Lord, Make Me
(Flame 15)

There's been an interesting series of articles running in one of the English daily papers, about words and their usage. It's pointed out how words have changed in meaning, by all sorts of processes. And sometimes become almost meaningless, or obsolete. But what we do with words & language, how we use them, also says something about ourselves, and has an influence on the way we think, and sometimes even on the way we act. You don't have to accept all the idiocies that have been put forward in its name, but the awareness of language-prejudice against women, for instance, that has been highlighted by recent civil-rights movements / is something valuable. Or again, what's now called 'racist' language, and the use of certain words. Our attitudes and the words we spontaneously tend to use do have a relationship. And making a conscious effort to choose other words does begin to influence our attitudes and behaviour. Skilled propagandists, of course, are well aware of this effect, and constantly make use of it .... and often enough the rest of us fall in with them unthinkingly. All those "baddy" words we read, and use for people, the 'labels' — 'conservative', 'regime' instead of 'government', 'capitalist', 'elite' and so on. And the "goody" words too: 'progressive', 'liberal', 'democratic' and hundreds more. And then there are the substitute words and language we invent to make bearable and palatable in polite society what we are afraid of, don't want to think about, will not honestly face. People still make fun of Victorian prudery about sex — the modern prudery about death and dying isn't funny at all. Killing an unborn child doesn't sound or seem so horrible when it's a termination of pregnancy.

So abortion can become acceptable. The language we choose to use does influence our own and other people's attitudes. | One of today's most used, and abused words must surely be 'peace'. It's even become a political propaganda word: and peace itself seems harder to reach. But in trying to reach for it, what kind of language and words do we use about one another? What attitudes do we have towards people, that are influenced by the way we speak and think of them? And what do we have to do to reach towards peace, within ourselves, within our families & relationships, within society and the world we live in? It is to "peace-makers" on whom Christ called a blessing — the makers of peace, by deed and word and thought and attitude. Reflect on that awhile, to this song which is called, simply, "Peacemaker"

MUSIC (Flame 1)

PRAYERS

'To reach peace, teach peace'. That was the theme message for this year's world day of prayer for peace. And the theme of Pope John Paul's special letter written for the occasion, from which I quoted the other day. In it, he has a passage about the language of peace, and an appeal for people to teach peace in word and in behaviour. Here's what he says:

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