



Justice and Peace Scotland

Ceartas agus Sith

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President: Bishop William Nolan

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The coming of Christ brings us hope, and the Church exists to proclaim that hope to the world. There is hope because God does not abandon us to live with our imperfections and our failings – God is with us.

Deep in the heart of every individual is a desire, a longing, a hope for peace. But it is our human failings of greed and selfishness, of pride and arrogance that lead to friction and fallouts, in our families, in our communities, and in our places of work. And when it comes to the international level and the relationship between states, those negative effects of our human weakness and our failings are multiplied leading to violence and to war, to death and to destruction.

Pope Francis tells us that every war is a form of fratricide,¹ because in war we are killing our brothers and sisters, since we all belong to the one human family.

Despite the conflicts in our homes and the wars in our world, the longing for peace lies in the heart of every human being,² including in the heart of those we choose to call our enemies. But peace can only be brought about by building up trust, for mistrust and fear increase feelings of insecurity and lead us to putting our faith in military might and weapons of war. For peace to be achieved we must overcome those baser elements of our human nature that tempt us to dominate and dictate, and to seek retaliation and revenge.

We always begin the New Year by praying for peace, but we must do more than pray, we must actively work to build up peace: to seek reconciliation in our family fallouts and in our disputes with neighbours. We must urge our politicians and governments not to base their foreign policy on a narrow sense of national self-interest, but to respond to the urge that lies in the hearts of their people for peace, and so work for harmony among the family of nations.

¹Pope Francis, Message for 53rd World Day of Peace, 8th December 2019

²Ibid.

There are not two moralities, a private one for dealing with our family and friends, and a public one for countries and nations. There is only one morality and it is based on respecting the dignity of every human being. There is only one human family to which we all belong.

Our hope for peace comes from God, whose Spirit is active in the hearts of all and whose presence enables us to overcome the flaws of our human nature. By our prayer and by our constant effort may the peace which we long for in our hearts become a reality in our world.

With my prayers and best wishes for peace and justice in the coming year,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'William Nolan', preceded by a plus sign (+).

+William Nolan
Bishop of Galloway
President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland Justice and Peace Commission