

This week in our series on the Beatitudes, as some of you will know, we have reached 'blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God'.

As with all the Beatitudes, this is deceptively simple, but I want to just leave you with one simple idea about it tonight, about how we can live out our mission as peacemaking followers of a God of peace.

What I'm going to say is probably second nature to you anyway, but if it gives you some encouragement and support that's all to the good.

This is a time in our world and in our country when peacemaking is particularly necessary. We are living through a lot of uncertainty, a lot of negative influences that are encouraging a breakdown in relationships.

Peacemaking isn't just about making peace when peace has broken down. It is of course about that, but it's even better if peace doesn't break down in the first place.

What we do as individuals can help set the mood.

For example, I remember being told a story by a priest I know, who used to be in a parish in Manchester. He described how when Pope John Paul II died he went to the local Catholic church to offer his condolences to the priest there. He was quite unprepared for the ripple effect of this. His visit became widely known locally, and made a big difference to ecumenical relations. One

simple and straightforward action encouraged a lot of other people to relate to each other better.

Our lives are full of opportunities for simple and straightforward actions like that. If we make the effort to make a human connection where there wasn't one before, it can have an impact not just on us and the person concerned, but potentially much wider.

Likewise, if we break a relationship, or behave badly towards people for whatever reason, we may well be encouraging more of that from other people, and down the line that can lead to horrendous acts.

And as they say, just doing nothing can be just as dangerous: all that it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.

It's the human equivalent of the butterfly effect. A small gesture, or the absence of one, in one place can have massive outworkings over distance and time.

In our daily relationships, this is for many of us how we can live out our vocations as peacemakers. Every day we can change the world by building positive relationships that make for peace in our immediate environment. We will probably never know how far our actions change the world, but without them the world certainly won't change for the better. And we can offer what we can do to God and pray for him to use it for greater good.

Prayers take many forms. Sometimes they address God directly, sometimes we use them to talk to each other about God. In place of more traditional prayers of intercession this evening, I want to read you something that is sometimes called the prayer of Oscar Romero, sometimes called a reflection, and often goes by the title of

A FUTURE NOT OUR OWN

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long
view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime
only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise
that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete,
which is another way of saying
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No programme

accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives
includes everything. That is what we are about.

We plant a seed that will one day grow.

We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations
that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects
far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation
in realising that.
This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete,
but it is a beginning,
a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace
to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders,
ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

*Let us pause for a moment in silent reflection before we
conclude our service.*

We commit all our prayers into your loving hands, O
Lord. Amen.