

## EDITORIAL

### Peace & A Place at Our Table: February 2010

#### A TABLE TO SHARE

*Over the last weeks my husband and I have been looking for a new dining table. The one that he had built out of the timbers of an old bed had become rickety from many lively shared meals, and has now entered a third - reinforced and abbreviated - incarnation as a hall table.*

Table fellowship is such a strong metaphor that the search for a new table could only be a moral quest.

How might the 2010 World Day of Peace Message guide us?

#### THE MESSAGE

*Each year the Pope issues a message for the World Day of Peace. Because this day is celebrated on 1 January, and New Year's Eve celebrations are very much part of our southern summer holiday rituals, we often miss the moment.*

None the less, seventy people from different parts of the world took part in a virtual World Day of Peace event initiated by *Faith Doing Justice* on Facebook. Each one, wherever they were, undertook to pray, reflect or act for peace on 1 January.

Benedict's message, titled *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*, also marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John Paul II's World Day of Peace Message *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation*. John Paul's message was a landmark because, although it was far from the first teaching document to deal with environmental issues, it was the first to be devoted specifically and exclusively to the topic.

These messages issued to mark a specific day have an ongoing significance and are worth pondering as our new year gets underway. You will find links to the full text of the 2010 World Day of Peace Message on both the peace pages ► and environment pages ► of the *Faith Doing Justice* website.

#### FIVE STARS OF PEACE

*As I read the Message, I was reminded of Pius XII's Christmas Radio Message of 1942 in which he set out five milestones for those who would have the star of peace shine over the world. My old Professor, Cardinal Franco Biffi, called them 'five stars of peace'.*

Five stars of peace shone out for me in the 2010 World Day of Peace Message: stewardship; solidarity; simplicity; sharing; and subsidiarity.

- ❖ We will not have peace unless we remember that we are stewards and carers rather than masters of creation (n 6).
- ❖ Peace depends on our solidarity in considering the needs of the poor and of future generations (n 2).
- ❖ Conflict over resources can be reduced by living more simply in order to reduce our demands and enable others' needs to be met (n 5).
- ❖ For world peace we need to share information, resources and technology (n 8).
- ❖ We all have a part to play in peace building and the protection of creation (n 11).

A simple PowerPoint highlighting these points (with stars made from recycled paper) is available here. ►

## FIVE STARS & THE TABLE QUEST

*How might these five stars of peace – stewardship, solidarity, simplicity, sharing and subsidiarity – guide our search for a new dining table?*

We wanted to make a good environmental and ethical choice.

Good stewardship and solidarity with the poor and with future generations suggested that the table should not be made from unsustainably managed resources. That ruled out cheap imports from places where the ethics of the allocation of timber concessions, the management of forests, and of the production processes, could not be guaranteed.

We favoured local, sustainable products with a smaller carbon footprint.

We favoured products which we could have some way of knowing had been produced by workers in safe, healthy and adequately remunerated circumstances.

*We favoured second hand and recycled options over something new.*

Simplicity and sharing suggested that the new table should be big enough to welcome guests, but not extravagantly priced or sized - or too big for our space!

We favoured charity shops where our purchase would support assistance to the poor or marginalised over commercial for profit vendors.

We would accept something less than perfect, or that we could fix ourselves.

Would we find a table meeting even half of these criteria? I was beginning to have my doubts! None of the fair trade websites I visited listed vendors of furniture in our state. Sometimes we simply have to make the best choice available to us.

*Is there such a thing as a dining table with a 'peace star rating' of five?*

In the end we bought a teak table, with one slightly dodgy leg, from the Barnados second hand shop for less than the price of a new dining chair. Like us, it's lived a bit and has taken a few knocks. I think it was made in the late 70's or early 80's. It was made from rainforest timber in my Mother's country of Malaysia.

Yes, rainforest timber! That's a bit of a dilemma. We certainly wouldn't have bought it new.

It will remind me of the logging issues in South East Asia, and of the struggle of the Indigenous people of Malaysia – the Orung Asli – every time we dine on it.

My husband has already lovingly oiled and restored the table. The leg will never look perfect, but it is sound. By provenance and labour, we feel a connection with it.

Now there is a place at our table for guests once more! We will respect this old tree by giving the table made from it another life rather than allowing it to be cast aside because it is no longer fashionable or perfect.

We may not be fashionable or perfect either, but the One who gives us being does not cast us aside – we are here for a purpose.

Sandie Cornish  
Editor