

Session 7: The Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers what biblical *shalom* is, why peacemakers are called sons of God (family resemblance), and how to hold this beatitude honestly next to the Jesus who said he came bringing a sword.

Catholic Touchstone. CCC 2304-2305: peace is the tranquility of order, the work of justice and the effect of charity; earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ.

What You Need to Know

The seventh beatitude blesses makers, not just lovers, of peace. The Greek *eirenopoios* is an active, constructive word: peace in this beatitude is something built, at cost, by somebody. Behind the Greek stands the Hebrew *shalom*, which never meant mere absence of conflict: *shalom* is wholeness, right relationship in every direction (with God, neighbor, creation, self), things set in their proper order. A cemetery is quiet; it is not *shalom*. This is why St. Augustine's definition became the Church's: peace is the tranquility of order (City of God XIX.13; CCC 2304 adopts it). Where order is broken, quiet is not peace, and making peace can require disturbing a false quiet.

The reward is family identification: "they shall be called sons of God." In Hebrew idiom, a "son of" something shares its character (sons of thunder, son of encouragement); to be called a son of God is to be recognized as bearing the family resemblance. And peacemaking is the family business: the Father "was pleased... to reconcile to himself all things, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:19-20); the Son "is our peace" who "has broken down the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14). Note carefully what those verses reveal: God's peacemaking was not conflict avoidance; it cost blood. Whoever makes peace at personal cost is doing the most Godlike thing a creature can do, and heaven says so out loud: they shall be CALLED sons.

Tonight must also face the hard text honestly: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). No dodging. The resolution is in the definitions: Jesus renounces the false peace purchased by abandoning the truth (his very presence divides households, 10:35-36, because truth forces a decision), while giving the real peace the world cannot give (John 14:27). Peacemakers, likewise, are not appeasers: they refuse both the false peace of silence and the false war of hatred, and build the costly middle: truth spoken in love, wrongs addressed, persons reconciled.

Scope the applications concretely: the family estrangement nobody names at Thanksgiving; the parish feud; the workplace cold war; the parish's witness in a polarized country; and the Church's teaching on war and peace (CCC 2302-2317), which begins disarmament in the heart, at anger (5:21-22 will make the same move). Peacemaking starts at the smallest broken order within reach.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Isaiah 9:6-7 names the coming king "Prince of Peace" and promises that "of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end": *shalom* is the Messiah's regime, not a mood. The group discovers this text tonight and should feel its Advent familiarity turn strange and political: peace is what his government produces.

Isaiah 52:7 blesses the feet of the herald "who publishes peace," and Psalm 85:10 gives the program in one line: "Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other." Biblical peace never floats free of righteousness; the two kiss or neither shows up.

Voices of the Church

ST. AUGUSTINE · CITY OF GOD XIX.13

"The peace of all things is the tranquility of order." St. Augustine's definition, forged while Rome's order was collapsing around him, is quoted by the Catechism itself (CCC 2304). Order here is not rigidity but rightness: each thing in its proper place and relation, God first. From this definition everything tonight follows: quiet without rightness is not peace, and restoring rightness sometimes breaks a quiet.

Application (ours, not the saint's): before asking "how do I stop this conflict?", the Augustinian question is "what order is broken here, and what would rightness look like?"

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA · HER LIFE AND LETTERS

St. Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church, spent the last years of her short life as a peacemaker in act: writing letter after letter to popes, princes, and feuding Italian cities, traveling to Avignon in 1376 to urge Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome, and laboring for peace between Florence and the papacy. She teaches, in substance, that peace among Christians is won by speaking the truth with boldness and with love together: never by flattery, and never by hatred.

A woman with no office and no army moved the politics of Europe by refusing both the false peace of silence and the false war of contempt. That is this beatitude with a pen in its hand.

ST. JOHN PAUL II · MESSAGE FOR THE WORLD DAY OF PEACE, 2002

St. John Paul II, addressing the world months after September 11, built his message on a double thesis that gives this beatitude its adult form: no peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness. He teaches in substance that justice pursued without forgiveness curdles into cycles of retribution, and that forgiveness, far from opposing or canceling justice, is what keeps the demand for justice human; real peace requires both, and forgiveness is not weakness but the choice of a strong soul refusing to let evil set the terms.

A pope who lived under both Nazism and Communism, and who forgave the man who shot him, had the standing to say it.

Catechism Connection · CCC 2302-2306; on Christ our peace, 2305; context on legitimate defense and war, 2307-2317

CCC 2302-2303 begins peacemaking where the Sermon does: in the heart, with anger and hatred. CCC 2304 defines the goal (peace is not merely the absence of war... it is the tranquility of order, the work of justice and the effect of charity) and 2305 names its source: earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ, who "is our peace," reconciling us by the blood of his cross. CCC 2307-2317 (leader background) sets the Church's sober framework on war: the strict conditions of legitimate defense, and the arms race and hatred as threats the Church condemns. Peacemaking scales from the examination of conscience to the family table to the nations.

