Introduction

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" *(Mt 5: 9)*. The countless works of peace, of which the world is rich, bear witness to humanity's natural vocation to peace. In each person, the desire for peace is an essential aspiration and coincides, in a sense, with the yearning for a full, happy and successful human life. In other words, the desire for peace corresponds to a fundamental moral principle, that is, to the right/duty of integral social and communitarian development, and this is part of God's design for the human being. In fact, the person is created for peace, which is the gift of God.

Call to Prayer

Almighty and merciful God, Lord of the universe and of history, all that you have created is good and your compassion for human errors is infinite. Today we come to you to ask for the salvation of the world and peace among its inhabitants, away from the devastating waves of terrorism. Restore friendship and instill in the hearts of your creatures the gift of kinship and the disposition for peace. Amen.

Experience

Exactly a week after the protests that led to violence between Brazilians and Venezuelan immigrants, residents of Pacaraima, a northern city of Roraima (Brazil) bordering Venezuela, demonstrated again.

One protest rally was near the bus station, at highway BR-174 which is the gateway for Venezuelans arriving in Pacaraima. This was the location the previous week of a protest by Brazilian residents after an elderly merchant was assaulted and beaten by Venezuelans. The demonstration advanced along the highway where most of the immigrants were crowded, and ended in violence between Brazilian protesters and Venezuelans who were on the street. In just one week, the climate in the city had changed.

Having lived for nine years in Pacaraima, Spanish priest Jesús López Fernández de Bobadilla reported that the growing conflict between Brazilians and Venezuelans is one of the greatest challenges of his life. The parish priest does not trust the apparent calm in the city, because there is still a climate of intolerance against foreigners.

"Apparently there is a calm, but it is a fictitious calm, false, misleading," said the priest. "I do not trust it because violence continues in people's minds. In a few days, nothing has changed. The anger against Venezuelans continues. Apparently, it is hidden, but at any moment it will reappear."

The priest regrets that violence has touched innocent people, such as children. He points out that no measures have been taken to prevent the growth of xenophobia. "This anger should be directed against the passivity of the authorities. I trust that good judgment and citizenship will come back and stop the violence on both sides. Because, on the part of the Venezuelans, there is also violence. They do not comply with our laws; there have been robberies, prostitution, drugs. And it all triggers [violence]," he said. "There were no palliative measures to contain this violence by the authorities or they were very scarce."   *By Débora Brito e Marcelo Camargo, 25/08/2018, Agência Brasil*

Reflection

Our mission is to proclaim the good news as School Sisters of Notre Dame, directing our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent. As he was sent to show the Father's love to the world, we are sent to make Christ visible by our very being, by sharing our love, faith, and hope. (*You Are Sent*, Constitution 4)

We are called and sent to deepen communion with God and among people wherever we are - in every place, in every time, in every situation. The values, attitudes, and virtues that foster oneness in our faith community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, are the same by which we promote unity among all people. As the desire of Jesus that all be one becomes more fully our own, our striving for unity embraces all humanity and the whole of creation. (*You Are Sent*, Constitution 9)

I leave you peace; my peace I give unto you. I do not give it as the world gives it. Let not your heart be troubled, nor be afraid. *(John 14:27)*

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. *(Matthew 5: 9)*

Therefore, let us strive to promote all that leads to peace and mutual edification. *(Romans 14:19)*

And the peace of God, to whom you were also called in one body, shall rule in your hearts; and be thankful. *(Colossians 3:15)*

- What do these texts tell me? Do I see myself as a person who builds dialogue and peace? What gift do I need to cultivate?
- What kinds of violence do we face where we are? How can we collaborate as SSND in building peace? What paths can be used as a province?

Action

- Deepen within groups, schools, and associates the awareness of the struggle against violence in all its forms. (xenophobia, discrimination, etc.)

- Make a concrete gesture of closeness to someone difficult to relate to.

- Find creative ways to educate for dialogue and peace.

Closing Prayer

Now, Lord, come to our aid! Grant us peace, teach us peace; guide our steps in the way of peace. Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to be artisans of peace. Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace. Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace; enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister. Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace, our trepidation into confident trust, and our quarreling into forgiveness. Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way may peace triumph. Amen.

Pope Francis, Invocation for Peace, 8 June 2014