

PEACE'S SYNONYMS: CONCILIAR AND POST-CONCILIAR CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Peace remains one of humanity's most desirable and cherished treasures. The preciousness of peace becomes most evident when it is absent due to violence, armed conflict, war, inner turmoil that leads to lack of sleep, trauma, and at times thoughts of vengeance. As simple as the term may seem, peace carries multiple meanings depending on the perspective one takes to describe it. I call these multiple meanings peace's synonyms. Scripture accounts for peace as shalom, a state of individual and communal wellbeing, social harmony, righteousness, and peace as a fruit of justice, forgiveness, and love. This essay focuses on synonyms that peace has assumed since the 1960s within the Catholic Church's social thought, with a specific focus on Conciliar and post-Conciliar Papal encyclicals and messages on peace.

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Introduction

On 1 January 1968, Pope Paul VI issued a message entitled "For the Observance of a Day of Peace" meant to become an annual global commemoration "as a hope and a promise... that Peace with its just and beneficent equilibrium may dominate the development of events to come."¹ He did not intend it to be limited to Catholics but to all peace-lovers.² The theme for the first World Day of Peace and subsequent commemorative themes speak of different ways in which peace can be construed. I have attempted to categorize these themes as: sincerity, justice and love among nations as pillars of peace (1968); promotion of human rights (1969), peace as a fruit of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness (1970,1971,1997); promotion and defense of life using justice, freedom and love (1968, 1977, 1980, 1981, 2006), intercultural and intergenerational dialogue (1983, 2022), a path toward development in solidarity (1968, 1987, 2023), defense of religious freedom (1988, 2011), respect for everyone's conscience (1991), outreach to the poor and alleviation of poverty (1993, 2009), non-violence (2005, 2017), a genuine integral humanism (1968, 2007), protection of creation and ecological conversion (2010, 2020), fraternity (2014), overcoming indifference (2016), and a culture of care (2021). These themes for the World Days of Peace since 1968 demonstrate how crucial peace remains and how its attainment requires a multi-track approach.

Approximately five years prior to Paul VI's inauguration of the World Day of Peace, John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris*, whose sixtieth anniversary we celebrate this year, saw peace as a divine order to be pursued in truth, justice, charity, and freedom. His successor, Paul VI, envisioned peace beyond the "absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; [because] it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among

¹ Pope Paul VI, *Message for the Observance of a Day of Peace*, (1 January 1968) https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_p-vi_mes_19671208_i-world-day-for-peace.html

² Through resolution 36/67 the UN General Assembly officially declared the third Tuesday as an International Day of Peace. It is now celebrated on 21 September of each year. See <http://www.un-documents.net/a36r67.htm>

men.”³ He also equated peace with integral human development.⁴ John Paul II chose solidarity as the other name for peace.⁵ Benedict XVI called peace the fruit of love,⁶ while for Pope Francis peace remains anchored in fraternity.⁷

A cursory glance at what each of these Popes' synonyms for peace entails will help us appreciate the spiritual significance that peace carries in our contemporary world and the ramifications its absence unleashes on entire families, societies, nations, and, above all, peoples and minority groups or the marginalized. This year's 60th Anniversary of John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* makes the revisiting and appreciation of peace even more urgent given the international implications and repercussions of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, notwithstanding other places in urgent need of lasting peace. In light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, one might be tempted to think that humanity learns little from history for it appears that applying “the *law of force* rather than...the *force of law*”⁸ in resolving conflicts tends to prevail.

Peace as a Divine Order

John XXIII strongly believed in the kind of peace that is divinely ordered. In his words, the “world will never be the dwelling place of peace, till peace has found a home in the heart of each and every [person], till every [person] preserves in himself [or herself] the order

³ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples), 26 March 1967, no. 76, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html

⁴ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, no. 76.

⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On Social Concern), 30 December 1987, no. 39, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html

⁶ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth), 29 June 2009, no.1, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html

⁷ See Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship), 3 October 2020, no. 10, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

⁸ John Paul II, “An Ever-Timely Commitment: Teaching Peace,” *Message for the Celebration of World Day of Peace*, no. 5, (1 January 2004), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20031216_xxxvii-world-day-for-peace.html

ordained by God to be preserved.”⁹ While this may sound pious to the non-believer, it does address a fundamental starting point for any faith inspired peacebuilder. For as John XXIII clearly states, “peace is but an empty word, if it does not rest upon order, which...is founded on truth, built on justice, nurtured and animated by charity, and brought into effect under the auspices of freedom.”¹⁰ One would therefore rightly say that truth, justice, charity (love) and freedom are all divine virtues that together form the bricks with which to build lasting peace. This theological foundation for peace is not unique to John XXIII. In 1939, at the beginning of the Second World War, his predecessor Pius XII put it this way:

For true though it is that the evils from which [humankind] suffers today come in part from economic instability and from the struggle of interests regarding a more equal distribution of the goods which God has given [humanity] as a means of sustenance and progress, it is not less true that their root is deeper and more intrinsic, belonging to the sphere of religious belief and moral convictions which have been perverted by the progressive alienation of the peoples from that unity of doctrine, faith, customs and morals which once was promoted by the tireless and beneficent work of the Church.¹¹

He continued, “If it is to have any effect, the reeducation of [humankind] must be, above all things, spiritual and religious. Hence, it must proceed from Christ as from its indispensable foundation; must be actuated by justice and crowned by charity.”¹²

In addition, John Paul II, elaborated on what he called John XXIII’s “four pillars of peace” by stating: *Truth* will build peace if every individual sincerely acknowledges not only his [or her] rights, but also his [or her] own duties towards others. *Justice* will build peace if in practice everyone respects the rights of others and actually fulfils his [or her] duties towards them. *Love* will build peace if people feel the needs of others as their own and share what they have with others, especially the values of mind and spirit which they possess. *Freedom* will build peace and make it thrive if, in the choice of

⁹ John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty) 11 April 1963, no. 165, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html

¹⁰ John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, no. 167.

¹¹ Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Summi Pontificatus*, 20 October 1939, no. 83, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20101939_summi-pontificatus.html

¹² Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus*, no. 83.

the means to that end, people act according to reason and assume responsibility for their own actions.¹³

Despite the divine origin of peace, John XXIII was all too aware of disorder in human hearts and chaos in the world. In other words, he remained very much alert to the fact that wars deprive people of peace and have long lasting negative consequences for societies, nations and peoples but he drew his hearers to the understanding that wars have root causes. As he indicates in *Mater et Magistra* "nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another, and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist."¹⁴ At the same time, he believed fundamentally that war is a consequence of deep-rooted mistrust among nations, and hence he called upon nations not to build "true and lasting peace" upon "the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust"¹⁵ to which he later added "sincerity in negotiation, and the faithful fulfilment of obligations assumed."¹⁶ Peace also presupposes responsible citizens whose lives are rooted in mutual respect and the promotion of human rights and dignity.¹⁷ This he believed ought to invite the Church to revisit its traditional principles of just war theory in search of lasting.¹⁸

The acceptance of human rights violations and indignities suffered by silent or silenced victims of violent crimes is what Martin Luther King, Jr., called "negative peace,"¹⁹ by which he meant a mere "absence of tension," which takes the form of resignation and acceptance of one's situation and one's plight but without "true peace" or "positive peace."²⁰ Indeed, for King, "peace is not merely the absence of some negative force, it is the presence of a positive force. True peace is not

¹³ John Paul II, "Pacem in Terris: A Permanent Commitment," *Message for the Celebration of World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2003, no. 3, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20021217_xxxvi-world-day-for-peace.html

¹⁴ John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* (On Christianity and Social Progress), 15 May 1961, no. 157, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html

¹⁵ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, no. 113.

¹⁶ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, nos. 118, 126.

¹⁷ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, no. 30.

¹⁸ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, no. 113.

