

**Chaplain's Assembly – Father Philip Murphy SSC  
13<sup>th</sup> November 2014  
“Peace”**

**Reading: John 14:23-27**

**A narrated version of this talk as a PowerPoint presentation can be found here:  
<http://youtu.be/5eaH-vzRDVA>**

When it comes to Peace, it seems as if we are, if you excuse the phrase, “fighting a losing battle”.

Each day the newspapers, the radio and television news and the online media all tell us about conflicts of one sort or another.

According to the website “Wars in the World” dot com, this map shows the current conflicts which are taking place as of yesterday.

Very often you will find people who say that the main cause of war is religion. It is a statement and an argument which is repeated by so many people, but without any real evidence to support it. So I think it is important at the start of my talk today to check the facts.



The Encyclopaedia of Wars by Charles Phillips and Alan Axelrod lists just over one thousand seven hundred wars through human history. Of those wars just 123 can be said to be religious wars, whilst 1,640 are non-religious.

The same is true when we look at the number of people who have been killed as a result of war. Seven non-religious dictators in recent history have been responsible for the killing of over 122,064,000 people. (R. J. Rummel's work *Lethal Politics and Death by Government since 1917*. Transaction Publishers 1990.)

Certainly religions have sadly had an involvement in war and have made some serious mistakes in the past and today. However, a central message of all of the world's major religions is that of Peace.

As Archbishop Paul reminded us yesterday in his talk, Jesus, who is known as the Prince of Peace, said that those who are the Peacemakers are blessed. For they will be called the children

of God. (Matthew 5:9). In our reading this morning Jesus speaks of the Peace which he brings to the world.

How can we achieve this peace? Many of you here will quite rightly have an ambition to change the world – and you should have that desire. You will want to make your mark also on the future of Hong Kong, and it is healthy that you do. But again, in one of the story's he told us yesterday, Archbishop Paul reminded us that the way to change the world begins from within. It begins with changing ourselves, in order that we may be able to change those around us and the world through work, perseverance and sacrifice.

There is no better place for that journey to begin than in a College such as this. For education is the fuel which assists us on the road to peace. It is only when we learn about the history of people, their hopes and desires and to break down the barriers which divide us that we can begin to work towards peace.

Kofi Annan, one time Secretary General of the United Nations said: "Education is, quite simply, peace-building by another name. It is the most effective form of defence spending there is."

Malala Yousafzai, the 17 year old girl from Pakistan who was shot two years ago on her way to school and is now the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize said: "Let us pick up our books and our pens, they are the most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world."

This idea is echoed in the words of Nelson Mandela when he said: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

And American Poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Peace cannot be achieved through violence, it can only be attained through understanding."

After all, as Nelson Mandela also said: "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

As I said, Jesus Christ is called the Prince of Peace. But his entry into the world as a man was not one of a conqueror on a horse. Instead, he was born into a humble family and educated by them and lived under their authority. He lived within the family for thirty years before beginning his ministry and work. He prepared himself and those closest to him, before he began to prepare his chosen Apostles and then, through his Spirit, the world.

Peace truly does begin in our hearts, in our education and in our homes. Only then can we hope to extend that peace to the world and achieve a lasting peace which comes from God rather than the temporary peace of this world.