behalf of peace, including the most recent, even if they are not yet decisive, are such as to deserve that We, presuming to interpret the sentiments of the whole world, express to you both praise and gratitude.

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/paul-vi-50-years-ago-no-more-war-war-never-again>

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes) 1965: The Nature of Peace

78. Peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice. Peace results from that order structured into human society by its divine Founder and actualized by men and women as they thirst after ever greater justice. The common good of humanity finds its ultimate meaning in the eternal law. But since the concrete demands of this common good are constantly changing as time goes on, peace is never attained once and for all, but must be built up ceaselessly. Moreover, since the human will is unsteady and wounded by sin, the achievement of peace requires a constant mastering of passions and the vigilance of lawful authority.

But this is not enough. This peace on earth cannot be obtained unless personal well-being is safeguarded, and men and women freely and trustingly share with one another the riches of their inner spirits and their talents. A firm determination to respect other peoples and their dignity, as well as the studied practice of fraternity are absolutely necessary for the establishment of peace. Hence peace is likewise the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can provide.

That earthly peace which arises from love of neighbor symbolizes and results from the peace of Christ which radiates from God the Father. For by the cross the incarnate Son, the prince of peace reconciled all people with God. By thus restoring all people to the unity of one people and one body, He slew hatred in His own flesh; and, after being lifted on high by His resurrection, He poured forth the spirit of love into the hearts of all.

For this reason, all Christians are urgently summoned to do in love what the truth requires, and to join with all true peacemakers in pleading for peace and bringing it about.

https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

Pope Francis Address for the World Day of Prayer for Peace, Assisi, Sept. 20, 2016

"We cannot remain indifferent. Today the world has a profound thirst for peace. In many countries, people are suffering due to wars which, though often forgotten, are always the cause of suffering and poverty. In Lesbos, my dear brother, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and I saw the sorrow of war in the eyes of the refugees, the anguish of peoples thirsting for peace. I am thinking of the families, whose lives have been shattered; of the children who have known only violence in their lives; of the elderly, forced to leave their homeland. All of them have a great thirst for peace. We do not want these tragedies to be forgotten. Rather together we want to give voice to all those who suffer, to all those who have no voice and are not heard. They know well,

often better than the powerful, that there is no tomorrow in war, and that the violence of weapons destroys the joy of life."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-chronicles/popes-quotes-profound-thirst-peace>

Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* 2013: The Common Good and Peace in Society

217. We have spoken at length about joy and love, but the word of God also speaks about the fruit of peace (cf. *Gal 5:22*).

218. Peace in society cannot be understood as pacification or the mere absence of violence resulting from the domination of one part of society over others. Nor does true peace act as a pretext for justifying a social structure which silences or appeases the poor, so that the more affluent can placidly support their lifestyle while others have to make do as they can. Demands involving the distribution of wealth, concern for the poor and human rights cannot be suppressed under the guise of creating a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority. The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. When these values are threatened, a prophetic voice must be raised.

219. Nor is peace "simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day towards the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect justice among men". In the end, a peace which is not the result of integral development will be doomed; it will always spawn new conflicts and various forms of violence.

220. People in every nation enhance the social dimension of their lives by acting as committed and responsible citizens, not as a mob swayed by the powers that be. Let us not forget that "responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation".^[180] Yet becoming a people demands something more. It is an ongoing process in which every new generation must take part: a slow and arduous effort calling for a desire for integration and a willingness to achieve this through the growth of a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter.

229. This principle, drawn from the Gospel, reminds us that Christ has made all things one in himself: heaven and earth, God and man, time and eternity, flesh and spirit, person and society. The sign of this unity and reconciliation of all things in him is peace. Christ "is our peace" (*Eph 2:14*). The Gospel message always begins with a greeting of peace, and peace at all times crowns and confirms the relations between the disciples. Peace is possible because the Lord has overcome the world and its constant conflict "by making peace through the blood of his cross" (*Col 1:20*). But if we look more closely at these biblical texts, we find that the locus of this

reconciliation of differences is within ourselves, in our own lives, ever threatened as they are by fragmentation and breakdown. If hearts are shattered in thousands of pieces, it is not easy to create authentic peace in society.

230. The message of peace is not about a negotiated settlement but rather the conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity. It overcomes every conflict by creating a new and promising synthesis. Diversity is a beautiful thing when it can constantly enter into a process of reconciliation and seal a sort of cultural covenant resulting in a “reconciled diversity”. As the bishops of the Congo have put it: “Our ethnic diversity is our wealth... It is only in unity, through conversion of hearts and reconciliation, that we will be able to help our country to develop on all levels”.

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html#Concern_for_the_vulnerable