¹⁹ James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1986), 50.

²⁰ Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope*, 50.

merely the absence of tension, but it is the presence of justice and brotherhood.”²¹

John XXIII would definitely agree with Dr. King’s approach to peace. John XXIII in fact calls for international relations that are skillfully ordered by “right reason” by which he means, “truth, justice, and vigorous and sincere co-operation.”²² The principles of right reason would also include freedom and reject any form of domination of weak nations by powerful ones.²³ In *Mater et Magistra* he states clearly that “the economically developed nations must resist [the temptation]...of giving technical and financial aid with a view to gaining control over the political situation in the poorer countries, and furthering their own plans for world domination.”²⁴ He makes it succinctly clear that “a nation that acted from these motives would in fact be introducing a new form of colonialism – cleverly disguised, no doubt, but actually reflecting that older, outdated type from which many nations have recently emerged.”²⁵ He goes on to say that acting in this way “would...have harmful impact on international relations, and constitute a menace to world peace.”²⁶

The above notwithstanding, it is important to note that wars are not always driven by the desire for economic prosperity. On February 24, 2022, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, for instance, was not based on the fact that the former is poor economically. Reasons for the invasion include Russia’s intent to reclaim the territory of the Soviet Union ‘lost’ after 1991, which includes Russia’s seizure of Crimea in 2014 and the Russian speaking Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in the ongoing conflict. It also wants to control the buffer territory between Russia and Western Europe.²⁷ The invasion took Europe by surprise, and it raises a fundamental question regarding the starting point for building lasting peace. In my view, economic prosperity may be attained, but as long as greed for power and prestige persists the desire for domination by the weak will endure as well. Lasting peace calls for a multi-track approach which must engage the whole person, and by

²¹ Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope*, 51.

²² John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, no. 114.

²³ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, no. 120.

²⁴ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 172.

²⁵ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 172.

²⁶ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 172.

²⁷ Liana Fix and Steven Keil German, eds., “NATO and Russia after the Invasion of Ukraine: Marshall Fund of the United States (2022), 4-5, accessed on 29 September 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep42862>

extension, society at large spiritually, psychologically, morally, culturally, politically, socially, and economically. Extending from a personal level, nations must also heed the call by John XXIII to engage truthfully and not merely diplomatically. Otherwise, international diplomacy turns into duplicitous engagements²⁸ while the innocent suffer the brunt of what Pope Francis has termed the “absurd folly of war”²⁹ in reference to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Peace as Integral Development

If one were to ask what people in contexts of war desire, most would inevitably include the return to peace, which they would mean the end of war. Peace in this context would definitely mean the absence of war. What then does Pope Paul VI mean when he states that peace is not the mere absence of war? I think the key word in this statement is “mere.” Paul VI builds on John XXIII’s understanding of lasting peace by stating that true and lasting peace must necessarily include integral human development. While in *Mater et Magistra* John XXIII had premised the preservation of lasting peace in an increasingly interdependent world upon social and economic progress,³⁰ Paul VI states in unhesitating terms that “extreme disparity between nations in economic, social and educational levels provokes jealousy and discord, often putting peace in jeopardy.”³¹ For a long time, development had been largely understood exclusively in economic terms, so much so that some economic theorists thought and even proposed to Africa that in order to get rid of poverty, African nations had to restructure their economic policies in what became known as the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP). With foresight, some African leaders, such as Julius K. Nyerere, officially named Servant of God by Pope Benedict XVI on 13 May 2005,³² saw these Bretton Woods imposed

²⁸ See Albert L. Schlitzer’s discussion on the international common good as articulated by *Pacem in Terris* in University of Notre Dame, “Proceedings of the Symposium on *Pacem in Terris* by Pope John XXIII,” 15.

²⁹ Francis, *Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the People of Ukraine Nine Months after the outbreak of the War*, 24 November 2022, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2022/documents/20221124-lettera-popolo-ucraino.html>

³⁰ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 175.

³¹ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, no. 76.

