

Editorial

PACEM IN TERRIS: THE GUIDING STAR FOR PEACE

Peace is God's dream, his plan for humanity, for history, and for all creation. And it is a plan which always meets opposition from men and from the evil one. Even in our time, the desire for peace and the commitment to build peace collide against the reality of many armed conflicts presently affecting our world. They are a "kind of third world war being fought piecemeal, and in the context of global communications, we sense *an atmosphere of war*,"¹ says Pope Francis.

Some wish to incite and foment this atmosphere deliberately, mainly those who want conflict between different cultures and societies, and those who speculate on wars for the purpose of selling arms. But war means children, women and the elderly in refugee camps; it means forced displacement of peoples; it means destroyed houses, streets and factories; it means, above all, countless shattered lives. The years 2022-2023 have been a painful reminder that peace and democracy should never be taken for granted. The images coming out of Ukraine, Russia, Israel and Palestine every day stand in strong contrast to the long-lasting expectation of the peace that we had all come to enjoy in Europe and the Middle East in particular, and the whole world in general.

In the scenario of conflicts and war, Pope John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* remains highly relevant and contributes to world peace and the first steps toward disarmament. The encyclical was published in the wake of the first major global crisis, the "Cuban Missile Crisis," which posed a nuclear threat. The pope warned about nuclear weapon risks. The

¹ Homily of Pope Francis during his apostolic Journey to Sarajevo in Bosnia on Saturday 6 June 2015. https://www.vatican.va/content/Francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150606_omelia_Sarajevo.html

document remains pertinent 60 years later, yet it is ignored. *Pacem in Terris* arrived six months after the Cuban missile crisis, and largely because of it. The most dangerous moment in the history of the Cold War compelled Pope John XXIII to ask Italian theologian Fr. Pietro Pavan to draft an encyclical on peace. The document and the attention it received reflected the central role the Catholic Church played in articulating the moral language of the nuclear age—a language that developed previous doctrine in some important ways.²

A devastating war that began with Russia's aggression against Ukraine continues in Europe's heart today. The conflict between Israel and Palestinians — and other groups in the Middle East — goes back decades and is at its ridge of mutual destruction and suffering. Civil wars are happening in places like Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria, which have caused a lot of deaths and forced people to move or migrate, which is indicative of the need for peace in the world. The culture of non-violence proposed by Gandhi is struggling to find its place. Even establishing a world political authority to promote peaceful international dispute settlement is sceptical. War and an insane arms race are considered inevitable, while diplomacy seems subdued. War should never be an acceptable solution to international disputes. As Pope John Paul II said, "War is not always inevitable, it is always a defeat for humanity" (address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, January 13, 2003). War is always a defeat for humanity, Always. The warning of Pius XII still rings in our ears, "Nothing is lost by peace; everything may be lost by war" (PT 116).³

The Guiding Star of Peace: Protection of the Common Good

Pacem in Terris teaches that we not only have rights, we also have duties toward our fellow human beings. Just as we have a right to life, we have a corresponding duty to preserve it. Just as we have a right to a dignified life, we have a corresponding duty to promote the well-being of others, what is often called the "common good." The document prioritises the protection of the common good as a means of promoting national and international peace. The document says that the common good is chiefly guaranteed when personal rights and

² Massimo Faggioli, "Reading *Pacem in Terris* in 2023, Can we still imagine world peace?" May 20, 2023. <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/pacem-in-terris-war-peace-biden-ukraine-pope-francis> (accessed on 15/10/2023)

³ Cf. Pope Pius XII, Radio Message, August 24, 1939, AAS 31 (1939), 334.

duties are maintained. The chief concern of civil authorities must therefore be to ensure that these rights are acknowledged, respected, coordinated with other rights, defended, and promoted, so that in this way each one may more easily carry out his duties. For “to safeguard the inviolable rights of the human person, and to facilitate the fulfilment of his duties, should be the chief duty of every public authority” (PT 60). Pope Leo XIII, has said: “The civil power must not serve the advantage of any one individual, or of some few persons, inasmuch as it was established for the common good of all.⁴ The leaders of nations might be in a position to provide for the universal common good, either through normal diplomatic channels, or through top-level meetings, or through conventions or treaties by making use of methods and instruments suggested by natural law, the law of nations, or international law (PT 133).

