

Spiritual Reflection for January 2026

We encourage you to send this reflection out in advance of your meeting and discuss which section(s) struck you for further reflection.

Prepared for you by Monsignor Bianco, Spiritual Advisor to SSVP GTCC, who wishes all the best to you, your families and our Vincentian family; Happy New Year.

St. Bernard says; ‘It’s as if God the Father sent upon the earth a purse full of his mercy’.

We certainly receive the full purse from God, having very recently celebrated the feast of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, marking the World Day of Prayer for Peace. We received the bounty of two marvelous, wise, holy Popes within one year. There is a bounty of words, actions and plans laid out before us.

I want to reflect on the words of Pope Francis and his reflections on peace for 2025. On Jan 1, 2025, Pope Francis wrote these words:

“I think especially of those who feel downtrodden, burdened by their great mistakes, oppressed by the judgment of others and incapable of perceiving even a glimmer of hope for their own lives.”

Pope Francis goes on to show that peace is both personal and social. He highlights the many causes of the lack of peace in our world:

- the international debt of poor nations;
- ecological debt born chiefly by poor countries;
- the vicious forms of financing and competitive struggle for global domination and power;
- the lack of opportunities for sustainable development;
- limited educational opportunities for the majority of people.

The list can be endless, and we can add to it. At the same time, the Holy Father says we need three specific goals for 2025:

- a great jubilee of debt reduction for poor countries;
- a firm commitment to the dignity of human life in all its stages;
- and a Global Fund to eradicate hunger through a fixed percentage of money now earmarked for armaments.

With the arrival of this new year, we can judge how far or how close or even if there has been any movement toward fulfilling these goals. No matter how we judge the past year, we try, albeit “with feeble arms and weak knees (Heb. 12:12), to work together for these longings and this justice.”

As Paul tells us, “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2)”; the message of Jesus is always relevant, even when not acted upon or circumscribed; it will bear fruit. Pope Francis quotes St. John XXIII, who taught us “that peace can only be born from a heart disarmed of anxiety and fear. And then in words that echo the hopes and desires of all people and all Vincentians:

“Disarming hearts is a job for everyone, great and small, rich and poor alike. At times, something quite simple will do, such as a smile, a small gesture of friendship, a kind look, a ready ear, a good deed.”

Home Visitation, Special Works, our relationships with our Neighbours in Need and one another, are all captured and given life in the words of Pope Francis. We also all know what these words and actions mean in our families, in the Church and within the Society.

Pope Leo XIII continues this hope; each Conference, each Council does this work, day by day, in word and deed. Most of us are not rich and powerful - still, we have inspiration, grace and our own rich traditions to bring us step by step, person by person, community by community into the realm of God’s peace on earth.

We have all had challenges this past year; they are not dead ends; they are opportunities to seek new, refreshed and better ways to witness to peace. I am reminded of the words of the first communion hymn we taught to children:

“He brought us to his banqueting table; his banner over me is love”.

We unfurl that banner again and try as best we can to sing with these added words: “his banner over us is Peace.”