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THE LEGACY OF PACEM IN TERRIS

Our new Holy Father, in choosing the name “Francis”, invoked the intercession and indeed the inspiration of St Francis of Assisi for his ministry as 266th successor of St Peter. Speaking with journalists on 16 March, the Holy Father explained the choice: “Thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi. Then I thought of all the wars..., Francis is also the man of peace. That is how the name came into my heart: Francis of Assisi. For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation; these days we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we?”

So to consider the legacy of *Pacem in terris*, putting war and peace in the context of solidarity with the poor and stewardship of creation, seems to fit perfectly within the spirit of Blessed John XXIII, whom this important conference wants to honor with the greatest gratitude and respect.

My remarks this morning begin with recalling the geopolitical context of the *Pacem in terris* when it appeared, and the influence of senior Church figures in striving for peace. Then I will invite you to step back with me in order to appreciate the sources, unique perspective and perennial value of the encyclical. Finally I will reverse direction in order to look forward and explore with you how the encyclical can assist us in our future peace-building, thus furthering the legacy of *Pacem in terris*.

A. *Pacem in terris* and Geopolitical Challenges

i. Human person and dignity at the center: now

This morning we heard about the *New Nuclear Agenda*. Before I turn to the 1960s, I wish to point out that the Holy See has worked for decades with other governments to promote incremental disarmament and the banning of all nuclear weapons. For instance, the Holy See participated last year in the First Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Church's position was that: "It cannot be considered morally sufficient to draw down the stocks of superfluous nuclear weapons while modernizing nuclear arsenals and investing vast sums to insure their future production and maintenance. The current course will ensure the perpetuation of these weapons indefinitely."¹

Moreover, the Holy See is a founding Member State of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Last year, at its 56th General Conference, the Holy See stated, *inter alia*, that "Every step on the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda must be built on the principles of the preeminent and inherent value of human dignity and the centrality of the human person, which constitute the basis of international humanitarian law."² This focus on the human person and human dignity lies at the core of our topic today.

ii. Human person and dignity at the center: then

In his Opening Address at Vatican II, Blessed Pope John drew attention to the issue at hand. He said that "The great problem confronting the world after almost two thousand years remains unchanged. Christ is ever resplendent as the center of history and of life. Men are either with Him and His Church, and then they enjoy light, goodness, order, and peace. Or else they are without Him, or against Him, and deliberately opposed to His Church, and then they give rise to confusion, to bitterness in human relations, and to the constant danger of fratricidal wars."³

But he found room for hope. He acknowledged that some are inclined to condemn "those ways of life which despise God and His Law," the "excessive confidence in technical progress," and "a well-being based exclusively on the comforts of life."⁴ He pointed out that they were becoming "ever more deeply convinced of the paramount dignity of the human person and of his perfection as well as of the duties which that implies," and that "Even more important, experience has taught men that violence inflicted on others, the might of arms, and political

¹ *Statement of the Holy See at the First Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, Vienna, April 30-May 11, 2012, 3.

² *Draft Statement of the Holy See to the 56th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)*, Vienna, September 17, 2012, 5.

³ *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, Discourse of Blessed John XXIII, 11 October 1962. Translations in this text from *Council Daybook: Vatican II, Sessions 1 and 2*, Floyd Anderson, ed. 1965, The National Catholic Welfare Conference, Inc., 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

domination, are of no help at all in finding a happy solution to the grave problems which afflict them.”⁵

iii. Challenges and responses

As all of you know, and as those of you who are about 60 or older vividly remember, *Pacem in terris* was issued at a time when nuclear disaster seemed imminent.

In 1963, not yet two decades after the conclusion of the Second World War, and despite the pledged commitments of Nations to stop wars and to maintain world peace, the human family stood again at the brink of international war. Rival political ideologies had more or less forced the nations of the world into opposed political blocks that competed desperately for supremacy.

By erecting the Berlin Wall in 1961, the German Democratic Republic had completely cut off West Berlin from East Berlin and the rest of East Germany. The Eastern Bloc had claimed that the purpose of the Wall was to protect its population from fascism. Yet, in reality, the Berlin Wall served as a barrier to prevent emigration and defection of its suffering population. The Wall expressed blatant disregard for human rights.

The following year saw nuclear missile sites constructed in Cuba to deter any future invasion attempt by the United States. The United States responded with an air and sea blockade to prevent nuclear weapons from being delivered to Cuba, and it demanded that the Soviet Union dismantle the missile bases and take back all weapons. Tension escalated further when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev wrote to United States President John Kennedy that “The Soviet government considers the violation of the freedom of navigation in international waters and air space to constitute an act of aggression propelling humankind into the abyss of a world nuclear-missile war.”⁶ The Cuban Missile Crisis was the moment when the Cold War came closest to turning into a nuclear conflict. It showed how precarious world order can be in the face of opposed militarized camps based on rival ideologies. Was humanity again going to betray its desire for security and peace? Would humanity bear out Thomas Hobbes’s observation of *man as a wolf to man*?

Fortunately, Pope John XXIII learned that an intervention of his might be welcomed. He was trusted by Khrushchev, from whom he had received Christmas wishes the year before. The Holy Father made a statement on Vatican Radio that was published in newspapers all over the world, including *Pravda*, the official newspaper of the Soviet Communist party. The headline in that paper quoted the Pope: “We beg all governments not to remain deaf to this cry of humanity.” Both leaders could now back down without conceding defeat. Khrushchev ordered the vessels

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶ Letter of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to United States President John F. Kennedy, October 4, 1962.

transporting missiles for Cuba to turn back, and the U.S.A. reduced the number of its warheads in Turkey.