Pacem in Terris acknowledges the anthropological foundation of the Catholic tradition, namely the dignity of the human person and the fact that the human person is social by nature. In the light of this anthropology, the Catholic viewpoint has always opposed the opposite extremes of individualism and collectivism. Individualism emphasises the individual at the exclusion of society. Collectivism places such an emphasis on collectivity that it disregards the dignity of the individual. In the Catholic perspective, the common good is the end or purpose of public society and the state. Individualism exclusively acknowledges individual goods, while collectivism only respects communal goods. By definition, the common good is a good for the whole society but also flows back to the good of the individual who belongs to the community. Think, for example, of clean air or equal rights for all (PT 53-66). The encyclical continues to inspire Catholics in the twenty-first century who strive for peace.

Pope Francis stated, “To say no to violence is not enough to avoid acts of violence, we also need to eliminate the roots of violence.”⁵ The encyclical *Pacem in Terris* was published at the right time and is relevant today, but it was largely ignored. Pope John XXIII, for the first time, addresses an encyclical not only to bishops and members of the Church but to all people of good will. Such an approach makes explicit

⁴ Cf. Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter, *Immortale Dei*, ASS 18 (1885),161-180.

⁵ Address of Pope Francis during his apostolic journey to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan on Wednesday, 1 February 2023. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/february/documents/20230201-vittimeest-repdem-congo.html>.

what was implicit in the earlier documents – all people on earth are called to work together for the common good. Catholics are not called to do something different from others. Many non-Catholics responded to *Pacem in Terris*. For example, the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions sponsored convocations about *Pacem in Terris*.⁶

Promotion of Life

Promotion of life at the international level often requires collaboration between countries, governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals to address complex issues and challenges that impact the well-being of people and earth. There should be Peace and Conflict resolutions to promote diplomacy and prevention of violence etc. Pope John XXIII cautioned against the alarming arms race, especially the increasingly lethal weapons that can indiscriminately strike entire populations and simultaneously destroy the very life of the planet, with a waste of “spiritual energies and economic resources” that could be better utilised for the promotion of life and the environment. This appeal, which has been made repeatedly by successive pontiffs, is unfortunately still relevant in a context in which some important steps taken in the past for the reduction of nuclear weapons risk not finding adequate ways to renew and realise unequivocal words in the encyclical: “Nuclear weapons must be banned.”

The deterioration or absence of democracy contributes to the violation of human life and prosperity, depriving people of their future. In the absence of peace and democracy, human suffering increases exponentially. Nothing good comes from war. Nothing good comes of oppression. People live in constant fear, lest the storm that every moment threatens break upon them with dreadful violence. And one must bear in mind that, even though the monstrous power of modern weapons acts as a deterrent, there is nevertheless reason to fear that the mere continuance of nuclear tests, undertaken with war in mind, can seriously jeopardize various kinds of life on earth (PT 111).

Promotion of Human Rights

Pacem in Terris was the first document in Catholic social teaching to elaborate on human rights and give them a central role. Part one of *Pacem in Terris* discusses the order among human beings, and human

⁶ Edward Reed, ed., *Peace on Earth: Pacem in Terris: The Proceedings of an International Convocation on the Requirements of Peace*, New York: Pocket, 1965.

