

**A CULTURE OF CARE AS A PATH TO PEACE**  
**MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD DAY OF PEACE**  
**1 JANUARY 2021**

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

The 2021 World Peace Day Message, the eighth from Pope Francis, is the 54<sup>th</sup> of this initiative launched by Pope Paul VI in 1968.

As you know, *'A Culture of Care as a Path to Peace'* is the subject of this year's Message.

Before reviewing its content with you, I think it's worth recalling the issues which have been addressed in these Messages during the present pontificate and to situate this year's theme in that continuum:

2014	<b>Fraternity</b> , the Foundation and Pathway to Peace
2015	No longer <b>Slaves</b> , but Brothers and Sisters
2016	Overcome <b>Indifference</b> and Win Peace
2017	<b>Non-Violence</b> , A Style of Politics for Peace
2018	<b>Migrants and Refugees</b> : Men and Women in Search of Peace
2019	Good Politics is at the service of Peace
2020	Peace as a <b>Journey of Hope</b> : <b>Dialogue, Reconciliation, Ecological Conversion</b>
2021	A <b>Culture of Care</b> as a Pathway to Peace

In these subjects one recognises many of the themes Pope Francis has highlighted elsewhere, how the themes of the Message are interlinked and indeed how this year's Message focusses many of them in the optic of *'a culture of care as a pathway to peace'*.

In short, one sees Pope Francis' preoccupation with fostering a culture of global societal awareness and care. In these Messages, as in his Social encyclicals and other statements, he espouses a politics and economic systems, a world economy, which promote an integral and sustainable human and cosmic ecology, aimed at combatting **'the culture of indifference, waste and confrontation, so prevalent today'** (No. 1.4).

## THE 2021 WORLD PEACE DAY MESSAGE : CONTEXT, STRUCTURE & CONTENT

Necessarily, the introduction (No.1) of the 2021 World Peace Day Message is set against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic as a '**multisectoral and global phenomenon**' (no.1.2) which has aggravated '**deeply interrelated crises**' (ibid) in a global setting which is also witnessing '**a surge in forms of nationalism, racism, xenophobia and wars and conflicts**' (No. 1.3.).

These phenomena underline, Pope Francis opines, '**how important it is to care for one another and for creation in our efforts to build a more fraternal society**' (No.1.4)

The annual Messages are rooted in the Christian tradition of *fides quaerens intellectum* : they are faith-inspired impulses in the service of shaping a society built on fraternal / caring structures. They offer faith inspired impulses for reflection, discernment/ discourse and orientation to value informed governance.

Thus Sections 2 to 5 of this year's Message set out the theological and scriptural sources for the Message :

- Section 2 God the Creator, source of our human vocation to care
- Section 3 God the Creator, a model of care
- Section 4 Care in the ministry of Jesus
- Section 5 A culture of care in the life of Jesus' followers

Some points worthy of note in this section which may trigger discussion :

- The section opens in the key of **inter-religious recognition** : '*Many religious have accounts of the origins of human beings and their relationship with the Creator, with their fellow men and women*' (No.2.1).
- The reference to the biblical indicators for the **interconnectivity of everything...** '*that genuine care of our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others*' (No. 2.2 / L Sì 70).

- References to **institutionalised respite** such as, the Sabbath, the Jubilee every seventh year which ‘*provided a respite for the land, for slaves and for those in debt*’ as expressions of a culture of care.
- For the Old Testament prophetic literature - ‘*the way a community treats its weakest members’ is the highest expression of justice*’ (No.3.3). This axiomatic theme is further elucidated by references to the life and mission of Jesus (section 4).
- The **continuing and developing tradition of exercising the spiritual and corporal works of mercy** (No. 5.1) through the ages and in changing circumstances by the followers of Christ ... with a citation from St Ambrose, one of the Church Fathers who proposed that ‘property was meant by God for the common good’ : “nature poured out all things for the common use of all ... and thus produced a common right for all, but greed has made it a right for only a few” (No. 5 / De Officiis 1.28).

