Meditation on the Need and Desire for PEACE
Provincial Council Meeting, April 22, 2026

"Peace be with you!" This ancient greeting was infused with new life on Easter evening from the lips of the risen Jesus. "Peace be with you." **(*Jn* 20:19, 21)** It is his Word that does not merely desire peace, but truly brings about a lasting transformation in those who receive it, and for all humanity. For this reason, we give daily voice to the most silent of revolutions: "Peace be with you!" This is the peace of the risen Christ – a peace that is unarmed, disarming, humble, and persevering.

The contrast between darkness and light is not only a biblical image describing labor pains in a new world being born; but an unsettling experience affecting us amid trials in today's world. To overcome darkness, we must seek the light and believe in it. As Jesus' disciples, we are invited to live this call in a unique, privileged way, entering into every human heart. Peace exists; it wants to dwell within us. It has power to enlighten and expand understanding; it resists and overcomes violence. Peace is a breath of the eternal. To evil we say 'Enough,' to peace we say 'Forever.'

Just before being arrested, Jesus said to his disciples: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives." He immediately added: "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" **(*Jn* 14:27)**. The peace of the risen Jesus is unarmed, because his was an unarmed struggle of concrete historical, political, and social circumstances.

Goodness is disarming. This is why God became a child. The mystery of the Incarnation, reaching its deepest descent, even the realm of the dead, began in the womb of a young mother, revealed in the manger in Bethlehem. "Peace on earth," sing angels, announcing the presence of a defenseless God, whom humanity discovers itself loved only by caring for him **(cf. *Lk* 2:13-14)**. Nothing has the power to change us as much as a child.

Great spiritual traditions and right reason teach us to look beyond blood ties, ethnicity, or groups accepting only those similar and rejecting those *different*. All believers must refute these forms of blasphemy profaning God's holy name. We must cultivate prayer, spirituality, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue as paths of peace and ways of encounter. It is hoped every community will become a 'house of peace,' to defuse hostility through dialogue, where justice is practiced and forgiveness is cherished. ***Excerpts from Pope Leo XIV, Message: World Day of Peace 1.1.2026***

Reflection Questions:

- What forms of 'peace-making' can we encourage in our ministries and communities?
- How do we balance promotion of peace and justice goals amid apathy and divisive rhetoric?
- How well has US Bishops' call for monthly "Holy Hour for Peace" taken hold in our ministries and local communities? If not, what can we do to encourage participation?

"Let us pray for reconciliation where there is division, for justice where there are violations of fundamental rights, and for consolation for all who feel overwhelmed by fear or loss." USCCB 2026