

PEACE *is* DISARMED *and* DISARMING

LET US NOT FORGET THOSE SUFFERING IN WAR

In the joy of faith and communion, we cannot forget our brothers and sisters who are suffering because of war. In Gaza, the surviving children, families, and elderly are reduced to starvation. In Myanmar, new hostilities have cut short innocent young lives. Finally, war-torn Ukraine awaits negotiations for a just and lasting peace. Therefore, as we entrust to Mary the service of the Bishop of Rome, Pastor of the universal Church, let us, from the “Barque of Peter,” look to her, Star of the Sea, Our Lady of Good Counsel, as a sign of hope. We implore her intercession for the gift of peace, for support and comfort for those who suffer, and for the grace for all of us to be witnesses to the Risen Lord.

PEACE BEGINS WITH EACH OF US

Peace begins with each one of us: in the way we look at others, listen to others, and speak about others. In this sense, the way we communicate is of fundamental importance: we must say “no” to the war of words and images, we must reject the paradigm of war.

LET US DISARM

Let us disarm words and we will help to disarm the world. Disarmed and disarming communication allows us to share a different view of the world and to act in a manner consistent with our human dignity.

CHRIST HIMSELF SAYS: "PEACE BE WITH YOU!"

From the Holy Land to Ukraine, from Lebanon to Syria, from the Middle East to Tigray and the Caucasus, how much violence do we see! Rising up from this horror, from the slaughter of so many young people, which ought to provoke outrage because lives are being sacrificed in the name of military conquest, there resounds an appeal: the appeal not so much of the Pope, but of Christ himself, who repeats: "Peace be with you!" (John 20:19, 21, 26). And he adds: "Peace I leave you; my peace I give to you. I do not give it to you as the world gives it" (John 14:27). Christ's peace is not the sepulchral silence that reigns after conflict; it is not the fruit of oppression, but rather a gift that is meant for all, a gift that brings new life. Let us pray for this peace, which is reconciliation, forgiveness, and the courage to turn the page and start anew.

WAR IS NEVER INEVITABLE

War is never inevitable. Weapons can and must be silenced, for they do not resolve problems but only increase them. Those who make history are the peacemakers, not those who sow seeds of suffering. Our neighbors are not first our enemies, but our fellow human beings; not criminals to be hated, but other men and women with whom we can speak. Let us reject the Manichean notions so typical of that mindset of violence that divides the world into those who are good and those who are evil.

THE FIRST GIFT OF CHRIST

From a Christian perspective—but also in other religious traditions—peace is first and foremost a gift. It is the first gift of Christ: "My peace I give to you" (John 14:27). Yet it is an active and demanding gift. It engages and challenges each of us, regardless of our cultural background or religious affiliation, demanding first of all that we work on ourselves. Peace is built in the heart and from the heart, by eliminating pride and vindictiveness and carefully choosing our words. For words too, not only weapons, can wound and even kill.

GOD'S PROMISE OF TRUE AND LASTING PEACE

We are to bring to all peoples, indeed to all creatures, the Gospel promise of true and lasting peace, which is possible because, in the words of Pope Francis, “the Lord has overcome the world and its constant conflict ‘by making peace through the blood of his cross.’”²⁵

MAY EVERY COMMUNITY BECOME A “HOUSE OF PEACE”

The Lord sends us into the world to bring his same gift: “Peace be with you!,” and to become its creators in everyday life. I am thinking of parishes, neighborhoods, areas within the country, the urban and existential peripheries. There, where human and social relationships become difficult and conflict takes shape, perhaps subtly, a Church capable of reconciliation must make herself visible. The apostle Paul urges us, “If possible, on your part, live at peace with all” (Romans 12:18); it is an invitation that entrusts a tangible portion of responsibility to every person. I hope, then, that every diocese may promote pathways of education in nonviolence, mediation initiatives in local conflicts, and welcoming projects that transform fear of the other into an opportunity for encounter. May every community become a “house of peace,” where one learns how to defuse hostility through dialogue, where justice is practiced, and forgiveness is cherished. Peace is not a spiritual utopia: it is a humble path, made up of daily gestures that interweave patience and courage, listening and action, and which demands today, more than ever, our vigilant and generative presence.

THE PROPHETIC FORCE OF PEACE

Giorgio La Pira, the politician of happy memory whose thinking inspired the initiatives in Bari and Florence,²⁶ was convinced that peace in the Mediterranean region could be the beginning and, as it were, the basis of peace among all the nations of the world. That vision retains all its power and prophetic force today, in a world rent by conflict and violence, where an arms race and

²⁵ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013), 229.

²⁶ This refers to the meetings held, on the initiative of the Italian Episcopal Conference, in Bari from February 19–23, 2020, attended by Pope Francis, and in Florence from February 23–27, 2022, dedicated to exchanges between Mediterranean Churches in the pursuit of peace.

THE POWER *of the* GOSPEL

the will to power prevail over international law and the common good. Yet we must not be discouraged; we must not give up! You young people, with your high ideals and your creativity, can make a fundamental contribution. Now, not tomorrow! Because you are the “now” of our hope for the future!

THE PURSUIT OF THE COMMON GOOD

The current global context is sadly marked by wars, violence, injustice, and extreme weather events, which force millions of people to leave their homelands in search of refuge elsewhere. The widespread tendency to look after the interests of limited communities poses a serious threat to the sharing of responsibility, multilateral cooperation, the pursuit of the common good, and global solidarity for the benefit of our entire human family. The prospect of a renewed arms race and the development of new armaments, including nuclear weapons; the lack of consideration for the harmful effects of the ongoing climate crisis; and the impact of profound economic inequalities make the challenges of the present and the future increasingly demanding.