

Archbishop Justin Welby joined Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew in the ecumenical prayer and concluding ceremony of the World Day for Peace in Assisi today, along with the representatives from various religions.

During the service Archbishop Justin, Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew each gave a meditation on the theme of peace.

*Read the Archbishop's meditation on Isaiah 55:1-6:*

We are those who live in a world which struggles to distinguish between what something costs and what it is worth. So powerful is this trend that we face Christ and seek to put a price on grace. He responds with infinite love and mercy – and with a command that seems irrational when we first hear it. He says to us, who think ourselves rich, that we are to receive freely from him.

The reason for his offer is that, in God's economy, we are the poorest of the poor; poorer than ever because we think ourselves rich. Our money and wealth is like the toy money in a children's game: it may buy goods in our human economies that seem so powerful, but in the economy of God it is worthless. We are only truly rich when we accept mercy from God, through Christ our Saviour.

Our imaginary economy, which we treat as real, not only deceives us – as the prophet says – into spending our worthless money on things that do not satisfy; but it drains our energies in the pursuit of illusions.

Look around us at Europe today and hear the truth of the words that God speaks to us. The greatest wealth in European history has ended in the tragedies of debt and slavery. Our economies that can spend so much are merely sandy foundations. Despite it all, we find dissatisfaction and despair: in the breakdown of families; in hunger and inequality; in turning to extremists. Riddled with fear, resentment and anger, we seek ever more desperately, fearing the stranger, not knowing where to find courage.



Yet God calls to us in mercy, to each of us and all of us together. He offers wealth that is real and will bring satisfaction. He calls for us to listen, to eat, to come, to trust.

We are to listen. How do we hear God? So often in the mouths of the most helpless and the poorest. Jean Vanier of L'Arche tells us that those with great disabilities speak powerfully of hope, of purpose and of love to those who think they are strong.

He calls us to eat. We eat above all in the Eucharist, in sharing the body and blood of Christ, so that we can feast. To eat with God is to have more than enough, so that we become people of generosity in a hungry world – of abundance that overflows.

He calls us to come. One of our great poets in England, George Herbert – a clergyman – starts a poem about the mercy of Christ, "Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back ..." We draw back because we do not believe that mercy, that love so freely given, is for us. Our sins cry out, but Christ cries louder, "Come ..."

And we are called to trust. To trust that God's mercy in Christ is enough. To trust that when we listen, eat and come we will be nourished as he promises. It is a calling constantly in need of renewal.

We need to be reminded daily of our poverty in spirit, to thirst for the riches of God's mercy. We are all to drink daily of that mercy in order to overcome our sin and anger, and to bear mercy to others.

Isaiah ends this passage with a great picture of all nations coming to the one – to the people, the church, the nations that have listened, eaten, come and trusted. The nations are drawn because the illusion of wealth is replaced by the reality of peace and love. Because when we receive mercy and peace we become the bearers of mercy and peace.

That is where we end, as those who carry mercy from God through Christ to all humanity in actions that reveal mercy. Sant'Egidio's work in Mozambique and around the world is a sign of what is possible when Christ's mercy flows through us. We are to be those who enable others to be merciful to those with whom they are in conflict. We are called to be Christ's voice to the hopeless, calling, "Come to the waters" in a world of drought and despair; giving away with lavish generosity what we have received in grace-filled mercy.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

4 min read

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