rights and duties form the basis for this order (PT 8-33). Every human being is an intelligent, free-willed individual endowed with rights and responsibilities that derive directly and simultaneously from their nature. These rights and responsibilities are universal and inviolable. The developed rights include the right to life and a decent standard of living, rights pertaining to moral and cultural values, the right to worship God in accordance with one's conscience, the right to freely choose one's state of life, economic rights, the right to assembly and association, the right to emigrate and immigrate, and political rights. These natural rights are "inseparably connected, in the very person who is their subject, with just as many respective duties; and rights as well as duties find their source, their sustenance, and their inviolability in the natural law which grants or enjoins them" (PT 28). For instance, the right of every individual to life is correlated with the obligation to preserve life, and the right to a decent standard of living is correlated with the duty to live up to it. Everyone has the responsibility to recognise and respect the rights of others.

The promotion of human rights is essential for ensuring that all individuals are treated with dignity, respect, and equality. Taking its cue from *Pacem in Terris*, the Second Vatican Council declared, the Gospel as the surest safeguard of "the personal dignity and liberty of man" and announced the promotion of human rights as one of two principal services the Catholic Church renders to the world. First of all, *Pacem in Terris* insists on the need for rights and duties. The two must go hand in hand. Rights alone are insufficient. Second, *Pacem in Terris* insists on both civil or political rights as well as social or economic rights. The concept of "Freedom from" is connected to political and civil rights. I am free from any external force that tells me how to worship God, what to say or print, and with whom I should associate. Social and economic rights, according to *Pacem in Terris* include the rights to food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and necessary social services. *Pacem in Terris* recognizes the right to a decent standard of living in a broader sense (PT 11).

In April 2023, during the General Exchange of Views at the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the following statement is made: "Tragically, the lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis are being forgotten, and numerous arms control treaties have been discarded, reflecting a paucity of trust internationally and accelerating a worrying trend toward rearmament. Additionally, the plight of Ukraine—a country that gave up its nuclear weapons in 1994 and is now defending itself against a nuclear power—might inspire other

non-nuclear countries to seek out or develop their own nuclear weapons in hopes of deterring invasion.”⁷

The Vision and Programme for Peace

The major contribution of *Pacem in Terris* is the insertion of the subject of peace into the documents of Catholic social teaching. The earliest document, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), dealt with the social problems created by the Industrial Revolution. Subsequent documents, including John XXIII’s *Mater et Magistra* (1961) dealt primarily with the issues of economic justice. As a result of *Pacem in Terris*’ putting the focus on peace, successive publications of Catholic social doctrine address peace alongside economic and political challenges. Thus, the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* of Vatican II addressed five specific themes, such as “Chapter 5: The Fostering of Peace and the Promotion of a Community of Nations.”⁸

The manner in which *Pacem in Terris* expands on the subject of peace is most important. In this document, John XXIII proposes a vision of peace and the methods or programmes that should be implemented to make peace pervasive in all aspects of our world. All people of good will must try to establish peace in all the relationships in our worldwide community. However, the document shifts the focus from casuistry to vision and a programme for peace, from war to peace. Everyone is obliged to be peacemakers in our world (166-173). Subsequent documents in Catholic social teaching have continued this vision of peace and urged everyone to work for peace, despite employing a greater degree of casuistry in relation to specific aspects of war and its threats. For instance, Pope Paul VI insisted that development is the new name for peace,⁹ while Pope John Paul II views peace as the fruit of solidarity.¹⁰ Subsequent popes have followed the approach of John XXIII by recognizing the significance of peace, the need for all to work for peace, and the structures that will bring about peace in our world.

⁷ Massimo Faggioli, Reading *Pacem in Terris* in 2023, Can we still imagine world peace? May 20, 2023. <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/pacem-in-terris-war-peace-biden-ukraine-pope-francis> (accessed on 15/10/2023).

⁸ David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992, 219-229.

⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* nos. 76-80, in O’Brien and Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought*, 258-259.

¹⁰ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* n. 39, in O’Brien and Shannon *Catholic Social Thought* 423.

