

International Day of Peace 2023

On this occasion of International Day of Peace, 21st September 2023, the theme to celebrate the day has been provided by the official website of the United Nation is “Actions for Peace: Our Ambition for the Global Goals”. The Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the United Nations says that the Governments must put their efforts on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. This connotes the need for building a cohesive and resilient community that understands that no one should be left behind in the process of development. This International Day of Peace therefore is a day for spreading the message that every life matters in this world and every opinion as well. The theme of the International Day of Peace is a push for us to recognise how our individual and collective actions can affect and foster global peace. Keeping this ideology in mind, the members of AMAITHI SANGAMAM (Peace Collective) with the partnership of Rotary Club of Salem Smart City (Salem), Salem Stores Jewellers, and Sisters of the Good Shepherd organised a Peace rally and public meeting to create awareness among the public about the need and importance of working for peace in the arena of religion, caste, and gender. Eminent speakers on the subject were invited to deliver speeches on the said subject and sow seeds of change among the people for a sustainable peace.

Mrs. Manjula, Sub-inspector of Police, Rev. Msgr. D. Michaelraj Selvam, Vicar General of the Catholic Diocese of Salem, Mr. Moulavi A. Faizullah Bukhari, Principal of Hadhiya Women Arabic College and Board Member of Tamil Manila Imamgal Peravai, Sister Brahma Kumari Maheswari, Director of Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, Salem, Rev. R. Rajan Daniel, Chairman, CSI Steel Plant Pastorate, CSI Good Shepherd Church, Sr. Rajakumari, Community Leader of Good Shepherd Convent, Salem, and Pastor. Justin Raj, President of Salem Christian Church Protection Committee graced the occasion of the International Day of Peace with their reflection on peacebuilding.

Peace Rally for Awareness Creation

An awareness rally was flagged off jointly by Mrs. Manjula, Sub-Inspector of Police, Salem Town, and three religious’ leaders (Hindu, Christian and Muslim) in Salem city from Natanmai Kazhaga Katitam to YMCA Hall in which students from Sri Sharada College of Education, members of AMAITHI SANGAMAM, religious leaders of different faiths, and Volunteers participated and expressed

their thoughts and commitments in the form of slogans. The messages conveyed through the slogans include that we must create a casteless people, should not discriminate and abuse in the name of social hierarchy, we should not speak less of other religion, practice of religion is the right of every person, in the name of gender women should not be abused in any manner; women should be given opportunities to come up in life and the families and the community have a greater responsibility of upholding the rights of women.

Public Meeting for Discourse

Soon after the rally, the participants gathered together at YMCA hall where the special invitees delivered speeches on the theme of the day. Sr. Rajakumari, Community Leader of Good Shepherd Convent, Salem welcomed the special invitees and the participants. Some of the key messages being shared by the speakers and the through the skit and songs are listed below;

Take Home Messages of the Day

- ☞ India's position on the Global Peace Index stands at 126 out of 163 countries. Among the 26 Asian countries analysed, India was ranked 21st, falling in the decent category of “medium.” However, the reports also indicated India's falling compared to a few of its neighbouring counterparts, such as Bhutan, Nepal, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Maldives, ranking far above India. This needs to be given a serious thought and accordingly efforts need to be taken to improve the peace among the people. The religious have to play a greater role on building a peaceful nation.
- ☞ A Tamil Poet, namely, Kaniyan Poongundranaar who lived in the 2nd century in one of his poems said that "யாதும் ஊரே, யாவரும் கேளிர்" (*yaadhum oorey yaavarum kelir*) which means that “All places are ours, and all people are our near and dear”. This message needs to be understood and lived by all people. It is important to treat everyone equally irrespective of their region, religion, caste or creed. It is important to treat people around you like they are your own kin.
- ☞ Embracing a religion is a Human Right and it is a Right for Everyone. This has been ascertained in the Indian Constitution; Right to freedom of religion is well described in the Articles 25, 26, 27 and 28 of Indian Constitution. Before the State no religion shall be given preference over the other. Citizens are free to preach, practice and propagate any religion of their choice. Religious leaders need to emphasis on this point when someone interferes and interrupts the practice of a religion.

- 👉 Religious leaders have the noble responsibility of guiding the people to build a peaceful community, a peaceful nation, and a peaceful world. It is the responsibility of the religious to build characteristics in each person the thirst for loving one another.
- 👉 A peaceful nation is one where the poor and the marginalised are leading a happy life.
- 👉 Today we are holding the International Day of Peace. This is an indication that the people are living peacefully. People in India is increasingly becoming
- 👉 Tamil Nadu, like India, has been host to peoples of various religions, languages and ethnicities in her long history.
- 👉 Peace of mind, also described as inner calm, refers to an internal state of tranquillity. It is what a person ultimately aspires for, but this has been disturbed over the last few years in India. People are kept under threat for trivial and unscientific reasons. This situation needs to be changed for good.
- 👉 If we have no peace today, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other; we failed to recognise that the other man, that woman, that child is your brother or your sister.
- 👉 In the past, in most of the schools during annual day celebrations interfaith peace was being inculcated into the minds of the children through arts and craft. But these efforts are being stopped in many schools due to affinity with certain ideologies that do not promote universal brotherhood. It is necessary that such good practices that were promoting the interfaith peace needs to be reintroduced and continued.
- 👉 Peace is not found somewhere far away. Peace is found where there is caring. Peace is found when you bring joy to your mother instead of suffering. Peace is found when you reach out and make an effort to understand and embrace someone who is different from you.
- 👉 Forgiveness brings a kind of peace that allows you to focus on yourself and helps you go on with life.
- 👉 The struggle for peace, like the struggle for human rights and humanity, is not one in which, having reached the peak of the mountain, the final goal comes into view. Rather, it should be thought of as the work of generating an uninterrupted and unstoppable flow of commitment that connects and is passed on from one generation to the next. Hence, the members of the AMAITHI SANGAMAM must constantly work together henceforth and undertake activities that would sustain the spirit of oneness standing interfaith peace.

