

Imagine a day when the whole planet was at peace

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The UN International Day of Peace is next week, September 21st. It is a day for rekindling our noblest aspirations. Imagine even a day when the whole planet was at peace. A day when our most attractive power, our capacity to love, was all one could see. A day when not one person was killed by hateful violence. A day when no one was fearful for their loved ones.

To support our deep yearning for safety and peace, there will be interfaith prayers and meditations on peacebuilding.

Through the leadership of 'Calm in the City,' we have been asking folk to consider, in preparation:

"In this moment, what brings you peace?"

My reflection is that, amidst the beauty of spring, what gives me peace is the compassionate work of so many.

This work is real, and so I can truly say, "thankfully, there is more going on than meets the eye."

Thus, also on September 21, through the leadership of Dr. Lynne Reader and her Board there is, in fact, a window into this work – a National Day of Compassion.

The genesis for the Charter for Compassion is Karen Armstrong. At a crucial time in her life, her voice was listened to respectfully, and with words of support.

From that seminal moment, she grew in confidence, and her scholarly gifts flourished. Her contribution thereafter included this Charter, based on the deep wisdom of world faiths.

It points us towards a sorely needed recovery of relational wellbeing, at every level.

Including as people live from the spiritual dreams and visions they have been given

I know this poignantly, as pertaining to the referendum on October 14, soon after UN Peace Day.

It is a dimension thus far missing from public discourse.

I say this because in recent years I have had opportunities to listen to Indigenous leaders of deep Christian faith.

There have been many sharings of dreams and visions. Moments which have encouraged folk to offer a new beginning, so as to 'heal the land.'

For example, when I went to work as a Bishop in northern NSW late last millennium, I was welcomed by a Bundjallung elder with a song of faith. He invited me thereafter into matters of significance, including to offer prayers for healing and peace in places of past massacres.

Years later, I learned from his family that his motivation had come from a God-given dream: he was swimming in a flowing Clarence River. The water was beautifully clear. Then youngsters came swimming to join him. Black-skinned and white-skinned kids, all so happy to be swimming together. He knew the dream was pointing him to his reconciling ministry.

From that he lived, including with me.

There are many such stories. They are wonderfully encouraging. Now is the time to be sharing them.

Another story of thankfulness about that 'more which is going on'?

Prior to the pandemic, as we concluded a Retreat on 'Spiritual Leadership in a time of Crisis,' a German social scientist asked me to help her create a Reflective/Contemplative Space for diplomats, negotiators, and political leaders within the UNCOP's which seek, through the Paris Agreement, to prevent catastrophic climate change.

One thing has led to another. Now there is a wave of prayer, meditation, and advocacy flowing, including in the lead up to UNCOP28 in Dubai, from November 30.

This is coordinated through the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC].

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'Meditation and Peacebuilding' together give us a better future.

Accordingly, and finally, how we educate young Australians as global citizens is also therefore engaging wonderful contributors. Especially so as to offer this deeper wisdom of relational wellbeing. One such is John Hendry.

There really is splendid work happening, even though this may not yet be evident.

John reminds us that a culture, at a moment in time, reflects the history of relationships in that place.

Improving cultures therefore requires fostering relationships that are marked by trust, forgiveness, integrity, hope, and compassion.

John says that, in all his years of this work, everyone agrees that 'giving' underpins all quality relationships. 'Giving' adds meaning and encompasses 'forgiving,' as we manage our mistakes in relationships.

This deep wisdom is universal. It doesn't belong to one party or one faith or one nation.

It reflects what is hoped for on the UN International Day of Peace.

Thankfully, there is more going on than meets the eye!

Hence this sharing to which others might add ahead of UN Peace Day.