



# The Holy See

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**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS  
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
"PEACE AMONG PEOPLES. 60 YEARS AFTER PACEM IN TERRIS"**

[Pontifical Lateran University, 11-12 May 2023]

Never has war brought relief to the lives of human beings, never has it been able to guide their path through history, nor has it been able to resolve conflicts and oppositions that have arisen in their actions. The effects of war are victims, destruction, loss of humanity, intolerance, to the point of denying the possibility of looking to tomorrow with renewed confidence.

Peace, on the other hand, as a concrete objective, remains in the soul and aspirations of the entire human family, of every people and every individual. This is the lesson that we can still draw today from the message that Saint John XXIII wanted to launch to the world with the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. A positive and constructive message that recalls how building peace means, first of all, the commitment to structure a policy inspired by authentically human values that the Encyclical summarizes in truth, justice, love and freedom.

And yet, sixty years later, humanity does not seem to have grasped how necessary peace is, how much good it brings. A glance at our daily life, in fact, shows how the selfishness of a few, and the ever-narrower interests of a number of individuals, lead us to think that we can find in weapons the solution to so many problems or new needs, as well as to those conflicts that emerge in the reality of the life of nations.

While the rules of international relations have limited the use of force and the overcoming of underdevelopment, which is one of the aims of international action, the desire for power is still, unfortunately, a criterion of judgement and an element of activity in relations between states. And this manifests itself in different regions with devastating effects on people and their affections, without sparing infrastructure and the natural environment.

At this time, the increase in economic resources for armaments has once again become an instrument of relations between states, showing that peace is only possible and achievable if it is

based on a balance of their possession. All this generates fear and terror and risks overwhelming security because it forgets how a “conflagration could be started by some chance and unforeseen circumstance” (*Pacem in Terris*, 111).

It necessitates a profound reform of the multilateral structures the States have created to manage security and guarantee peace, but which are now deprived of the freedom and possibility of action. It is not enough for them to proclaim peace if they are not endowed with the autonomous capacity to promote and implement concrete actions, since they risk not being at the service of the common good, but merely partisan instruments.

As the Encyclical explains clearly, States, called by their nature to the service of their communities, have a duty to operate according to the method of freedom and to respond to the demands of justice, knowing, however, that “daily is borne in on us the need to make the reality of social life conform better to the requirements of justice” (*Pacem in Terris*, 155).

These brief notes are intended to contribute to the objective of deepening the study of the Encyclical, as proposed by the Pontifical Lateran University and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

I entrust to the University the task of advancing the method of education in peace, for a formation that is not only adequate, but ongoing. Indeed, a true scientific formation is the fruit of study and research, further exploration, updating and practical exercises: this must be the road to follow to open up new horizons and to overcome outdated didactic and organizational forms that are no longer appropriate for our era.

I am sure that the study cycle in Peace Sciences I instituted at the Lateran University will contribute to forming the new generations in these objectives, to promote that culture of encounter that is at the basis of a human community formed according to fraternity, which is then the norm of acting in order to build peace.

*From the Vatican, 11 May 2023*

FRANCIS

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