



What is a Peacemaker?

Blessed are the Peacemakers
Session by Fr. Anthony Perkins - [Leader Packet](#)
Originally written for Great Lent Giveaway 2015

Objective: To provide youth with the basic understanding of a Peacemaker in reference to the Beatitudes.

Needed Items:

Handouts for opening activity
Copies of Participant Worksheets

Opening Prayer: Being that Great Lent has begun you could choose to have your first discussion following one of the weekday services. If choosing the weekend, perhaps plan to cook a lenten meal together. [Recite Together](#)

Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian

Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power and idle talk. But rather, grant unto me thy servant, the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love. Yes Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins and not to judge my brother for blessed are you to the ages of ages. Amen.

Opening Activity: Handout the opening activity. For larger groups allow the participants to break into small groups. For smaller groups work alone or in pairs. Give them a set time to match the "people" with their trait.

When completed - have someone read from Matthew 5: 1 - 12. Allow time for them to discuss which ones they had correct and those they missed. Then continue in your own words, "*What are these called?*" You are looking for - The Beatitudes. "*Good, now let's see what our Lord means by Blessed are the Peacemakers.*"



Then Jesus Christ said; "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." (St. Matthew 5:9) *Either have the participants read the following out loud or to themselves.*

We sing this every Sunday as part of the Beatitudes (sung during the Little Entrance, when the clergy process to the Holy Doors with the Gospel), but what does it mean? [Allow some time for discussion.](#) Then continue with the reading.

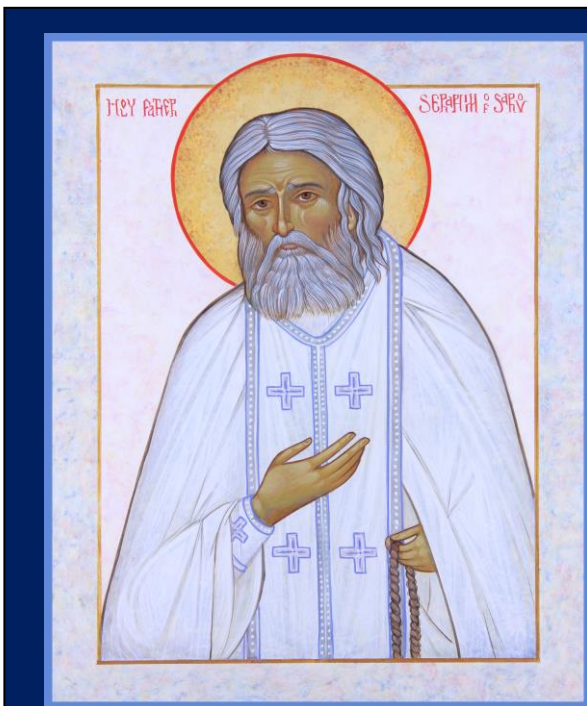
Let's start with the promise being made: the Son of God is telling us that if we bring peace to this world, His Father will adopt us as His sons and daughters! Imagine that: God has more riches and power than any billionaire or king, and He wants us to be His heirs (e.g. Romans 8:17)! He wants to give us a special inheritance (e.g. Colossians 3:24)! This as an incredible reward for doing something that should come naturally: bringing peace to the world!

But what is a peacemaker?

The peacemaker is more than just someone who acts to resolve disputes; peacemakers bring peace to those around them but because they have become peace themselves. The ministry of the peacemaker is more a “ministry of presence” than a “ministry of counseling”. As Fr. Thomas Hopko put it, the peacemaker “bears witness by his own peace in the midst of conflict.” (“Peacemakers” in *The Orthodox Faith, Volume 4 on Spirituality*). This means that you don’t have to have a special college degree, seminary training, or title to do it; it is a job that all of us can do, a job that all of us are supposed to do. We are called to be peacemakers just as we are all invited to become children of God!

What is unique about Orthodox Christian peacemakers?

