

Notes for a Talk to World Vision of Australia Volunteers

22nd February 2003

JOHN 14:27a Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

What is the PEACE that Jesus gives to us? And how does his PEACE differ from the way the world gives us peace?

The World's peace is the peace brought by violence.
Jesus' peace is the peace that comes through relationship.

The World's peace:

Violence is controlled by scapegoating. Scapegoats are the release-valve for society's violence.

The scapegoating mechanism works like this.

Violence builds and builds.

Someone accuses another, "You are responsible for the violence in our society."

The mob say "Yes, Yes."

The scapegoat is murdered.

In the act of murder, the murderers experience powerful forces of social cohesion, unity of mind and purpose—violence drains away.

Peace is restored.

Of course, put so baldly, we don't like this. Our experience of scapegoating is much more subtle and clever, and self-deceiving. We have developed an elaborate, even brilliant, collection of myths to convince ourselves that scapegoating violence is right and proper. What are some examples of these myths?

Sport, news, TV programs, competitions of all sort, national borders, monarchies, race.
Our language—"fight for peace" weapons of mass deception

How do we know this?

Because one time the story of the scapegoating mechanism was NOT told from the point of view of the murderers. When Jesus died on the cross, we heard the story told from the point of view of the scapegoat. In most respects, the story of Jesus is just like thousands of ancient stories about gods who were murdered by humans. Many people use this knowledge to say the Jesus story is just another myth. They overlook the difference!

The idea of the "innocent victim" was born. And since then the Gospel, the Good News of the kind of peace that Jesus gives that is NOT like the kind of peace the world gives has been loosed abroad. And gradually, the mechanisms of peace through violence are being more and more undermined. They are being revealed for the lunacy they are. They are being unveiled as the myths that support them are crumbling.

Once upon a time we believed witches were the cause of violence in society.
Once upon a time we believed it was the lower classes.
Once upon a time we believed it was the Jews.
Once upon a time we believed it was the Japanese.
Once upon a time we believed it was the Communists.
Once upon a time we believed it was Osama bin Laden.
Once upon a time we believed it was Iraq.

A little historical perspective helps us to see how these were scapegoats for the violence in society.

What is the peace that Jesus gives?

What happens in the Eucharist? Jesus comes in flesh and blood and gives himself away. It is in the act of self-donation that we find a new way to peace. Love expressed in giving ourselves away to others is the way to peace that Jesus gives.

We find this hard to believe, because we live in the world which promotes self-donating love as foolish at best, or simply absurd.

But what is more absurd?

Fighting for peace, pacifying nations with bombs, Gaining security by taking revenge
OR

Turning the other cheek, going the second mile, giving ourselves away to others?

God gives us the choice as he always has.

As Joshua challenged the Children of Israel, so God challenges us today. JOSHUA 24:15
“Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”