

Catholic social teaching on peace and conflict

Teacher's notes

Starter

Give each pupil one of the thirty quotations from scripture and Catholic Social Teaching, according to ability.

Give pupils a few minutes to read through and ask for definitions of any unknown words. Pupils then have a few minutes to rewrite the quotation in their own words and think about how it relates to peace-making.

Next, each explains his or her quotation to another pupil, then they swap quotations. These two pupils find another two; all four explain their new quotations to each other.

Each foursome chooses what it considers the most important quotation for peace building, giving their reasons. Foursomes feed back to the whole class.

Record answers on the board. Identify points that illustrate the Church's teaching on why peace-making is essential and what it should look like.

Main session

Explain that projects backed by CAFOD are building peace in multiple conflict situations. Poverty and conflict are closely linked, so CAFOD works in many countries where there is war or violence.

Three inspiring examples are given in the case studies.

Give each group of pupils the conflict situation report of one case study. Groups discuss the causes of the conflict, how they would feel if they were in this situation and what they could do to build peace

Give out the second half of the case study. Pupils read and discuss the questions.

How can we help build peace?

Ask pupils to feed back or write answers to the following questions:

- What steps have been taken to build peace?
- Was there a special role played by the Catholic Church or another faith?
- What scripture or CST is reflected here?

Repeat with other case studies as time allows.

Plenary

Pupils explain how CAFOD's peace-building work reflects scripture and Catholic teaching. They can refer back to the quotations.

Suggestions might include:

- The project workers are committed to peace: Q11: "Blessed are the peacemakers".
- People even risk their lives to build peace and tragically, some are killed. Q18: "we too must shoulder that cross".
- People of various faiths are working together. Q21: "This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves".
- People on different sides are encouraged to talk to each other and be reconciled. Q26: "first be reconciled".
- CAFOD works to relieve the poverty and injustice that can lead to conflict. Q4: "to fight poverty is to build peace".
- Local people who are most affected are involved in decision-making. Q17: "The voice of the peoples affected must be heard".
- CAFOD's work is supported by the prayer of Catholics in England and Wales.

Extension activities

- **Watch the short video on Sudan on our website.**
- **Use the 'Prayer for Sudan' on our website.**
- **Use the 'Builders of Peace' prayer on our website to pray for Colombia.**
- **Visit our country pages for Sudan, the DRC and Colombia to learn more.**
- **Order a fundraising pack to support our work in areas of conflict.**

17. "The voice of the peoples affected must be heard and their situation must be taken into consideration, if their expectations are to be correctly interpreted."

Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 72

18. "(Jesus) taught us by example that we too must shoulder that cross which the world and the flesh inflict upon those who search after peace and justice."

Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 38

19. "Peace is not merely the absence of war. Instead, it is rightly... called an enterprise of justice."

Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 78

20. "Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes."

Pope Francis, quoting the Conference of Dominican Bishops, *Laudato Si'*, 92

21. "The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 201

22. "Prayer, as a means of drawing ever new strength from Christ, is concretely and urgently needed. People who pray are not wasting their time, even though the situation appears desperate and seems to call for action alone."

Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 36

23. "If a mistaken understanding of our own principles has at times led us... to engage in war, injustice and acts of violence... by so doing we were not faithful to the treasures wisdom which we have been called to protect and preserve."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 200

24. "When people witness the denial of their elementary rights, such as the right to food, water, health care or employment, they are tempted to obtain them by force."

Pope Francis, *World Day of Peace 2015*

25. "Various subcultures exist side by side, and often practise segregation and violence. The Church is called to be at the service of a difficult dialogue."

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 74

26. "...if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister."

Matthew 5:23-24

27. "A firm determination to respect other [people] and their dignity, as well as the studied practice of brotherhood are absolutely necessary for the establishment of peace."

Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 78

28. "The common good calls for social peace... which cannot be achieved without particular concern for *distributive justice*; whenever this is violated, violence always ensues." Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 157

Distributive justice = justice for each and all

29. "Injustice, excessive economic or social inequalities, envy, distrust, and pride... constantly threaten peace and cause wars. Everything done to overcome these disorders contributes to building up peace and avoiding war."

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2317

30. "Excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and *militate against* social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace." Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 29

Militate against = make it less likely to happen

1. "All Christians are urgently summoned... to join with all true peacemakers in pleading for peace and bringing it about."

Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 78

2. "No one can cultivate a sober and satisfying life without being at peace with him or herself."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 225

3. "Peace is the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can provide."

Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 78

4. "The truth... cannot be refuted: 'to fight poverty is to build peace.'"

Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace 2009

5. Excessive economic, social and cultural inequalities among peoples arouse tensions and conflicts, and are a danger to peace.

Saint Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 76

6. "Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities."

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 250

7. "In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things... making peace by the blood of his cross."

Colossians 1:19-20

8. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Matthew 6:12

9. "'Lord, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' ...'I tell you, seventy-seven times.'"

Matthew 18:21-22

10. "We are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty and fullness."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 53

11. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Matthew 5:9

12. "A child has been born for us... and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6

13. "We are called to identify the causes of violence, injustice and warfare and challenge the systems and structures that sustain and maintain them."