In this section (No.5) a citation from an historian recalls that ‘*the needs of the times called forth ‘new efforts’ in the service of Christian charity*’ and reference is made to the numerous and varied services which Churches have provided over time. Such ‘*new efforts*’ are necessary now in our contemporary interdependent world, indeed they are necessary with an existential urgency in many places. Yet for Christians, and specifically for the Justice and Peace family, identifying and giving form and consistency to ‘*new efforts*’ adequate to addressing the issues and structural governance issues of our times in politics (local, national and international), economics and education are crucial for the Church’s mission in society and for its credibility. Our discussion may assist us in exploring or identifying some such ‘*new efforts*’

### **The Church’s Social Teaching – ‘a grammar of care for all people of good will’**

Drawing on a range of sources, section 6 presents core principles of the Social thinking and teaching of the Church :

Care as promotion of the dignity and rights of each person

Care for the common good

Care through solidarity

Care and protection of creation

These principles Pope Francis then proposes to leaders of government and international organisations, business leaders, scientists, communicators and educators as a “**compass**” ‘capable of pointing out a common direction and ensuring a more humane future’ (No.7.1).

In fact, he asks ‘**everyone to take this compass in hand to overcome many existing social inequalities**’ (No. 7.1). Furthermore, he remarks that ‘**this can only come about through a widespread and meaningful involvement on the part of women, in the family and in every social, political and institutional sphere**’ (ibid).

The use and application of such a value compass inevitably raises questions of the quality of international relations, the observance of international law, respect for human rights, humanitarian law, the tragic reality of wars and conflicts and their attendant destruction, as alluded to in the text (No. 7.2,3). In this context, once again Pope Francis suggests the establishment of “ a ‘**Global Fund**’ with money spent on weapons and other military expenditures, in order to permanently eliminate hunger and contribute to the development of the poorest countries” (No.7.5). Perhaps we might consider this suggestion in our exchanges.

The advancement of the vision, set out in the 2021 World Peace Day Message, is dependent upon education as recognised in section 7, where the roles of the family, schools, universities and religious leaders are emphasised. In this regard ‘networking networks’ such as, Justice and Peace Commissions play a key role in the life of the Church and society : they contribute to building and shaping in the light of faith and Christian anthropology an informed civic public opinion, grounding and developing societal self-awareness for the significance of cultural, political, economic issues.

By way of bridging this brief presentation with the wide experience that M. Bertrand Badré brings to our exchange this evening and in the light of our current societal and global circumstances, I shall draw attention to a few themes in the text which we may wish to explore in the discussion :

### **1. Serving the common good in the private as well as in the public sphere**

*‘Every aspect of social, political and economic life achieves its fullest end when placed at the service of the common good, in other words, “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily” ‘. (No. 6 / Gaudium et Spes, 26)*

In this regard we might explore the nexus democracy – capitalism – social marginalization and exclusion, populism : is a better form of capitalism achievable, can capitalism be re-modelled/refashioned ? What ‘new efforts’ (No.5) - eg. initiatives such as, *Blue like an Orange Sustainable Capital* ; the *Council for Inclusive Capitalism*) are required ? How is their ‘refashioning capability’ to be assessed?

### **2. Global Health: research for vaccines**

*“I renew my appeal to political leaders and the private sector to spare no effort to ensure access to Covid-19 vaccines and to the essential technologies needed to care for the sick, the poor and those who are most vulnerable.” (No.1)*

Several issues arise in this context in regard to the production, equitable and just distribution, access especially for developing countries and their populations ...

### **3. Education**

*“Promoting a culture of care calls for a process of education.” (No.8)*

Taking account of the current pandemic, the financial crisis of 2008 and afterwards, the financial and economic impact of the pandemic, climate change and the sustainable development agenda, what measure can the world of finance take to ‘save the world’, a question which alludes to M Bertrand Badré’s book, *Can Finance Save the World?*

### **4 Fostering the role of women**

*[Overcoming inequalities] ‘can only come about through a widespread and meaningful involvement on the part of women in the family and in every social, political and institutional sphere’ (No. 7) ....*

*‘I see them advocating a more “maternal economy”, one that isn’t focused solely on growth and profit but asks how economies can be geared to helping people to participate in society and thrive. They advocate an economy that sustains, protects, and regenerates, not just regulates and arbitrates .... .. My concern is not to assess their theories – I am not qualified – but to assess the ethos of this thinking ... (Pope Francis, Let us Dream, The Path to a Better Future, in conversation with Austin Ivereigh, Simon & Schuster, 2020, p.64).*

I look forward to our discussion arising from this World Day of Peace Message.

+ Noël Treanor  
28 January 2021