We are called to peace.

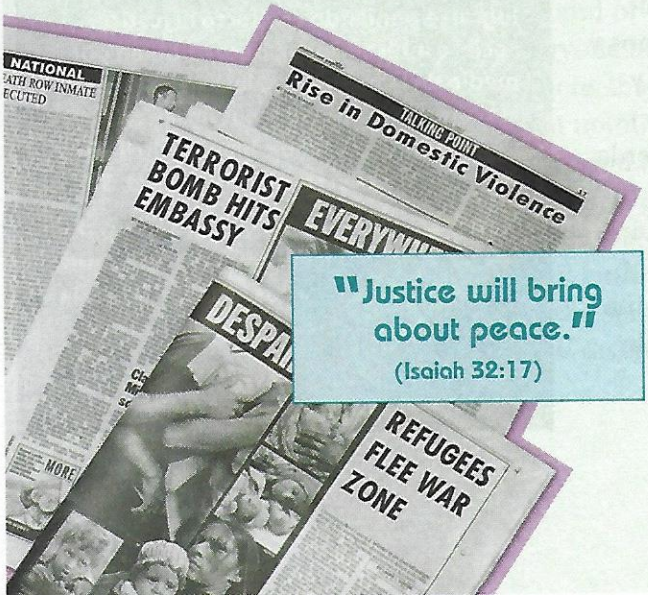
God lovingly wills that all people live in peace. In Scripture we find that God's peace, which is more than just the absence of war and violence, is realized when everyone lives in true harmony with one another and with God's creation. We also find that peace and justice are very closely connected. They are like two sides of the same coin, and both are central to the coming of God's Kingdom.

"Justice will bring about peace;
right will produce calm and security."
(Isaiah 32:17)

As disciples of Jesus, carrying out the mission of sharing God's love and spreading God's Kingdom, we must commit to justice and become peacemakers in every context of our lives. Yet in our society there are many types of violence—all of which contradict peace and are against God's loving will for us. One tragic form of violence is domestic violence. It takes place in many homes today and is particularly condemnable because it violates people where they should be safest—in their own family. At your age, you may not be able to prevent domestic violence, but you should know that it is an assault against human dignity. And if you have witnessed it, you must consciously work never to repeat or allow this type of violence in your life.

As Catholics, we recognize that some forms of violence are always wrong:

abortion The direct termination of the life of an unborn baby is always wrong. The Supreme Court of the United States has legalized abortion, but we must remember that what is legal is not always morally right. We should work to change laws in society that allow abortion.



"Justice will bring about peace."
(Isaiah 32:17)

euthanasia, or mercy killing We can never deliberately kill someone, even in cases of great suffering. Our faith requires us to take ordinary measures to preserve life. A dying patient, however, may refuse "'over-zealous' treatment" (*CCC*, 2278).

murder The deliberate taking of someone's life

suicide The taking of one's own life is an offense against God, who gave each of us the gift of life.

terrorism and related violence that intentionally targets innocent civilians Misusing our political views and personal beliefs to intimidate or attack innocent people is never acceptable.

There are many other forms of violence. Catholic teaching should shape our decisions on these:

war We should always try to use nonviolent means to resolve conflicts. War should be a last resort when other means fail to protect the innocent against fundamental injustice. Our American Catholic bishops have declared, "We do not perceive any situation in which the deliberate initiation of nuclear warfare . . . can be morally justified" (*The Challenge of Peace*, 1983, 150).

the death penalty The *Catechism* states, "The cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity 'are very rare, if not practically non-existent'" (2267).

environmental waste and pollution This is the destruction of those things in creation that God gave us to support life. To pollute the environment is to poison ourselves and to take away the possibilities of life for the generations that will come after us.

scandal "An attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil" (*CCC*, 2284). It is wrong when individuals or groups use their power and influence to tempt others to disrespect life in any way.

Though we realize that we will only experience the fullness of God's Kingdom in eternity, by doing God's will—living in justice and peace—we show that good can triumph over evil, hope over despair, love over hate. In Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, God's grace is active in us, empowering us to live as disciples, doing God's will "on earth, as it is in heaven" (the Lord's Prayer). It is then that we show the world that God's Kingdom is among us!

Activity **Discuss five concrete ways that people your age can work for justice in society, and five ways that people your age can be peacemakers.**