Saint Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 98

14. "When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit... resources end up in the hands of...the most powerful... Completely at odds with this model are the ideals of... justice, fraternity and peace as proposed by Jesus."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 82

15. "Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Matthew 6:10

16. "For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us."

Ephesians 2:14

Conflict situation report

More than 60 years of internal armed conflict has affected millions of people in Colombia – especially people from Indigenous, small-scale farming and Afro-Colombian communities.

The conflict between the Colombian government and the then-largest guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), officially began in 1964. In 2016, a historic peace accord was signed between the government and FARC. However, the conflict endures, now increasingly fragmented and complex, involving other guerilla and dissident groups and criminal gangs.



Colombia faces a complex humanitarian situation where natural disasters, armed conflict and their impacts have led to one of the highest numbers of internally displaced people in the world: millions of people have been forced to flee their homes in search of safety.

The Church's path to peace

"I express my closeness in prayer to the victims and their families, and I urge everyone to reject every form of violence and to choose decisively the path of peace." Pope Leo XIV

In April 2026, Pope Leo XIV condemned a surge of violence in Colombia. The Catholic Church continues to play a vital role in peacebuilding, offering support and advocacy in conflict zones reached by few others.

CAFOD has been working alongside communities in Colombia for more than 60 years.



© Building peace with young people/PDP

With your support, we're focusing on addressing the root cause of the armed conflict, building peace and protecting the environment in the midst of conflict, natural disasters and climate change.

We are working with partners to support peace at community level by promoting dialogue, strengthening social cohesion, raising awareness about human rights and land rights, so that the poorest and most vulnerable members of the community participate in decisions on what happens in their territory.

We are supporting partners who are contributing to a culture of peace and the importance of caring for our Common Home. Young people, parents and teachers are learning more about peaceful conflict resolution, how to manage emotions and how to live in harmony with the environment. Peace education is a key element to prevent forced recruitment of children and young people, which is on the rise.

Conflict situation report

Since 1996, conflict in eastern DRC has killed an estimated 6 million people, making it one of the deadliest conflicts in modern history. Despite being the second-largest country in Africa and rich in natural resources like oil, diamonds, gold and cobalt (which is used to make our smartphones), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of the five poorest nations in the world. In 2024, an estimated 73.5 per cent of Congolese people lived on less than £1.73 a day.

Sadly, DRC is currently experiencing a humanitarian crisis due to escalating conflict in its eastern provinces. Over 7 million people are internally displaced.



Hunger, health, climate and economic crises have compounded the injustices faced by Congolese people: 25.6 million people are experiencing emergency levels of food insecurity and an estimated 4.5 million children are malnourished.

The Church's path to peace

"I urge those with responsibilities at both the local and international levels to work together to prevent such tragedies." Pope Leo XIV



Bitita Dany/ Caritas Australia

Recent fighting in the east of DRC has seen rebel groups encircle Goma, take control of parts of the city and block routes for food access. Women and children fleeing the violence have arrived in the city, exhausted from their journey, to find water and electricity cut off and food prices soaring.

The conflict isn't the only challenge facing the DRC. In May 2026 the DRC had to deal with an Ebola outbreak.

The Catholic Church was at the heart of the humanitarian response. In many parts of the DRC, the Catholic Church is one of the most trusted providers of healthcare and operates an estimated 45% of the country's health facilities.

As Bishop Théophile Kaboy of Goma said during the previous outbreak, "the involvement of faith groups ... remains among the best weapons for convincing the people to adopt good practices."

CAFOD's Church partners are deeply rooted in their communities, and have access to remote or conflict-affected areas where other organisations, or even government health officials, struggle to enter.

Despite enormous challenges, the Catholic Church remains a lifeline, present in every province of the country. Through CAFOD's local partner Caritas Congo, and alongside other Church networks, vital aid continues to reach those most in need.

Conflict situation report

Sudan was already one of the poorest countries in the world. Sadly, three years of war have made the situation so much worse. The war has displaced around 9-9.3 million people in Sudan. A further 4.3 million are now refugees in neighbouring countries, such as South Sudan or Egypt. Refugee camps along the White Nile in South Sudan are already at four times their capacity, with 1,000 more people seeking shelter every day.



The cost of war

Sudan has been affected by conflict since April 2023. The fighting is mainly between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The war is not an isolated crisis. The violence is being actively fuelled by a steady influx of foreign weapons and funding, turning what began as a domestic power struggle into a high-stakes proxy war.

The Church's path to peace

"How much the Sudanese people are suffering, innocent victims of this inhuman tragedy!" Pope Leo XIV



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Pope Leo XIV has repeatedly called for peace across the world. On 12th April 2026, he renewed his call for people to stop the fighting, and begin, "without preconditions, a sincere dialogue".

CAFOD are responding to this humanitarian crisis by working with local Church partners and other local experts to provide emergency food, life-saving medical care and safe drinking water.

We are working with religious leaders in Sudan and pushing the UK government to scale up efforts to secure a ceasefire, increase emergency aid and increase funding. In April 2026 we delivered a petition with over 44,000 signatures to Downing Street.



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We've been working in Sudan since 2004 and we will continue to support families to survive, adapt and rebuild. We are at a cusp of making a difference in Sudan. We are not wasting this opportunity but instead demanding more support for civilians in Sudan.