

Pax Christi - Peace Sunday 2013

Extracts from the message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the celebration of the World Day of Peace 2013.

Blessed are the Peacemakers

Each New Year brings the expectation of a better world. In the light of this, I ask God, the Father of humanity, to grant us concord and peace, so that the aspirations of all for a happy and prosperous life may be achieved.

Fifty years after the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, which helped to strengthen the Church's mission in the world, it is heartening to realise that Christians are committed within history to sharing humanity's joys and hopes, grief and anguish (1) as they proclaim the salvation of Christ and promote peace for all.

.....It is alarming to see hotbeds of tension and conflict caused by growing instances of inequality between rich and poor, by the prevalence of a selfish and individualistic mindset which also finds expression in an unregulated financial capitalism. In addition to the varied forms of terrorism and international crime, peace is also endangered by those forms of fundamentalism and fanaticism which distort the true nature of religion, which is called to foster fellowship and reconciliation among people.

All the same, the many different efforts at peacemaking which abound in our world testify to mankind's innate vocation to peace.

..... All of this led me to draw inspiration for this Message from the words of Jesus Christ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Mt 5:9)

.....Jesus' beatitude tells us that peace is both a messianic gift and the fruit of human effort..... The ethics of peace is an ethics of fellowship and sharing.Peace concerns the human person as a whole, it involves complete commitment. It is peace with God through a life lived according to his will. It is interior peace with oneself, and exterior peace with our neighbours and all creation. Above all, as Blessed John XXIII wrote in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, whose fiftieth anniversary will fall in a few months, it entails the building up of a coexistence based on truth, freedom, love and justice. (2)The attainment of peace depends above all on recognising that we are, in God, one human family.

..... Peace is not a dream or something utopian ; it is possible. Our gaze needs to go deeper beneath superficial appearances and phenomena, to discern a positive reality which exists in human hearts, since every man and woman has been created in the image of God and is called to grow and contribute to the building of a new world.....The peacemaker, according to Jesus' beatitude, is the one who seeks the good of the other, the fullness of good in body and soul, today and tomorrow.

From this teaching one can infer that each person and every community, whether religious, civil, educational or cultural, is called to work for peace. Peace is principally the attainment of the common good in society at its different levels, primary and intermediary, national, international and global. Precisely for this reason it can be said that the paths which lead to the attainment of the common good are also the paths that must be followed in the pursuit of peace.

..... The path to the attainment of the common good and to peace is above all that of respect for human life in all its many aspects, beginning with its conception, through its

development and up to its natural end. True peacemakers, then, are those who love, defend and promote human life in all its dimensions, personal, communitarian and transcendent. Life in its fullness is the height of peace.

..... The predominant model of recent decades called for seeking maximum profit and consumption, on the basis of an individualistic and selfish mindset, aimed at considering individuals solely in terms of their ability to meet the demands of competitiveness.....Concretely , in economic activity, peacemakers are those who establish bonds of fairness and reciprocity with their colleagues, workers, clients and consumers. They engage in economic activity for the sake of the common good and they experience this commitment as something transcending their self-interest, for the benefit of present and future generations. Thus they work not only for themselves, but also to ensure for others a future and dignified employment.

.....The creation of ethical structures for currency, financial and commercial markets is also fundamental and indispensable; these must be stabilised and better coordinated and controlled so as not to prove harmful to the very poor. With greater resolve than has hitherto been the case, the concerns of peacemakers must also focus upon the food crisis, which is graver than the financial crisis

.....I wish to reaffirm forcefully that the various peacemakers are called to cultivate a passion for the common good of the family and for social justice, and a commitment to effective social education.

.....Peace calls for a rich interior life, clear and valid moral points of reference, and appropriate attitudes and lifestyles. Acts of peacemaking converge for the achievement of the common good; they create interest in peace and cultivate peace. Thoughts, words and gestures of peace create a mentality and a culture of peace, and a respectful, honest and cordial atmosphere. There is a need, then, to teach people to love one another, to cultivate peace and to live with good will rather than mere tolerance. A fundamental encouragement to this is “to say no to revenge, to recognise injustices, to accept apologies without looking for them, and finally, to forgive,” in such a way that mistakes and offences can be acknowledged in truth, so as to move forward together towards reconciliation.

...Peace implies activity, compassion, solidarity, courage and perseverance. Jesus embodied all these attitudes in his own life, even to the complete gift of himself, even to “losing his life” (cf. Mt 10:39,Lk 17:33 Jn 12:25)

.....I express my hope that all will be true peacemakers, so that the city of man may grow in fraternal harmony, prosperity and peace.

(1) Gaudium et Spes 1

(2) Pacem in Terris 265-266

From the Vatican , 8th December 2012
