

ADVENT REFLECTION 2016

Week 1: Prepare for the coming of the Lord's kingdom

SCRIPTURE

He will wield authority over nations and adjudicate between many peoples; these will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war.

Isaiah 2:4



FOSTERING A CULTURE OF WAR

On 4 October 2016 Defence Secretary Michael Fallon announced the next wave of 25 school cadet units, taking the government closer to its target of 500 schools across the UK by 2020. This Cadet Expansion Programme was first proposed in 2012 and received over £14 million in its initial phase. In the 2015 Budget the Chancellor of the Exchequer set aside £50 million for phase two, followed by a further half a million in 2016.

Peace activists have expressed concern at the sight of ranks of pupils as young as 12 in military gear and handling weapons, as well as the message this sends.

Find out more here: www.forceswatch.net

BUILDING BRIDGES, NOT WALLS

What sort of world do we want for ourselves and future generations?

A world where bullies and braggarts reign supreme; unchallenged when they mock the disabled, demean and disrespect women, foster xenophobia and racism, threaten immigrants, deny climate change and abuse those who disagree, or a world where love, compassion, respect, tolerance and care for all creation are the model by which we live?

Let us direct our efforts and prayers towards building bridges between communities and groups of all kinds rather than building walls that divide.

Find out more here: www.hopenothate.org.uk

REFLECTION

- *Is there hostility in my local community, especially towards newcomers? Can I help foster peace and harmony?*
- *Do I look out for the stranger and offer friendship and support?*
- *What changes might I make to my current lifestyle to focus more fully on the needs of others?*
- *How might I help those who suffer because of violence and war?*
- *Do I treat everyone with respect and stand up for the rights of others?*
- *Is there tension within my own family? What can I do to resolve it?*

ACTION IDEAS

- Become a member of the Catholic Peace organization Pax Christi www.paxchristi.org.uk
- Find out more about the work of the Campaign Against Arms Trade www.caat.org.uk
- Send a greetings card to a prisoner of conscience www.amnesty.org.uk

NJPN PRAYER

Lord, you call us to discipleship and loving service.

In prayerful response
may we be beacons of your light
where there is darkness;
may we bring hope
where there is despair;
fostering love and compassion
where there is hatred and division.

May we strive at all times to live simply:
finding joy in small things;
content to have less
so others might have more.

Mindful of our responsibility
as stewards of creation,
may we tread lightly on the earth,
respectful of all living things.

Rooted in faith,
may we work together to make
your kingdom of peace and justice
a reality for all people.

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