



One hundred years later – It's Canada's time to lead

One of the most eloquent summations of the First World War came from Pope Benedict XV, who witnessed the conflict and called it “the suicide of civilized Europe.” As Canadians prepare to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the fighting, we should all recommit to memorializing the terrible decisions and actions that have led to war throughout our history. These include the destruction of people, families and communities caused by war, and the psychological and physical wounds that mar people and communities today because of armed conflict.

Peace is a paradox. On the one hand, peace is a gift of the Creator. We cannot, on our own, earn peace. Yet our strongest moral imperative is to love one another. So, on the other hand love is the driving force that builds peace in ourselves, our families, our communities, our country and the world.

Remembering the terrible cost of war must galvanize us to build peace together in love through concrete, practical ways. We must sit and converse with those touched by war, see and acknowledge their visible and invisible wounds; recommit to community volunteering, civic education, and informed voting. We should also work for justice – that is healthy and restorative relationships among people and nature where there is no fear – since there can be no peace without justice. If peace is to be the heart of community, then justice must be the way of all people and communities, with or without government leadership and support.

We call on the Government of Canada to lead in love at home and abroad by ratifying the United Nations (UN) Arms Trade Treaty and signing the UN's Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons. The arms trade fuels conflict and must be curtailed rather than promoted. Ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty will strengthen Canadian resolve to build an economy where the fruits of our commerce do not become a curse on the peoples, economies and land of others. The United Nations Arms Trade Treaty will hold us accountable to human rights standards that can prevent the growth of conflict and safeguard the protection of oppressed or innocent communities.

Nuclear weapons are too destructive to the Earth and all human communities to even contemplate their use as a deterrent or as a weapon of war. Therefore, their possession by anyone or any state must be prohibited and each and every one destroyed. Canada, a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member state, can clear the path for other countries to join the movement and further isolate those countries who persist in their possession of such destructive power.

When we wear the poppy – a symbol of the flowers growing on the graves of those who fought and died in all horrific wars – may our love and gratitude for peace be sparked anew.

When the bells toll and we stand in silence on November 11th, may our hearts be burning with love that transforms conflict, stands with those who are left out and left behind, and leads us on the shared path of reconciliation, of walking one another home.

For more on Principles of Peace, visit www.councilofchurches.ca.

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