

International Day of Living Together in Peace

One cannot help noticing that there is to be a major national event tomorrow, and a happy one at that: a royal wedding. I am also reliably informed that there will also be an important football match, which will be a happy one for the winning team and its supporters, though not perhaps for the other side. It is good to have such high profile events when people can enjoy themselves and be free, if only for a short time, from the often depressing news we hear at home and abroad.

Less well publicised this last Wednesday was the International Day of Living Together in Peace, a day established by the United Nations in addition to the International Day of Peace in September which we always mark here. We cannot have too many days devoted to focussing on the need for peace.

To quote from the official United Nations website:

“Living together in peace is all about accepting differences and having the ability to listen to, recognize, respect and appreciate others, as well as living in a peaceful and united way.

The UN General-Assembly ... declared 16 May the International Day of Living Together in Peace, as a means of regularly mobilizing the efforts of the international community to promote peace, tolerance, inclusion, understanding and solidarity. The Day aims to uphold the desire to live and act together, united in differences and diversity, in order to build a sustainable world of peace, solidarity and harmony.

The Day invites countries to further promote reconciliation to help to ensure peace and sustainable development, including by working with communities, faith leaders and other relevant actors, through reconciliatory measures and acts of service and by encouraging forgiveness and compassion among individuals.”

The aims of this day echo so closely the threefold mission of the Community of the Cross of Nails to heal the wounds of history, to learn to live with difference and celebrate diversity, and to build a culture of peace.

Few would deny the overriding need for peace in our world today, except those who take advantage of conflict to fulfil their own ambitions or for some misguided ideology. And it is of course a goal specifically proclaimed in the Christian gospel, the good news of love and of peace. In our reading just now (Romans 15.4-7, 12-13) we heard how St Paul encouraged the Christians in Rome to live in harmony with one another. That was addressed to a Christian community but it has a much wider, global application.

And so we continue to offer to God prayers for peace and reconciliation, as we do each week, in faith and in hope.

Kingsley G. Boulton
18th May 2018