³² SECAM, “The Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of the Servant of God Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Lay Faithful, Father of Family and Statesman,” accessed on 16 December 2022, <https://secam.org/the-cause-of-beatification-and-canonisation-of-the-servant-of-god-julius-kambarage-nyerere-lay-faithful-father-of-a-family-and-statesman/>

policies on Africa as a disaster waiting to happen. In hindsight, Nyerere was right, even though he became a victim of his own boldness for interrogating the International Monetary Fund's global monetary control. Addressing diplomats in Dar es Salaam on the 1 January 1980, he stated:

[IMF] has an ideology of economic and social development which it is trying to impose on poor countries irrespective of their own clearly stated policies. And when we reject IMF conditions, we hear the threatening whisper.

'Without accepting our conditions, you will not get our money, and you will get no other money'...When did the IMF become an International Ministry of Finance? When did nations agree to surrender to it their powers of decision making?³³

The economic prescriptions of the IMF have in turn widened the gap between the rich countries and the poor countries, but also between the rich and the poor within the rich and the poor countries, so much so that John Paul II coined the word, the "fourth world," which also exists within the so called first world.³⁴ For Paul VI, peace was not synonymous with "the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power..."³⁵ Like John XXIII, Paul VI advocated peace that "is fashioned day after day toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among [peoples]."³⁶ For him, "civil progress and economic development are the only road to peace."³⁷

Benedict XVI interprets Paul VI's understanding of development as having "the goal of rescuing peoples, first and foremost, from hunger,

³³ Julius K. Nyerere, "No to IMF Meddling," Extract from President Nyerere's New Year Message 1080 to Diplomats accredited to Tanzania, *Development Dialogue: A Journal of International Development Corporation* (1980:2):8, accessed on 17 October 2023, <https://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/development-dialogue-1980-2.pdf>

³⁴ Pope John Paul II, "Pope John Paul II on the Social Concerns of the Church," *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (March 1988): 212 and 213, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1972523>. John Paul II explains the term "Fourth World" in the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* footnote 31 saying "The expression "Fourth World" is used not just occasionally for the so-called less advanced countries, but also and especially for the bands of great or extreme poverty in countries of medium and high income."

³⁵ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, no. 76.

³⁶ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, no. 76.

³⁷ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, no. 83.

deprivation, endemic diseases and illiteracy."³⁸ He goes on to say that "economically, this meant their active participation, on equal terms, in the international economic process; from the social point of view, it meant their evolution into educated societies marked by solidarity; from the political point of view, it meant the consolidation of regimes capable of ensuring freedom and peace."³⁹ Addressing root causes of poverty is critical to peace in the context of continuously impoverished countries. Lack of peace arising from indignities suffered by millions of materially poor people worldwide remains not only a matter of economic concern but also to borrow William Brown's expression, "a social problem of the highest magnitude."⁴⁰ It is even more acute when poverty becomes endemic and chronic as a result of "an increasing percentage of people in permanent idleness."⁴¹ Popularly expressed in Kiswahili as *Kijiweni* to describe the state of young people who sit idly in groups from morning till evening hoping for someone to offer them casual labour, "permanent idleness" may result in desperate criminal behaviour when the hoped for casual labour remains an unrealizable dream.

Peace as a Fruit of Solidarity

John Paul II indicated that "If development is the new name for peace, war and military preparations are the major enemy of the integral development of peoples."⁴² He arrived at this assertion inspired by John XXIII's concern for the misplaced priorities generated by the misallocation of funds that could be used for development but are instead used for military purposes and stockpiles of weapons in developed as well as developing countries.⁴³

For John Paul II, the demand for justice from the perspective of integral human development cannot be ignored. He states that to "ignore this demand could encourage the temptation among the victims of injustice to respond with violence, as happens at the origins of many wars."⁴⁴ He goes on to say that those "excluded from the fair

³⁸ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* no. 21.

³⁹ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 21.

