



# International Solidarity Reflection

Peace

## *Shalom*

School Sisters of Notre Dame

September 2009

### **Introduction**

To build peace (shalom) in this world is a great challenge. The issue of peace comprises all the other issues that human beings confront. Such serious issues as poverty, war, and environmental degradation have been brought about by the breakdown of relationship. All the pain that human beings and the natural world experience is a result of this breaking down or loss of relationships. To build peace is nothing but to redeem these broken relationships.

### ***Call to Prayer***

Let us be more conscious of the reality of suffering people and nature in the present world and take their pain as our own. The September 11 attacks killed several thousand people at one time and shocked people all over the world. But on the same day many more lives were lost because of hunger, poverty, and this loss of lives continues every day without much attention. Let us keep in mind those who yearn for one peaceful night.

### **Experience**

Dr. Tetsu Nakamura has been giving medical support in Afghanistan for 25 years. When the U.S. military started bombing Afghanistan to find the terrorists of the September 11 attacks, almost all NGOs left the country. But his group stayed to continue to provide support.

His action touched the hearts of many Japanese people, and enormous amounts of money were offered. With this money he started building water channels in order to restore agriculture to the dried land. For this construction work former soldiers on both American and Taliban sides were employed. They worked together to build the water channels which made it possible for many farmers to return from refugee camps and live by their own work. Those who had been fighting each other, killing each other before, came to cooperate together to give people life.

### **Reflection**

- The above mentioned story reminds us of the words of the Prophet Isaiah.  
They will beat their swords into mattocks, and their spears into pruning knives; nation will not lift sword against nation nor ever again be trained for war. (*Isaiah 2:4*)
- The Japanese Peace Constitution declares so clearly that the people of Japan do not permit the state to fight with weapons against other countries. This will be the treasure not only of the Japanese people but also of all peoples on the earth.  
Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other forces for war, will never be maintained. The right to belligerency by the state will not be recognized. (*Japanese Constitution, Article 9*)

- National Conferences of Catholic Bishops wrote a letter to the leaders of the G8 nations on June 22, 2009. The following is part of the letter.

Our moral tradition commits the Church to protecting human life and dignity, especially of the poorest, most vulnerable members of the human family. In the face of poor persons the Catholic Church sees the face of Christ whom we serve in countries throughout the world.

- \* We are challenged by our own declaration in the *Call to Solidarity*.

Called to solidarity with all Creation, we are ready, personally and communally, to risk all we are and all we have for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ.

### ***Pause for Quiet Reflection and Prayer***

#### **Action**

How might we live out our commitment to peace, to shalom? Some actions to consider:

1. Join with others in action to oppose the use of armed force in conflicts.
2. Participate in action to reduce the number of the people living in extreme poverty, and for this, to be ready to let go and choose a lifestyle counter to consumerism.
3. In our ministry of education, spread the truth that peace cannot be brought about by weapons and that not competition but cooperation and sharing are necessary for true peace and happiness.
4. Commemorate International Day of Peace on September 21 and recommit to building peace and healing broken relationships.

### ***Closing Prayer***

Lord, we pray for the power to be gentle; the strength to be forgiving; the patience to be understanding; and the endurance to accept the consequences of holding to what we believe to be right. May we put our trust in the power of good to overcome evil and the power of love to overcome hatred.

We pray for the vision to see and the faith to believe in a world free from violence, a new world where fear shall no longer lead us to commit injustice, nor selfishness make us bring suffering to others.

Help us to devote our whole life and thought and energy to the task of making peace, praying always for the inspiration and the power to fulfill the destiny for which all people were created. (*Prayer for World Peace, 1978*)