


BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

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One of my favourite story books that my mother read to me was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. When the wicked witch asked, “Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of us all?” I took it literally to mean physical beauty. But, after studying children’s literature in university, I became aware of the author’s underlying meaning of what “fair” meant. We all want that mirror to say “me, me, and me.” Our mirrors are the sisters that walk with us in our journey and mission in the League. We are called to be the best we can and that challenge must be our ultimate goal. That radiant beauty that comes from within is nurtured by God and is an intricate part of us. It is reflected in the way others see us and how we can become peacemakers in our lives.

Where do we begin? How do we achieve this inner beauty, called peace? What does it take to be a peacemaker? The answer is simple; it is within us. The process is lengthy and challenging. In order for us to cultivate the art of peacemaking, we are called to prayer and to meditate on the messages that will lead us to achieve His will. Thomas Merton wrote, “We are not at peace with others because we are not at peace with ourselves, and we are not at peace with ourselves because we are not at peace with God.”

Instead of entering a chasm of chaos within ourselves, we need to journey into that place of stillness where we experience the presence of God. There He fills our lamp with oil to keep His light burning, and we enter a channel where we are fed with His word.

Recently when attempting to resolve a conflict between two sisters it became quite obvious that, as a mediator, I was called to be Christ’s ambassador. Students are asked, “What Would Jesus Do?” – a call to surrender to Him and be His instruments of peace. We must be conscious of His messages and make them our own. In Colossians 3:12-13 we are instructed, “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as

the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”

Once we have achieved this challenge, we are ready to reach out to our neighbours. We prepare to lead others to a peaceful relationship with God. Thus we bring harmony for the good of all. In St. Francis of Assisi’s prayer we ask that we be made “channels of peace”. Peacemaking implies that we must work at being mediators.

We need to recognize that we are all different and at various levels in our desire to achieve peace. We have a variety of methods we use to deal with problems and concerns. The cue here is that we must adapt. We must be willing to adjust our behaviour first and display a peaceful demeanour within and without.

“...lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3).

As mediators involved in conflict resolution, we must don certain attributes and characteristics. Underlying our desire to settle, repair and resolve conflict, we need to be aware of a number of attributes that will bring a positive solution. Our responsibility is to practice confidentiality, impartiality, versatility, composure and respect so that negotiations will be fair and without blame. Our behaviour may lead others to take ownership for their actions and feelings and work to build consensus. Communication should be impartial, yet should seek truth. Good communication is clear to both the receiver and sender.

We seek harmonious relationships with one another by gently unlocking and exploring the root of the problem. We must display tranquility, flexibility, humility, tenderness, patience, care, an attitude of generosity and love! In Matthew 19:26, we read, “... but for God all things are possible.”

A mediator must be prepared to accept that not all situations will be resolved. In conflict resolution we call this an “agree to disagree” solution. If we achieve some form of peace then we have built a bridge between the individuals. William Shakespeare’s definition of peace captures this concept when he writes, “A peace is of the nature of a conquest, for then both parties nobly are subdued, and neither party loser.”

In conclusion, I quote Mother Teresa of Calcutta, “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.” With this in mind, and having been challenged to be *Women of Peace and Hope*, it is our responsibility to unite with all our sisters in striving to bring well-being to all who call on us to be peacemakers. †