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY)

FACE OF CHRIST (final development, do not reveal): tonight's lines are almost too loud to hide: "he is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14), "making peace by the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20). If someone in the group says it out loud ("these all describe Jesus"), smile and say: hold that thought exactly one more week.

ANAWIM ROOTS (develop): Isaiah 9, Isaiah 52, and Psalm 85 join the root system.

LADDER (descent begins): frame it tonight: Sessions 1-6 climbed to the vision; Sessions 7-8 are the summit

sending us back down, first as builders (peacemakers), then as witnesses (the persecuted). SEALED GUESS: slips in reserve for next week's final ritual.

Session Goals

1. Participants can define *shalom* and Augustine's tranquility of order, and distinguish peace from quiet.
2. Participants can explain "sons of God" as family resemblance, grounded in Ephesians 2:14 and Colossians 1:20.
3. Participants resolve Matthew 5:9 and Matthew 10:34 honestly, without softening either text.
4. Each participant identifies one concrete broken order within reach and a first peacemaking step.

Time Note

90 minutes: Win 10, Read 5, Build 45, Steelman 12, Send 8, Live It + Closing 10. If running short: compress Build 5's CCC survey to the leader summarizing 2304-2305; do not cut Build 4 (the sword text), the group needs to see it faced.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Father, your Son is our peace. We come from houses, parishes, and feeds full of broken order. Disarm our hearts first; then make us instruments, at whatever cost, of the peace you make by the blood of the cross. Amen.

Win: Opening the Circle

Win 1. Describe a place or moment where you have experienced real peace. What made it peace and not just quiet?

Win 2. Where do you tend to keep a false peace: staying silent to avoid conflict? And where do you tend to make war: winning arguments at the cost of persons?

Build: Into the Text

Build 1. Read Matthew 5:9. Jesus blesses peace-MAKERS: an active, constructive word. Behind it stands the Hebrew *shalom*. Build the definition: what is *shalom*, and what is it not?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

Shalom is wholeness: right relationship with God, neighbor, creation, and self; things set in proper order. It is not mere absence of conflict (a cemetery is quiet), not appeasement, not conflict-avoidance. St. Augustine's definition, adopted by CCC 2304: peace is the tranquility of order. Where order is broken, quiet is a painted-over crack, and making peace may first require disturbing it.

Build 2. DISCOVERY. Read Isaiah 9:6-7. What is peace's relationship to government and to justice in this text? What does that do to a purely private, inner-calm definition of peace?

Leader cue: Live discovery: the Prince of Peace text they know from Advent, read with adult eyes.

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

The child is named Prince of Peace, and peace INCREASES with his government, established "with justice and with righteousness." Peace here is a regime, the fruit of right rule, not a private mood. Psalm 85:10 compresses it: righteousness and peace kiss. Biblical peace is inseparable from things being made right, which is why peacemaking is work.

Build 3. The reward: "they shall be called sons of God." In Hebrew idiom, what does "son of" mean (recall sons of thunder, son of encouragement)? Then read Ephesians 2:13-16 and Colossians 1:19-20: why does THIS activity earn THIS title?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

A "son of" something shares its character; the title recognizes family resemblance. And peacemaking is the family business: the Son "is our peace," who broke down the dividing wall and made peace "by the blood of his cross." Notice the cost in both texts: God's peacemaking ran through Calvary, not around conflict. Whoever builds peace at personal cost is doing the most recognizably Godlike thing a creature can do, and heaven says so: they shall be CALLED sons. (Romans 8:15-16: in Christ, by the Spirit, the title is not honorary; we cry Abba because we are children in the Son.)

Build 4. Now the hard text. Read Matthew 10:34-36 next to 5:9 and John 14:27. Both are Jesus. Resolve the tension without filing either verse down.

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

Jesus renounces one peace and gives another. The peace he did NOT come to bring: the false peace purchased by suppressing the truth; his presence forces a decision, and decisions divide households (10:35-36). The peace he gives: "not as the world gives" (John 14:27), the *shalom* of right relationship with God, which survives even persecution (next week's session). So the peacemaker's rule: never purchase quiet with truth, never purchase truth with hatred. Refuse the false peace of silence AND the false war of contempt; build the costly third thing.

Build 5. Where does the Church say peacemaking starts? Read Matthew 5:21-24 (just ahead in the sermon) and hear CCC 2302-2305 summarized. Then scale it up: what does the Church say about war (2307-2317, leader summary)?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

It starts in the heart, at anger: the sermon itself moves straight from the Beatitudes to "every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment," and commands leaving your gift at the altar to be reconciled first: reconciliation outranks worship in the queue. The Catechism follows the same path: disarm the heart (2302-2303), define peace as ordered rightness flowing from Christ (2304-2305), and only then treat war, where the Church permits legitimate defense under strict conditions while condemning hatred and the arms race (2307-2317). The scale runs unbroken from your examination of conscience to the family table to the nations.

