

MYSTAGOGY

Offering a Sign of Peace

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA

*Lord of life,
you invite us to dwell
with you in joy
and to prepare for
that blessed eternal life
by living in peace
with all our brothers
and sisters.
Make us your
instruments of peace
in this world.*

Recall the Easter Vigil

After praying the Lord's Prayer and before coming forward to receive Holy Communion, the assembly exchanged a Sign of Peace.

Probe the Mystery

There are not many who actively promote or who enjoy discord, disorder, and violence in their lives. Perhaps sociopaths, or others who feed off the suffering and pain of others, want violence and discord to abound.

Most of us, however, avoid violent behavior and do not actively seek out nasty confrontations. When we do confront others, we try to do it in as healthy a way as possible so as to promote good relations and smooth workings.

Upon meeting others for the first time, we offer them our hand in peace, as a token that whatever the future holds for our relationship may be smooth and untroubled by violence or mayhem.

What have you learned—through your own experience or through books, other resources, or other people—about healthy confrontation and how to manage situations of conflict at work or in the home?

Savor the Sweetness of Salvation

Every Mass includes the Sign of Peace. We are called to be a people of peace, to make peace with God and with others. Violence in word or action disfigures the beauty of God's creation and the Creator's intent in making the things of this world and us.

The Sign of Peace at Mass symbolizes our calling. It can be a word or silent gesture, a kiss (to a family member), an embrace, or a handshake. It does not take up much time in the course of the Mass and it is a relatively simple gesture, but it speaks volumes.

Peace is Jesus' farewell gift to his disciples at the Last Supper (see John 14:27-29). The priest celebrant, as he invites the assembly to exchange the Sign of Peace, quotes Jesus' words. He refers to Jesus' farewell gift and invites us to exchange a gesture symbolizing our peacefulness, because peace and unity are signs of the Kingdom of God, healthy signs that we encourage in one another as we are about to receive Holy Communion.

And so, to calm their grief, [Jesus] says [to the disciples] that as long as he remains with them the Spirit won't come, which means they wouldn't come to know the greater or more sublime things to come. He wanted them, in other words, to see his departure as a blessing. . . . And since they were still troubled . . . he calms them again by saying, "Peace I leave you."

Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 75.3:
NPNF 1 14:276

Inspire Others

Is there someone you know who could benefit from an "island of calm" or a bit of peacefulness in an otherwise chaotic or difficult life? Invite that person out for lunch or a visit to the local coffee shop. Lend a sympathetic ear or simply provide a "space" in which to relax.