

August Lesson Plan: Peace, Reconciliation, and Mercy

Living as Instruments of Peace in the Franciscan Tradition

August focuses on the heart of the Franciscan mission: **to be instruments of peace**, rooted in mercy, reconciliation, and the healing love of Christ. Peacemaking is not passive it is an intentional, daily choice to disarm our hearts and respond with compassion, gentleness, and humility.

This month we reflect on:

- **Conflict resolution rooted in charity**
- **Forgiveness as liberation**
- **Practicing mercy in everyday interactions**
- **Rule, Article 19: living as messengers of peace and bearers of reconciliation**

Key Question:

How do I intentionally bring peace into my daily relationships and interactions?

Opening (5 minutes)

Welcome & Centering Prayer

Place an olive branch, candle, or small bowl of water at the center as a symbol of peace.

Opening prayer:

“Lord, make us channels of Your peace. Quiet our hearts, soften our words, and help us reflect Your mercy in all we do. Amen.”

Scripture & Reflection

Suggested Gospel:

- **Matthew 5:9** — “Blessed are the peacemakers.”
- **Ephesians 4:1–3** — Patience, humility, and unity in the Spirit.

Reflection prompts:

- When have I been the recipient of mercy?
- How does peace begin within my own heart?
- What makes forgiveness difficult for me?

Teaching Content (15 minutes)

A. Franciscan Peacemaking: Rooted in Christ

- Peace is not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of right relationship.
- St. Francis approached every person with openness, humility, and reverence.
- Franciscan peacemaking begins with interior peace — free from fear, resentment, and harsh judgment.

B. Rule, Article 19: Instruments of Reconciliation

Article 19 calls the fraternity to:

- Foster peace and reconciliation in family, work, and society.
- Avoid harsh criticism and sow understanding.
- Be ministers of mercy, especially in places of suffering or division.

C. Conflict Resolution as a Spiritual Practice

Franciscan conflict resolution includes:

- **Listening before speaking**
- **Seeking common ground**
- **Choosing gentleness over defensiveness**
- **Responding with compassion rather than reaction**

Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a decision that frees the soul.

D. Mercy: The Heart of Peacemaking

- Mercy creates room for healing and understanding.
- It moves us from judgment to compassion.
- Even small gestures of mercy can transform relationships.

Discussion

Use any of these prompts:

- Where is God calling me to be a peacemaker right now?
- How do I usually respond to conflict? What might a Franciscan response look like instead?
- What relationship or situation might be asking for forgiveness?

- What does mercy look like in my daily life?

Love in Action: Humility & Hidden Service

✓ **Fast from one comfort for a week** (sweets, social media, unnecessary spending).

Let go of what distracts or pulls your attention from God.

✓ **Practice a daily surrender prayer.**

Release the desire to control outcomes.

✓ **Give a small donation without calculating or overthinking.**

Practice generosity rooted in trust.

Reflect: Surrender & Trust

At the end of each day or week:

- *What fear or worry am I placing before God?*
- *How did the small fast remind me of God's presence?*
- *Where did I notice peace growing within me?*

Monthly Prayer

"Lord, I give You what I cling to."

Practical Application:

Repeat this prayer during moments of anxiety, stress, or conflict.

1. **One relationship or situation** where they will intentionally bring peace.
2. **One forgiveness practice**, such as releasing a grievance or praying for someone they struggle with.
3. **One trust practice** from the Love in Action list.

Encourage journaling or sharing the experience at the next gathering.

Pray slowly:

"God of peace, transform our hearts so we may live as Your instruments of reconciliation. Teach us to let go, to forgive, and to trust in Your loving care. May our words and actions reflect Your mercy each day. Amen."