⁴⁰ William Brown's complementary discussion on the "Dignity of Man" as presented in *Pacem in Terris* in University of Notre Dame, "Proceedings of the Symposium on *Pacem in Terris* by Pope John XXIII," 22.

⁴¹ William Brown, "Dignity of Man," 22.

⁴² John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 10.

⁴³ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, nos. 203-204.

⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 10.

distribution of the goods ordinarily destined for all could ask themselves: why not respond with violence to those who first treat us with violence?"⁴⁵ Prior to his encyclical letter, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, during his Homily in Ireland, he had cautioned that "violence is evil, that violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, that violence is unworthy of man. Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings."⁴⁶

In this sense, peace and justice become inseparable. Clearly, right from its inception in *Rerum Novarum*, Catholic social thought has always understood peace as "built on the foundation of justice."⁴⁷ In John Paul II's words, *Rerum Novarum* proclaimed "the fundamental conditions for justice in the economic and social situation of the time."⁴⁸

By solidarity, John Paul II means the awakening among peoples and nations that people are not disposable; that is, instruments to be used for profit and exploited; but as sharers in "the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God." Solidarity calls for selflessness, collaboration, mutual trust and interdependence as paths to world peace and development. John Paul II envisioned peace as "the fruit of solidarity."⁴⁹ Interdependence remains central to the enjoyment of the goods of the earth. Indeed, "peace and prosperity...are goods which belong to the whole human race: it is not possible to enjoy them in a proper and lasting way if they are achieved and maintained at the cost of other peoples and nations, by violating their rights or excluding them from the sources of well-being."⁵⁰

Consistent with his message of peace John Paul II, in his message for the 2004 World Day of Peace, emphatically stated that peace remains limited if it is not accompanied by justice, solidarity, love, and forgiveness.⁵¹ Referring to the enduring crisis between Israel and Palestine, he stated that "a solution to the grave problems, which for

⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 10.

⁴⁶ John Paul II, Apostolic Journey to Ireland: Homily During Holy Mass in Drogheda, 29 September 1979, no. 9, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790929_irlanda-dublino-drogheda.html

⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no.5.

⁴⁸ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no.5.

⁴⁹ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 39.

⁵⁰ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 27.

⁵¹ John Paul II, "An Ever Timely Commitment," nos. 9-10.

too long have caused suffering for the peoples of those regions will not be found until a decision is made to transcend the logic of simple *justice* and to be open also to the logic of *forgiveness*.”⁵² In other words, as he had indicated in *Centesimus Annus*, “peace is never simply the result of military victory, but rather implies both the removal of the causes of war and genuine reconciliation between peoples.”⁵³

In this sense, peace becomes a fruit of truth and reconciliation, the absence of which can be “cold war,” as what was witnessed in Europe after the Second World War and as is currently witnessed by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, igniting the long-buried yet increasingly resurfacing tension between the so-called West (NATO and its allies) and the East (Russia and its allies). As the Second Vatican Council indicated:

Peace results from that order structured into human society by its divine Founder, and actualized by men [and women] as they thirst for ever greater justice. The common good of humanity finds its ultimate meaning in the eternal law. But since the concrete demands of this common good are constantly changing as time goes on, peace is never attained once and for all, but must be built up ceaselessly. Moreover, since the human will is unsteady and wounded by sin, the achievement of peace requires a constant mastering of passions and the vigilance of lawful authority.⁵⁴

As understood in this holistic sense, peace has ramifications and is indeed the foundation of human rights. As *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us, peace “cannot be obtained on earth unless the welfare of [humanity] is safeguarded and people freely and trustingly share with one another the riches of their minds and their talents.”⁵⁵

Peace as a Fruit of Love (*caritas*)

Benedict XVI states that “the driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity” is “charity in

⁵² John Paul II, “An Ever Timely Commitment,” no. 10.