Build 6. Get concrete. Around this circle: name (without gossip; no surnames, no identifying detail) one broken order within your actual reach: an estrangement, a feud, a cold war. What would a first peacemaking step, costing you something, look like there?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

No key; protect honesty and concreteness. Leader's toolkit for weak answers: the first step is usually one of four: go (initiate contact, Matthew 5:24), own (confess your share first, and only yours), hear (listen before litigating), or bless (pray for them by name daily, which disarms you). Warn against step one being a demand that the other person change. And name the limit honestly: some orders cannot be restored by you (the other party may refuse; some contact is unsafe, see Session 5's steelman); Romans 12:18 gives the scope: "If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all."

Steelman: religion is the problem, not the peace

At full strength, in the voice of its best advocates, because your coworkers hold some version of it: look at the record. Crusades, inquisitions, the Thirty Years' War, Catholics and Protestants burning each other, 9/11 itself: history's bloodiest fault lines run along religious borders. Religion divides humanity into saved and damned, sanctifies tribal hatred with eternal stakes, and makes compromise blasphemy; John Lennon's imagination (no religion, nothing to kill or die for) is just the observation that removing absolute claims removes absolute conflicts. If Christians are blessed peacemakers, why has Christendom fought so much? A serious answer must not begin by minimizing the record.

Press: no whataboutism as a first move, and no pretending the record away. Grant what must be granted; then find what the objection cannot explain.

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

First, grant it without flinching: Christians have waged unjust wars, blessed hatreds, and betrayed this beatitude, sometimes with crosses on their banners; St. John Paul II publicly asked God's pardon for the sins of the Church's children for exactly these reasons, and honesty about it is Catholic, not disloyal. Then examine the thesis. Its causal claim fails the twentieth century: the century's largest slaughters (the Nazi and Communist regimes' wars, camps, and engineered famines) were driven by explicitly anti-religious or neo-pagan ideologies, so removing God demonstrably does not remove the killing; humans weaponize whatever absolute they hold, including race, class, and nation. Second, the objection quietly borrows its own standard from the Gospel: the conviction that peace is normative and holy wars are scandalous is itself the Sermon on the Mount's legacy; pre-Christian antiquity mostly celebrated conquest. Third, the record has a second column the objection omits: the ones who lived this beatitude. Every century of Christian violence also produced Christian peacemakers (a Francis walking unarmed to the sultan; the countless anonymous reconcilers of parishes and families), and the Church's own teaching (CCC 2302-2317) condemns the abuses committed under her name. The honest verdict: the beatitude has been betrayed by Christians and vindicated by saints, and the betrayals are measured, and condemned, by the beatitude itself.

DIG DEEPER

In the Communion Rite the Church prays: "Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you...", and then, when the invitation is given, the faithful exchange a sign of peace before Communion. Its placement can remind us (the connection is ours to draw, not the Missal's stated rationale) of Matthew 5:23-24: seek reconciliation as you approach communion. Next time you exchange the sign of peace, mean it toward the person in your life it would cost the most to offer it to.

DIG DEEPER

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love." A word of honesty about a beloved text: this prayer first appears in France around 1912 and is not found in the writings of St. Francis of Assisi; the attribution grew up later, and the familiar English is one rendering of the anonymous French original. We tell you this because this catalog does not launder citations, and the truth takes nothing from the prayer: it is a profoundly Franciscan-hearted summary of tonight's beatitude, worth memorizing on its own merits. Instrument is the load-bearing word: the peacemaker is not the source of peace but a tool in better hands.

Send: Down the Mountain

Send 1. Which false peace in your life (a silence, an avoidance, a painted-over crack) is this beatitude calling you to disturb, gently, for the sake of real order?

Send 2. Who would be most surprised to receive a peacemaking step from you this week?

Live It This Week

- Memorize Matthew 5:9; recite 5:3-9 each morning.
- Take one concrete step toward one broken order this week: go, own, hear, or bless (see Build 6). If contact is unsafe or impossible, take the fourth: pray for them by name, daily.
- At Mass this Sunday, offer the sign of peace deliberately, holding in mind the person it would cost you most to offer it to.

· Read Matthew 5:10-16 before Session 8: the final session, and the reveal of the thread we have been tracking since night one.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your Apostles, peace I leave you, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity. Make us builders of the order your blood purchased. Amen.

Scripture Memory Verse

MATTHEW 5:9

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 7, in order:

- Matthew 5:9
- Isaiah 9:6-7 (discovery)
- Psalm 85:10
- Isaiah 52:7 (leader background)
- Ephesians 2:13-16
- Colossians 1:19-20
- Romans 8:15-16
- Matthew 10:34-36
- John 14:27
- Matthew 5:21-24
- Romans 12:18
- Matthew 5:44-45 (leader background, returns in Session 8)