

## ***Pray For the Courage to Work For Peace!***



Making peace cannot happen without seeking justice and justice must be tempered by mercy. Justice is not just about fair punishment for wrongdoing. It is about restoring right relationships with God and between people. That includes caring for all those who are vulnerable and changing systems so that injustice does not happen in the first place by assuring that all people are treated with love, respect, and dignity – as each of us wants to be treated ourselves. That includes acknowledging that all people have the same rights and responsibilities; that no one has the right to prosper at the expense of others; and that no one person or group is entitled to all controlling power over others. Seeking vengeance, revenge, or retribution for past wrongs real or perceived – does not bring either peace or justice especially when innocent people are involved. Killing in response to killing does not deter more killing and has not in all of human history. It encourages a never-ending cycle of violence, pain, and suffering. No one wins. No one's hurt, pain or loss goes away through an act of revenge. Bryan Stevenson says: "Whenever society begins to create policies and laws rooted in fear and anger, there will be abuse and injustice." Fear and anger are key elements of revenge. Abuse and injustice are key elements when force is used to control or suppress opposing ideas, even entire populations, or to try to eradicate those ideas or populations. While there may be the appearance of calm for a time when such force is used, oppression breeds resentment, frustration, and hopelessness. This can make the eventual rebellion of the oppressed inevitable and it is all too often, violent. Working for peace and justice takes the acknowledgement of the humanity and equal value of all parties involved, as well as a great deal more effort, dedication, and sacrifice than does using violence – whether to challenge oppression and seek justice peacefully, or to stop oppressing others and truly work for justice peacefully. The peace process must include rethinking past expectations, and establishing mutual trust. It must also include working toward reconciliation which requires confession – both naming and acknowledging past wrongs and seeking forgiveness. None of this is easy. Pray that all those involved in current conflicts will have the courage to change course and truly seek peace and justice.

### ***Pray For:***

- **The Middle East** where Israel & Hamas are now at war & both Israeli & Palestinian civilians are facing massive destruction & death
- **Nigeria** lives with insecurity. Armed gangs control large swathes of land in the northwest. Islamist insurgents (Boko Haram etc.) continue attacks in the northeast; gangs & separatists attack government targets in the southeast; deadly clashes between farmers & herders continue in central Nigeria. Kidnapping for ransom is rampant.
- **Ukraine. The war continues.** Attacks & atrocities against civilians are ongoing.
- **Azerbaijan, Sudan, Congo, Myanmar, & elsewhere** where minority populations face persecution & possible genocide.
- **Victims of Gun Violence** – Already this year, 33,577 people have died in gun violence (up 752 from last week) including 1,359 children (up 24 from last week). 29,254 people have been injured (up 619 from last week) including 3,673 children (up 72 from last week). 18,744 of the deaths are suicides (up 462 from last week). There have already been 542 mass shootings (up 10 from last week) this year. (Gun Violence Archive).