⁵³ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (On the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*), 1 May 1991, no. 18, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html

⁵⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (Apostolic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), 7 December 1965, no. 78, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

⁵⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 78.

truth.”⁵⁶ He goes on to echo *Gaudium et Spes* no.78 by affirming that justice and peace have love as their “extraordinary force,” whose origin is ultimately God.⁵⁷ As understood as a fruit of love, peace embraces everything that seeks to promote and respect life, the contrary of which leads to distraction and violence. Admittedly, “peace in and among peoples would also provide greater protection for nature. The hoarding of resources, especially water, can generate serious conflicts among the people involved. Peaceful agreement about the use of resources can protect nature and, at the same time, the well-being of the societies concerned.”⁵⁸ For Benedict XVI, peace stretches to domains as broad as interfaith dialogue, cultural exchanges, environmental concerns, religion purified by reason and reason informed by faith, and in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate* “collaboration between believers and non-believers.”⁵⁹ He believes strongly that “any breach in this dialogue comes only at an enormous price to human development.”⁶⁰ The reality and enduring violence arising from religious extremism and terrorism bear palpable witness to Benedict XVI’s prophetic pronouncement on interreligious dialogue as a way to lasting peace.

Indeed, we live in a world that continues to witness a lack of peace due to environmental degradation, terrorism, and religious extremism, partly due to intolerance and the absence of interfaith dialogue, extreme poverty amidst plenty due to human greed, and the heightened glorification of creation at the expense of its Creator. Consequently, millions of people are forced to migrate to safer areas. The price is indeed too high to pay, while remedies are readily available if only humanity can discern and bring everybody to the table to forge the way that leads to an equitable distribution of resources. Making reference to the Second Synod of the Bishops in Africa, Benedict XVI, in his address to the Roman Curia, identified reconciliation, justice and peace as “basic to theological and social responsibility.”⁶¹ He regarded reconciliation and justice as “essential

⁵⁶ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* no. 1.

⁵⁷ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* no. 1.

⁵⁸ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* no. 51.

⁵⁹ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* no. 57.

⁶⁰ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* no. 56.

⁶¹ Dicastery for Communication, “Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Members of the Roman Curia and Papal Representatives for the Traditional Exchange of Christmas Greetings,” Clementine Hall, Monday, 21 December 2009, video, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20091221_curia-auguri.html

premises of peace and that, therefore, to a certain extent, they also define its nature." But in his view, "Peace can only be achieved as the result of inner reconciliation."⁶²

Peace as Fraternity

In his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis, in reference to Francis of Assisi, speaks about the inseparable link "between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace."⁶³ In another instance, Pope Francis, quoting the Bishops of the Dominican Republic, makes the interconnectedness between "peace, justice, and the preservation of creation"⁶⁴ a holistic approach to life. For him, violence is a product of failure in ensuring the common good, which has "social peace," attainable through distributive justice, as its strongest ally.⁶⁵ In a world beset by all sorts of violence by the strong against the weak, Pope Francis, like John XXIII, calls for universal authority and heightened diplomacy.

In his first World Day of Peace message on 1 January 2014 entitled "Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace," Pope Francis states that "without fraternity, it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace."⁶⁶ He stresses the fact that fraternity is learnt and nurtured within safe families where values of care for one another find expression. He, however, indicates that at the global level, ethics ought to be anchored in transcendence, where God is ultimate; otherwise, it rests on a shallow and shaky foundation. When that happens trafficking in persons, gross inequality, selfishness, exploitation of the weak, corruption, organized crime, and armed conflicts take centre stage and destroy whole economies and render people disposable.⁶⁷ He concludes convincingly that "only when politics and the economy are open to moving within the wide space ensured by the One who loves each man and each woman, will they achieve an order based on a genuine spirit of fraternal charity and

⁶² Dicastery for Communication, "Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI.

⁶³ Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* On Care for Our Common Home, no. 10, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

⁶⁴ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no. 92.

⁶⁵ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no. 157.