Cardinal Peter Turkson, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences stated, “the *Pacem in Terris* John XXIII is a testament to humanity,”¹¹ and that also in the magisterium of Pope Francis there is an invitation to humanity to consider that without respect for the dignity of persons, their freedom, love and trust, a culture of peace cannot be cultivated. In order to establish peace in the world, *Pacem in Terris* advocates new methods of relationships in human society to be established with truth, justice, charity, and liberty (PT 163). The relations among individual citizens, among citizens and their own countries, among nations themselves, among individuals, families, intermediate associations and individual states and with the community of all mankind (PT 163), otherwise peace will be an empty-sounding word unless it is founded in truth, outlined in confident hope, built according to justice, vivified and integrated by charity and put into practice in freedom (PT 167).

Pacem in Terris offers numerous insights into achieving the peace that we desperately want. First and foremost, it asserts that peace cannot be established without observance of the divine order based on truth, justice, charity and freedom. *Pacem in Terris* asserts that we are all created in the image and likeness of God and God’s laws are inscribed on our hearts. Consequently, each individual possesses inherent dignity. *Pacem in Terris* states that, due to our intrinsic dignity, all humans have fundamental human rights including the right to life, food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, social services, just wages, and the right to migrate when necessary. It promotes open dialogue/communication and collaboration without barriers to become not just the theme and style of the pursuit of peace but of all forms of coexistence.

“In the wilderness justice will come to live and integrity in the fertile land; integrity will bring peace, justice give lasting security. My people will live in a peaceful home, in safe houses, in quiet dwellings” (Isaiah 32: 15-18).

Eight articles in this issue address various aspects of the overarching theme of *Pacem in Terris* and its call for world peace. Francis Thonippara reinterprets the document within the framework of globalisation. He analyses the encyclical critically, providing insight into how it will affect the Church as it enters a new era of globalisation.

¹¹ Antonio Piccione, “News about *Pacem in Terris* 60 years later,” 22 September 2023. <https://omnesmag.com/en/newsroom/pacem-in-terris-anniversary/#> (accessed on 15/10/2023).

Erik Sengers compares and contrasts the theology of peace in the writings of Thomas Merton and Pope Francis in the light of *Pacem in Terris*. Deogratias Rwezaura writes about the Peace Synonyms, the varied meanings of peace from various perspectives, with a particular emphasis on Conciliar and post-Conciliar Papal Encyclicals and teachings on peace. Francesco Scalzotto embodies the way to peace presented in *Pacem in Terris* and the spirit of brotherhood presented in *Fratelli Tutti*. In both encyclicals, he finds a similar practical and innovative approach. Additionally, the article displays a few speculative nodes that are unique to each encyclical and serve to differentiate and separate them from one another. Lawrence Pedregosa reflects on the Theopolitical Ethical Vision of *Pacem in Terris*. Subsidiarity and the universal human family are used in *Pacem in Terris* to counteract state violence. Pope Francis's ideas of the Church as 'mother to all', 'field hospital', and 'polyhedron' can help re-imagine the state as a social body built on the commons by unearthing its Theopolitical ethical underpinnings in pursuit of peace.

Jacob Marangattu observes that the harmony between the three matrices of reality – God, Humans, and the Cosmos – was shattered by human sin, which disrupted the original joy and happiness ordained by God. This article demonstrates how societies/cultures that accept a biblical worldview have a higher record of value consciousness and economic and scientific advancement. Sebastian Mathew and Pablito Baybado explore the importance of Pope Benedict XVI's transformative theology of the Eucharist in the current world. It emphasises the relevance of active participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice and the necessity of the Eucharist's transformational nature in regenerating the Church and addressing societal challenges and realities. Lastly, James Kanali elaborates on the concepts of human dignity and human rights. He argues further that the people are active citizens who are entitled to rights, as opposed to being dependent on their government's benevolence or international support. And individuals are supposed to respect the rights of other humans – the same rights they enjoy themselves.

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