- ☞ No one is born to hate others. In fact, prejudice and discriminatory attitudes are ingrained during the process of growing from childhood into adulthood. Hence, the younger generations who hold the key to creating peace need to be targeted and prepare them to form right and righteous ideologies. At times the younger generations are misguided by certain negative elements and were sent to spoil the peaceful coexistence of people. Peacemakers need to identify people who are getting corrupted by the spoilers and direct them to the right path.

Conclusion

Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development is the 16th Sustainable goal of the United Nations. Building peace, justice, and strong institutions cannot happen in the vacuum. It is the responsibility of every person; each person has a role to play in building peace. Everyone can be engaged in education for peace. It can be as simple as taking the time to talk with the children and young people in our lives, in our homes and communities about the dignity of life and the equality of people. We must never underestimate the impact of such seemingly small efforts.

In this world of technology, the human beings all have turned up as machines; machines that are aimed at producing material wealth which is immaterial for happiness and peace. Parents are often seen as busy persons and they do not find time to talk to their family members. The ever-present use of technology can be a significant distraction, making it difficult for parents to disconnect and focus on their children. This ends of in children taking wrong routes and at time they even do not even care about committing suicide. If we are truly wanting peace in the nation and in the world, let us begin by loving one another in our own families. Caught in a world of technology, people even stopped smiling each other. Mother Teresa says that peace begins with a simple smile. It is time that we all need to start working from the family, then share the smile to the community and to the people around the world. Let us begin the peace journey with a gentle smile.

Documented by

Mr. Sam, Project Coordinator for Peace Mission

&

Mr. Ayyadurai John Aruldass

Partner-in-Mission

Good Shepherd Convent, Salem (Tamil Nadu, India)





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Religious Leaders from different faiths, students from colleges, NGOs Representatives and volunteers join the rally to express their concern for building peace.



In the peace awareness rally, slogans were raised in support of promoting interfaith peace, casteless communities.



Sr. Rajakumari, Community Leader of Good Shepherd Convent, Salem welcomed the Chief Guest, special invitees and the participants from Different Faiths.



Sr. Rani, Sub-Site Director of CHALICE Educational & Community Sponsorship Programme presenting a memento to Sister Brahma Kumari Maheswari, Director of Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, Salem.



Mrs. Manjula, Sub-inspector of Police presenting a memento to Rev. Msgr. D. Michaelraj Selvam, Vicar General of the Catholic Diocese of Salem



Sr. Rajakumari, Community Leader of Good Shepherd Convent, Salem presenting a memento to Rev. R. Rajan Daniel, Chairman, CSI Steel Plant Pastorate, CSI Good Shepherd Church.



Teachers of Sharada College, Salem, are presented with a memento by the Members of AMAITHI SANGAMAM.



Mrs. Karolin Mary, Member of Minority Commission, Salem is honoured with a Plant by the Chief Invitees on the occasion of the International Day of Peace.



"If each of us learn to understand the godliness in each of us, then, there shall be peace in the society", says Rev. Msgr. D. Michaelraj Selvam, Vicar General of the Catholic Diocese of Salem.



Mrs. Manjula, Sub-inspector of Police, Salem Town lighting the lamp as a sign of inauguration of the public meeting on the International Day of Peace.



“A peaceful nation is the one which is compassionate to the people living at the fringe of the society”, says Mr. Moulavi A. Faizullah Bukhari, Principal of Hadhiya Women Arabic College and Board Member of Tamil Manila Imamgal Peravai.



"Brahma Kumaris around the world focus on promoting peace, love, harmony, and respect across diverse communities, transcending all barriers to embrace unity in diversity", says Sister Brahma Kumari Maheswari, Director of Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, Salem.



"Peace is a precondition for human development", says Rev. R. Rajan Daniel, Chairman, CSI Steel Plant Pastorate, CSI Good Shepherd Church.



"Caste culture is a stumbling block for human development", says Pastor. Justin Raj, President of Salem Christian Church Protection Committee.



Moulavi. Shakil Afthar, sang an awareness song that calls for interfaith peace among the people of different faiths.



A play on the relevance of understanding of the differences in faiths and the need for accepting the same was played by the Partners-in-Mission of the Good Shepherd Convent, Salem.