Everyone sees the terrible damage that violence – be it physical, mental, or spiritual – does to people. We all know that we need to replace it with something different. While some of the strategies are common to all cultures and religions (to include secular and atheist ones), not all approaches are equally useful. For example, people from all cultures and religions might agree that patience, empathy, and diplomacy are useful techniques for defusing someone’s anger, but such “universal” approaches cannot replace the negative energy of anger with the positive energy of real peace. Orthodox Christianity is. **Allow time for discussion. Ask the group, "Can you think of any Orthodox Christians that were peacemakers? What do we know about them?"** If they are unable to think of someone, mention - St. Seraphim of Sarov or ask if they new about Archbishop Iakovos and his participation in the march for civil rights as depicted in the new movie Selma.



Peace as a Positive, Powerful, and Personal Energy

Peacemaking is about more than just eradicating anger and violence; true peace is a positive force that transforms the space around it. Peace is not an impersonal force like gravity; its energy flows continually from the Triune God. Humans have access to it through their relationship with Jesus Christ (“Prince Peace” – Isaiah 9:6) and the Holy Spirit whom He sends. God established Holy Orthodoxy to give everyone the opportunity to have the most complete relationship with Christ possible, to the point that they can join St. Paul in claiming “it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me!” (Galatians 2:20). When someone has Christ living within his heart, the grace that continually flows continually from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit radiates from him as well. This is why St. Seraphim of Sarov is able to claim; “acquire the Holy Spirit and thousands around you will be saved.” St. Seraphim is not suggesting that these “thousands” will be saved by the Christian’s words, but that they will be transformed by the power of God working through his very presence.

But it gets even better than that: God has told us that He operates most completely within this world when we gather together in His name. The grace He provides through His Church (what we call it when we are together) transforms water into an element of spiritual renewal, oil into a salve of spiritual healing, and bread and wine into the meat of our salvation. That same grace can renew troubled marriages, heal communities devastated by war, and transform victims and murderers into bearers of Christ Himself.

Ask the participants, *"Have you ever known someone who has a positive "energy" around them - someone who is "chill"? Why do you think this is so? Do they meet some of the criteria we just read about?"*

In summary, the active power of peace radiates from God, even when He is in the world. It radiated from Him when he walked the Holy Land two thousand years ago, it radiates from Him as He lives in every Christian's heart, and it radiates from His living body, the Church.

A Caveat: The Peace of Christ Stirs the Passions of Those Who Reject Him

It is an unfortunate fact that not everyone responds to the grace of God in a way that leads them towards holiness and peace. We read in the Gospels how some people hated the "Prince of Peace" so much that they were inspired to commit violence against Him and His followers., even to the point of scourging Him and torturing Him to death on the cross. We are promised no greater fate on this earth than our master (John 15:20). *In your own words: "We are currently in the Great Fast. to Christ during Holy Week?" Allow time for responses. "How did Christ respond when he was verbally accused, beaten and spit upon?" Allow time fore responses. "Christ is our ultimate example, as in everything, of a Peacemaker." Continue with the reading.*

When we bring God's grace to those around us (along with the patience, charity, and long-suffering love that this grace brings us) most of our neighbors will eventually give up their demons ... but some will be inspired to greater passion and violence. In the same Sermon on the Mount in which Christ said; "blessed are the peacemakers...", He also said; "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ... Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven." (Matthew 5:10 & 12a)

We are called to bring the power of peace to bear in this world. The results will be mixed as long as the world is contaminated by demons and sin; but the victory of peace is assured and all who served Christ in His ministry of peace will receive eternal blessings as "Children of God."

