

Peacework:

Intro

- Anything that has struck you since our last meeting/any new insights or reflections you'd like to share?

Breakout Rooms

- What stood out to you in this chapter?
- Key themes/quotes/passages?

Overview of Chapter

'A peacemaker prays' p.25 – this chapter as core in rooting peace within spiritual practice, through prayer. Prayer being 'the beginning and the end, the source and the fruit, the core and the content, the basis and the goal of all peacemaking' p.25.

Speaks of peace as '**divine gift**' that 'we receive in prayer' p.26 Linked to Jesus' 'farewell discourse' to the disciples in John 14:27 – 'Peace I leave to you, my own peace I give to you; a peace the world cannot give...' = need to move into a sphere in which we can receive this peace i.e. away from the places that hate peace, and towards place of encounter with Jesus = prayer.

Starting place of peace then, begins with ourselves. 'Wounds and Needs' – our need to be recognised, praised etc. even when trying to do good - often rooted in our wounds – maybe past experiences of being ignored, unappreciated etc. Doubts about our own self-worth, which mean go looking for self-esteem/love in places that not necessarily safe – and which can lead to actions which cause suffering, hurt, violence – even if we think we are doing good.

- *'If we cannot see the dark works of conflict and war in our own daily lives, we will never fully understand the cruelty, torture, and mass murder that fill the pages of our newspapers day after day' p.30.*
- *'Though it may be easy to recognize the forces of darkness around us, it is very hard to recognize these same forces in our own "good works"'. Rather 'Only when we are willing repeatedly to confess that we too have dirty hands, even when we work for peace, can we fully understand the hard task of peacemaking' p.30.*

Prayer central here in that invites us in to live in the world without our wounds and needs – brings us into 'new way of speaking... of being together, of

knowing...' p.32. Not just about talking with God – but about ‘moving away from “the dwelling place of those who hate peace” into the house of God’ p.33. In this way see prayer as ‘converting power’ p.27 – drawing us to live with God ‘here and now’ p.33. Place where able to abide as peacemakers in a ‘hostile world’ p.33.

Way that we know that we are loved – as enter into communion with God p.36. Important in moving away from actions rooted in wounds and needs – or rooting peacemaking in basis of fear and anxiety p.35.

- This *‘knowledge of being loved sets us free to look beyond the boundaries of death and to speak and act fearlessly for peace’* p.36.
- The *‘paradox of peacemaking’* then is *‘that we can speak of peace in this world only when our sense of who we are is not anchored in the world. We can say “We are for peace”, only when those who are fighting have no power over us’* p.37.

Prayer not in contrast to action – rather see prayer itself as constituting peacemaking p.38. Part of ongoing conversion process, finding our true selves, entering into house of God’s love – ‘in prayer we die to the self-destroying world of wounds and needs and enter into the healing light of Christ’ p.39. In breaking through ‘boundaries between life and death’ pp.40-41 – gives freedom to ‘stand in the midst of this world without being overwhelmed by fear’ p.41. ‘... it is an act of stripping oneself of everything... so as to be totally free to belong to God’ p.41.

Difficulties of prayer – argues that can feel resistance in prayer as asks us to let go of what is familiar to us/reflect on and change whole way of being. Fundamentally, comes down to desire for control – see this ‘illusion of control’ as ‘the basis of all destructiveness’ p.41. Prayer entering into realization that we belong to God – about entering into truth that ‘we do not belong to this world.... we have already died to it’ p.42 – give up fear of death that leads to need to control, as ‘in God there is no death but only life’ p.43 – world has no power over us.

Not about escape from the world, but about being free to ‘live creatively in it’ p.43 = basis of action – and basis of strength and stability even when ‘tempted to despair’ p.43.

Breakout Room Questions

- What do you make of how Nouwen understands and describes prayer?
- How does this relate to your understanding of prayer?
- How do you see prayer as linked to peacemaking?

- What about in the context of the current news about the Middle East? Is there a role for prayer? What should it be?

'By allowing ourselves quiet time with God we act on our faith that the peace we want to bring is not the work of our hand or the product of movements we join, but the gift of Christ. Entering the special solitude of prayer is a protest against a world of manipulation, competition, rivalry, suspicion, defensiveness, anger, hostility, mutual aggression, destruction and war. It is a witness to the all-embracing, all-healing power of God's love. By not acting under the pressures of those who live their lives as victims of a series of emergencies, but standing quietly "with confidence before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36), we act for peace' p.44.

'... peace in the world cannot be made without peace in the heart' p.46

'... tranquillity of the heart is not a way to "feel good" while the world is ripped apart by violence and war, but a way to come in touch with our being part of the problem. Prayer leads to spiritual tranquillity and spiritual tranquillity leads us to the confession of our sins, the sins that lead to war' p.47.