

**The Middle East has erupted in violence again. Last Sunday Pope Benedict addressed the situation in words you won't hear many Americans say. The pope said, "You cannot re-establish justice, establish a new order and build authentic peace when you resort to instruments of violence." He asked all those responsible to put down their weapons in the name of God. He pleaded with governing leaders and international organizations to help halt the hostilities. He requested an increase in humanitarian aid. Then he said, "I ask that every heart continue to raise the hopeful prayer to the good and merciful God, so that he grants his peace to that region and to the whole world."**

**Many others, on the other hand, say you simply cannot dialogue with Hezbollah. The organization is determined to destroy Israel and the United States. You cannot put down weapons if it means that people bent on destruction will have free reign. We must continue to pray.**

**But we must also continue building examples of peace and justice in our own lives. Violence takes many forms – physical abuse, verbal abuse, and emotional abuse. Whenever we face problems, we may think that violence is the best solution or the only solution. Usually it is not. Usually there are other ways of resolving conflicts besides hurting someone more than they hurt us. Most people are reasonable, and they respond favorably to respect.**

**When we build a society based on truth, justice, love and liberty, our leaders will more easily find alternative solutions to global conflicts. Forty years ago our country pursued nuclear nonproliferation. Today the powerful nations on earth are increasing their capabilities of destroying the world several times over. Many candidates for public office will tell us peace comes from a strong defense, but our church teaches a different tradition: true peace comes from the proliferation of love.**

**As we celebrate the transfiguration of Jesus today, our psalm proclaims a message of justice and judgment. In the gospel, Jesus goes up a mountain and is transfigured; he reveals his glory to his closest followers. The psalm today shows God seated upon a throne. The throne is surrounded by clouds and darkness. It rests upon the foundations of justice and judgment. God rules, the heavens proclaim his justice, and the peoples of the earth see his glory. God's justice is a righteousness in which the world is balanced, people behave correctly, and God sets things right. God does not desire vengeance; God desires righteousness, where all will treat one another with respect and live in peace.**

**As Pope Benedict points out, everyone has a different part to play in advancing peace. World leaders have their responsibilities, and you and I have ours. We provide aid to those in need. We pray for an end of conflict, and we behave in ways that advance the kingdom of God, a kingdom built upon the foundations of righteousness.**