⁶⁶ Francis, "Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace," *Message for the Celebration of World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2014, no. 1, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20131208_messaggio-xxvii-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014.html

⁶⁷ Francis, "Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace," nos. 1 - 8.

become effective instruments of integral human development and peace.”⁶⁸ Indeed, for Pope Francis, peace can be attained by overcoming indifference, whose enduring existence “leads to self-absorption and a lack of commitment and thereby contributes to the absence of peace with God, with our neighbour and with the environment.”⁶⁹

Perhaps the most powerful departure from the pre-*Pacem in Terris* position on war as a possible means to peaceful settlement of conflict is Pope Francis’s call for making “active non-violence our way of life...and a style of politics for peace” informed by the fact that we are all divinely dignified as children of one God.⁷⁰ Pope Francis describes violence in a broader sense that is not limited to the horrors of world wars and genocides that the past century has witnessed. In what he terms “a horrifying *world war fought piecemeal*,”⁷¹ Pope Francis describes “wars in different countries and continents; terrorism, organized crime, and unforeseen acts of violence; the abuses suffered by migrants and victims of human trafficking; and the devastation of the environment,”⁷² as forms of violence suffered by the innocent victims. He then wonders whether violence is capable of bringing anything of “lasting value.”⁷³ He answers his rhetorical question by stating that this *piecemeal violence* breeds vengeance “and a cycle of deadly conflicts that benefit only a few ‘warlords’.”⁷⁴ These few “warlords” include beneficiaries of arms sales, multinational corporations that plunder natural resources in exchange for small as well as massive weapons of mass destruction, ideologues who move from conference to conference advocating nuclear weapons as deterrent measures, and manufacturers of deadly manned and unmanned weaponry which cause massive damage to hard earned developmental progress without focusing on its social counter indicator which must prize the dignity of all but above all that of

⁶⁸ Francis, “Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace,” no. 10.

⁶⁹ Francis, “Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace,” no. 3.

⁷⁰ Francis, “Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace,” *Message for the Celebration of the Fiftieth World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2017, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20161208_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.pdf

⁷¹ Francis, “Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace,” no. 2.

⁷² Francis, “Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace,” no. 2.

⁷³ Francis, “Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace,” no. 2.

⁷⁴ Francis, “Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace,” no. 2.

victims of violence at all times. For him, "violence and war are never the way to peace!"⁷⁵

Aware of the social ills that arise from the "globalization of indifference," Pope Francis proposes peace that is born of "a culture of solidarity, mercy and compassion," to those in most need, those at the human created fringes of society. To these three virtues he adds "foresight and courage," which he deems necessary and urgent for building lasting peace.⁷⁶ Peace in the mind of Pope Francis is born of good politics, which in turn remains a servant of peace. He says, "Peace, in effect, is the fruit of a great political project grounded in the mutual responsibility and interdependence of human beings."⁷⁷ He puts an accent on the fact that peace "entails a conversion of heart and soul; it is both interior and communal; and it has three inseparable aspects:" being at peace with oneself, with others, and with the rest of creation⁷⁸

For Pope Francis, "even nuclear deterrence can only produce the illusion of security."⁷⁹ Seen as a contribution to peace, the method of deterrence born of an increase in the production and stockpiling of sophisticated weaponry does not lead to "sure and authentic peace."⁸⁰ In effect, the ever-costly stockpiling of weapons fails to address the increasing misery of many people across the globe and leads to false security. "Every war is a form of fratricide that destroys the human

⁷⁵ Francis, "Vigil of Prayer for Peace: Words of Holy Father Francis," (7 September 2013), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130907_veglia-pace.html

⁷⁶ Francis, "Migrants and Refugees: Men and Women in search of Peace," *Message for the Celebration of the 51st World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2018, no. 5, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20171113_messaggio-51giornatamondiale-pace2018.html For a detailed analysis of the moral complexity of deterrence in light of faith see National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Pastoral Letter on War and Peace: The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, 3 May 1983, nos. 139-318, <https://www.usccb.org/upload/challenge-peace-gods-promise-our-response-1983.pdf>

⁷⁷ Francis, "Good Politics is at the Service of Peace," *Message for the Celebration of the 52nd World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2019, no. 7, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20181208_messaggio-52giornatamondiale-pace2019.html

⁷⁸ Francis, "Good Politics is at the Service of Peace," no. 7.