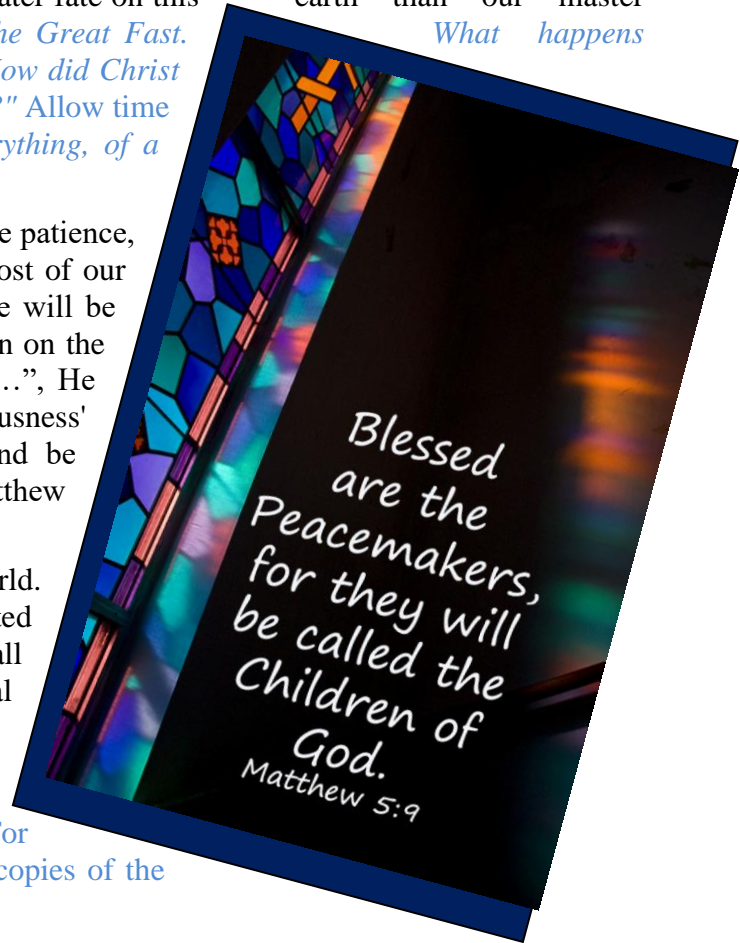
At this point allow time for open discussion on the topic. For additional reference points, you may have prepared printed copies of the following:

Orthodox Perspectives on War, Peace and Violence by Fr. Philip LeMasters

<http://www.incommunion.org/2011/03/31/orthodox-perspectives-on-peace-war-and-violence/>

The Beatitudes - Peacemakers from Spirituality Vol. IV by Fr. Thomas Hopko

<http://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/spirituality/the-beatitudes/peacemakers>



"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Who are these? Those who imitate the Divine love of others, who show forth in their own life the characteristic of the Divine energy. The Lord and Giver of good things completely annihilates anything that is without affinity and foreign to goodness. This work He ordains also for you, namely to cast out hatred and abolish war, to exterminate envy and banish strife, to take away hypocrisy and extinguish from within resentment of injuries smoldering in the heart. Instead, you ought to introduce whatever is contrary to the things that have been removed. For as light follows the departure of darkness, thus also these evil things are replaced by the fruits of the Spirit: by charity, joy, peace, benignity, magnanimity, all the good things enumerated by the Apostle (Gal 5:22). How then should the dispenser of the Divine gifts not be blessed, since he imitates the gifts of God and models his own good deeds on the Divine generosity?

But perhaps the beatitude does not only regard the good of others. I think that man is called a peacemaker par excellence who pacifies perfectly the discord between flesh and spirit in himself and the war that is inherent in nature, so that the law of the body no longer wars against the law of the mind but is subjected to the higher rule and becomes a servant of the Divine ordinance.

– St. Gregory of Nyssa / The Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes, Ancient Christian Writers series, Newman Press

Wrapping it Up!

Complete your session in prayer or perhaps together in one of the Divine Services. If needed, take some time to discuss the Great Lent Giveaway project. Share a Lenten meal together - a good fellowship project would be to teach the participants how to prepare some simple and tasty Lenten food and then share them together.

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Blessed are...

Place the correct attribute with the "Blessed" individual(s).

For they shall be comforted

For they shall be called the sons of God

For they shall be filled

For they shall see God

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven

For they shall obtain mercy

For they shall inherit the earth

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Blessed are the poor in spirit, _____.

Blessed are those who mourn, _____.

Blessed are the meek, _____.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, _____.

Blessed are the merciful, _____.

Blessed are the pure in heart, _____.

Blessed are the peacemakers, _____.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, _____.

Extra!!

What are these known as? _____

When did Christ give them to the people? _____

