

ACSJC Position Paper: 40th Anniversary of *Pacem in Terris*

On April 11 1963, Pope John XXIII released the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, Peace on Earth. The 40th anniversary of *Pacem in Terris* provides us with the opportunity to remember, celebrate and reflect on this document which still contributes to the Church's understanding of peace.

Pope John Paul II

John Paul II has often reminded us of the wisdom in *Pacem in Terris*. On the first day of 2003, during the homily in the Mass for the World Day of Peace he noted the 40th anniversary of Pope John XXIII's encyclical. He recalled the four key concepts articulated by John XXIII:

With the profound intuition that characterized him, John XXIII identified the essential conditions for peace in four precise requirements of the human spirit: truth, justice, love and freedom. Truth will build peace if all individuals sincerely acknowledge not only their rights, but also their own duties towards others. Justice will build peace if in practice all of us respect the rights of others and actually fulfil our 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 the means to that end, people act according to reason and assume responsibility for their own actions.

Using John XXIII's words, John Paul II reminded his audience that to construct peace is a "permanent commitment".

Full text of *Pacem in Terris* is available at
<http://www.osjspm.org/cst/pt.htm>

Pacem in Terris

For the first time, a papal encyclical was addressed to all people “of good will”. It opens with John XXIII emphasising that peace on earth can only be established if the right order of relationships exists between individuals, between and within nations and among all peoples. These relationships must acknowledge that “every human being is a person” and as a person “has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from” human nature. With these human rights come “just as many respective duties”, for “every fundamental human right draws its indestructible moral force from the natural law, which in granting it imposes a corresponding obligation”.

Assisting the right order of human society is “legitimate authority”, whose “whole reason for existence ... is the realisation of the common good”, which can be “guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained”.

Relationships between nations “must be harmonised in truth, in justice, in a working solidarity, in liberty”.

It is “with deep sorrow” that John XXIII notes the tendency of nations to attempt to preserve peace through the production and stockpiling of arms. The arms race must cease for “the true and solid peace of nations consists not in equality of arms but in mutual trust alone”. Pius XII’s warning is repeated, “Nothing is lost by peace; everything may be lost by war.” It is “contrary to reason to hold that war is now a suitable way to restore rights which have been violated”.

For the promotion of the universal common good the constitution of a public authority at the international level is necessary, so that differences among peoples and nations may be resolved through negotiations and agreements. Such a worldwide public authority ought not “be imposed by force by the more powerful nations”, and “must have as its fundamental objective the recognition, respect, safeguarding and promotion of the rights of the human person”.

Acknowledgement is given to the United Nations Organisation and to its approval of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Finally, John XXIII invites every individual to work for peace, for “there can be no peace between people unless there is peace within each one of them”.

Historical Context

Forty years ago, the Berlin Wall was dividing East and West and the two sides were engaged in an arms race. The Cuban Missile Crisis had occurred in October 1962. It was the height of the Cold War.

Pacem in Terris was a plea for peace and it outlined a principled strategy for peace.

Relevance Today

In 1989 the Berlin Wall fell. It had been a symbol of the division between East and West during the Cold War years. Supposedly a new era was developing, founded on democracy, free market and global security and without the threat of nuclear war and of Communist oppression. Opposing political ideologies, the source of world friction 40 years ago, seem to have been replaced by differences more of a religious nature.

Today, a moral order that could direct and sustain the economic, political, cultural, military and world order is needed.

For Reflection and Discussion

Some thoughts

- Peace is much greater than no armed aggression. It is not the mere absence of war.
- Peace and justice are often linked because peace is the work of justice.
- Peace is a gift of heaven that must be prayed for but it is also a permanent endeavour.
- All of us should speak the truth with our neighbour.
This practice implies acknowledging not only each individual's rights, but also the duties to be fulfilled toward others.

Some questions

- John XXIII names truth, justice, solidarity and liberty as requirements for peace. Solidarity has also been named as charity and love. Which do you prefer and why? What does each of these mean for you? How can you incorporate these principles into your way of life?
- "If you want peace prepare for war".
"If you don't want war prepare for peace".
Which is it?
- How can we give a gospel input into today's realities?
- What changes do I need to make in my life for peace to be achieved?
- Concrete "gestures of peace" are necessary in families, in places of work, in communities, in the totality of civil life, in national and international social gatherings.
Name some "gestures for peace".

Prayers for Peace

Pope John XXIII *Pacem in Terris*

*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you;
not as the world gives do I give to you. John 14:27*

May God banish from our hearts whatever might endanger peace.
May God transform us into witnesses of truth, justice and love.

May God enlighten the rulers of peoples
so that in addition to their solicitude for the proper welfare of their citizens,
they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace.

May God enkindle the will of all,
so that they may overcome the barriers that divide,
cherish the bonds of mutual charity, understand others,
and pardon those who have done them wrong.

May all peoples of the earth become as one,
and may the most longed-for peace blossom forth
and reign always among them.

Pope John Paul II *Pacem in Terris: A Permanent Commitment*

(Message for World Peace Day)

Almighty God, the source of all our good.
You call us from oppression and conflict
to freedom and cooperation for the good of all.

Help people everywhere to build a world of peace
ever more solidly established on the four pillars:
truth, justice, love and freedom.

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) was set up by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference (ACBC) in 1987 as the national justice and peace agency of the Catholic Church in Australia. The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference mandates the ACSJC to promote research, education, advocacy and action on social justice, peace and human rights, integrating them deeply into the life of the whole Catholic community in Australia, and providing a credible Catholic voice on these matters in Australian society. In this way the ACSJC seeks to bring good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed. The ACSJC is accountable to the ACBC through the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace.

The major responsibilities of the ACSJC are:

- Researching issues and monitoring trends in public policy and current affairs in Australia and overseas;
- Presenting Catholic Social Teaching and the social justice tradition of the Catholic Church;
- Applying Catholic Social Teaching to current social justice, human rights, development and peace issues in Australia and overseas;
- Speaking out against injustice, the abuse of human rights, poverty and violence and in favor of change for a more just society and thereby ensuring a credible national Catholic voice on these issues;
- Promoting a spirituality of justice and the integration of concern for social justice into the liturgy, worship and general life of the whole Church;
- Building social justice networks within the Catholic Church, encouraging local action, coordinating action at the national level, and maintaining contact with relevant international Catholic agencies;
- Collaborating with national and international agencies with objectives similar or complementary to those of the ACSJC;
- Witnessing to and promoting unity among Christians through ecumenical action in favour of justice and peace;
- Educating the Catholic and wider community on social justice, human rights, development and peace issues in Australia and overseas by providing guided experience and educational materials;
- Advising the Bishops on statements and actions for justice and peace.

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