

Social Justice Week 2025 Bishops' Statement: Let's Build Peace Together!

“My peace I give to you, not as the world gives...” (John 14:27)

These words of Jesus remind us that peace is not merely the absence of conflict, nor something we experience only when the world is calm. The peace of Christ is something deeper, something mysterious, enduring and alive within us even through the storms of life. It is a peace that can remain, even in the face of disagreement, tension and change.

St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) sought to capture that kind of peace in this way: “God is there in these moments of rest and can give us, in a single instant, exactly what we need. Then the rest of the day can take its course, under the same effort and strain, perhaps, but in peace...”

There is a quiet strength in the moments when Christ seems absent. Before His departure, Jesus assured His disciples: “And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). In the silence of the empty tomb and the stillness of our own hearts, we are invited into a deeper trust.

This is the peace of the Risen Christ – a peace that is “unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering”, as Pope Leo XIV described it. It is a peace that does not depend on circumstances but flows from the God, who loves us all unconditionally.

This year marks the final stage of our three-year journey reflecting on peace through Social Justice Week. We began by seeking peace within ourselves, then explored how forgiveness helps us share peace with others. Now, in 2025, we are invited to look outward again – to come together and take up our shared responsibility to build peace in the world around us. Although this may be the last step in a structured focus, the call to peace is never finished. We must continue to walk this path with courage, faith and hope.

True peace is not passive. It is something we build each day through prayer, through kindness, through listening and through action. Every one of us is given opportunities to be peacemakers. Sometimes, this means speaking out against injustice. Other times, it looks like quietly serving someone in need, showing respect when it's difficult or standing in solidarity with those who are suffering. Often, it begins in the quiet moments of prayer, where we allow the Holy Spirit to renew us and guide our hearts.

This year's theme – Let's build peace together! – reminds us that peacebuilding is not a task for others; it is not something to be left to governments or leaders. It is the vocation of every Christian. Our world needs people who are willing to engage in dialogue, act with compassion, and build relationships grounded in dignity and love. As Pope Francis has reminded us, peace is crafted not with weapons, but with open hearts and outstretched hands.

As we mark Social Justice Week 2025, we encourage you to reflect on the resources offered by Caritas. We invite you to make time in your communities, schools, parishes and homes to talk, to pray and to act for peace. Through small daily choices and courageous love, may we help create a more just and peaceful Aotearoa New Zealand, and world, for the generations to come.

With fraternal blessings,

+Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Auckland, President of NZCBC
+Michael Dooley, Bishop of Dunedin, Vice-President of NZCBC
+Paul Martin, Archbishop of Wellington
+Michael Gielen, Bishop of Christchurch
+John Adams, Bishop of Palmerston North
+Richard Laurenson, Bishop of Hamilton

Social Justice Week 2025 is being celebrated from September 7-13.
Access Caritas' resources here: <https://www.caritas.org.nz/schools/social-justice-week>