⁷⁹ Francis, "Peace as a Journey of Hope: Dialogue, Reconciliation and Ecological Conversion," *Message for the Celebration of the 52nd World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2020, no. 1, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco20191208_messaggio-53giornatamondiale-pace2020.html

⁸⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 81.

family's innate vocation to brotherhood."⁸¹ Addressing the root causes of armed violence, Pope Francis states that

War, as we know, often begins with the inability to accept the diversity of others, which then fosters attitudes of aggrandizement and domination born of selfishness and pride, hatred, and the desire to caricature, exclude, and even destroy the other. War is fueled by perversion of relationships, by hegemonic ambitions, by abuses of power, by fear of others and by seeing diversity as an obstacle. And these are, in turn, aggravated by the experience of war.⁸²

To counter such attitudes which breed violence and war, *Gaudium et Spes* proposed peace education especially among the youth, aimed at creating in them a desire and commitment to lasting peace as a result of building mutual trust, rooting out racial and tribal hatred, rigid ideologies, and hostile relationships.⁸³

For Francis, however, reiterating the words of John Paul II's to representative of Argentinian culture, "real and lasting peace will only be possible on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family."⁸⁴

In practical terms, Pope Francis advocates "an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence between individuals and among peoples."⁸⁵ He believes that this kind of ethics "cannot be based on the logic of fear, violence and closed-mindedness, but on responsibility, respect and sincere dialogue."⁸⁶ Motivated by the ethics of fraternity, Francis appeals "for disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons: nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutual assured destruction are incapable of grounding such an ethics."⁸⁷ But since violence stems from human hearts and is nurtured within human families, he also calls for an end to domestic violence within families, which largely negatively impacts women and children.

⁸¹ Francis, "Peace as a Journey of Hope," no. 1.

⁸² Francis, "Peace as a Journey of Hope," no. 1.

⁸³ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 82.

⁸⁴ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 127.

⁸⁵ Francis, "Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace," no. 5.

⁸⁶ Francis, "Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace," no. 5.

⁸⁷ Francis, "Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace," no. 5.

Conclusion

The delegates gathered at the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council in Rome from 1962 to 1965 invited religious congregations and orders to return to the source of their founders in order to revitalize their charism. I do believe that in the context of the search for world peace, the Church as people of God is invited to return to the real source and fountain of peace – Jesus Christ. This will ensure the desired peace attainable through justice, truth and charity as we commemorate sixty years of John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris*.

To emphasize Christ-centred peace, Pope Francis refers to the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus invites us to go an extra mile in our love of neighbour to include love for our enemies (Mt.5:44) and invites Peter not to use violence against Jesus' adversaries (Mt.5:39) by asking him to return the sword to its sheath. With this scriptural reference, Pope Francis indicates that Jesus sets us on a path to non-violence, which is one of the tenets of discipleship today.⁸⁸ Inspired by the life of Jesus and the witness of people like Mother Teresa of Kolkata, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, Desmond Tutu, and many others who have witnessed the power and success of active non-violence in combating injustice and degrading structural policies, Pope Francis works inter-religiously in search of world peace. Jan De Volder describes Francis as a "bridge-builder" whose approach to peace remains a moral and prophetic defense of the victims of war and violence guided by his strong belief that war remains a tragic defeat for humanity.⁸⁹ Thus, Francis's tripartite approach to peace as a prophetic voice, a moral and active voice and a "diplomatic actor"⁹⁰ has great lessons to teach all peace lovers and practitioners.

⁸⁸ Francis, "Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace," nos. 3 and 6.

⁸⁹ Jan De Volder, "Pope Francis's Contribution to Catholic Thinking and Acting on War and Peace," in *Theological Studies* 84, 1 (March 2023): 30-31.

⁹⁰ Jan De Volder, "Pope Francis's Contribution," 37.