As we come ahead in the years and decades, we find the same foundations of the Church's interventions. For instance, John Paul II exercised influence on ending the Cold War by speaking in Poland, beginning in 1979, of truth, human dignity and liberation of the spirit.

Allow me to share my own experiences too. While Archbishop of Cape Coast, I chaired Ghana's National Peace Council. My beliefs in the deep yearning of all people for dignity, respect and peace were essential to how I led this group. We were involved in a wide variety of issues, but none more difficult than the tense national elections in late 2008. We did not judge or criticize or pick sides. We constantly brought stakeholders together for dialogue and kept communication lines open. I have been assured that we played a major role in achieving social peace during this period.

The results of another mission, to Côte-d'Ivoire in 2011, were not positive. A disputed election gave way to armed conflict. Pope Emeritus Benedict sent me there to express his "solidarity and that of the universal Church to the victims of the hostilities as well as encourage reconciliation and peace.... Violence and hatred are always a defeat! I therefore address a new heartfelt appeal to all the parties concerned, that the work of peace-making and dialogue be initiated so that further bloodshed may be avoided."⁷ Unfortunately some of the forces were inimical to this message of peace and love, and I was prevented from ever entering the country, but perhaps my waiting for days "at the gate" in the name of the Holy Father had some moderating effect.

However, a Pope or Cardinal is not exclusively a crisis-intervener on the world stage. A more typical role, and just as crucial, is to keep reminding the world of the deepest truths. For example, in September 2010, I led the delegation of the Holy See to the UN to discuss the *Millennium Development Goals* and the chance of attaining the goal of *eliminating global poverty* by 2015. Curiously, some of the methods of the anti-poverty campaign tended to target the poor in ways that suggest that the solution to *global poverty* is to eliminate the poor. The delegation of the Holy See intervened vigorously. Reflecting on human dignity and personhood, we reminded the assembly that combating poverty requires investments in the resourcefulness of the poor, making them protagonists in their emergence out of poverty, and not eliminating them. The poor need education to transform them from dependency to resourcefulness.

These examples have something in common: not secular negotiations of interests within the boundaries of the "humanly established order," but rather, reference to what people really want (namely peace and human flourishing); and the need to invoke the basic starting point of human

⁷ General Audiences of 30 March and 6 April 2011.

dignity and personhood, which is grounded in a “divinely established order,” as the next Section will explain.

B. Understanding *Pacem in terris* and its unique contribution

i. The biblical sources: Old Testament

We often hear the word “peace” spoken: we want peace within our family, our community, in society, among nations. Yet what is this peace for which we long? The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* has a beautiful section devoted to the nature of peace that begins with its biblical aspects.⁸ I invite you to study, reflect and pray about it, because it provides a keen presentation of the nature of peace and thus about what this Conference is addressing.

Very briefly, peace is an attribute of God himself: “God is peace” (Judges 6:24). Creation aspires to peace. Violence is caused by interpersonal and social relationships, and violence and peace are mutually incompatible. Peace is not merely the absence of war but represents the fullness of life (*cf.*, Mal 2:5); it is a gift of God; and it involves obedience to His plan. It produces fruitfulness (Isaiah 48:19), well-being (*cf.*, Isaiah 48:18), prosperity (*cf.*, Isaiah 54:13), absence of fear (*cf.*, Leviticus 26:6), and profound joy (*cf.*, Proverbs 12:20).

The promise of peace runs through the entire Old Testament; it is the messianic attribute *par excellence*, in which all other beneficial effects of salvation are included. The Hebrew word ‘*shalom*’ expresses this fullness of meaning in its etymological sense of ‘*completeness*’ (*cf.* *Is* 9:5ff; *Mic* 5:1-4). The kingdom of the Messiah is precisely the kingdom of peace.⁹

ii. The biblical sources: New Testament

By beginning his encyclical with the words *Pacem in terris*, “Peace on earth,” Blessed John XXIII brought us back to Christ’s Nativity and the hymn of the angels (Lk 2, 14).¹⁰ The first part of the hymn is “Glory to God in the highest heaven”; the second is “peace on earth to the men whom He loves”. Here heaven is in relationship to earth and glory to peace. God corresponds with men, meaning men and women of course; but which ones? Whether our translation says *men of good will* or *men whom God loves*, the heart of the matter is that peace is a gift of God to all, because God loves all. But this gift comes to fruition, it becomes real, only for those who

⁸ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (March 7, 2005), 488-493.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 491.

¹⁰ Jerome commentary on Lk 2:14: *glory*: In Jesus God has effected God’s end-time gift of peace. Deeds of peace and not worldly weapons grace the escutcheon of King Jesus. As He completes his journey to Jerusalem, he will be hailed with a greeting of peace (19:38). *Men favored by God*: the Lucan theme of God’s grace towards human beings brings out another dimension of the Davidic birth.

embrace it by working for it and making it, as Jesus was to say in his greatest sermon: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).

In this sense, then, peace does not belong to human nature as such, but under some circumstances – defined and illustrated with the expression “men whom He loves” – it *can* be a human experience to the degree that humans embrace this gift of God. The coming of Jesus brings *something* into the world; something that is necessary because of our eternally fallen human nature. This grounds the entire plan of human salvation as such and applies to all humans, not just to a particular chosen group. Thus Christ’s birth was announced not just to the Jewish people, represented by the shepherds who heard the angels, but to the entire world in the persons of the three Wise Men who came from other lands. In reality, the legacy of *pacem in terris* began with the shepherds and the Magi, did it not?

iii. World order: human, or divinely established

The first sentence of the encyclical says that “Peace on Earth – which man throughout the ages has so longed for and sought after – can never be established, never guaranteed, except by the diligent observance of the divinely established order” (*Pacem in terris*, § 1).

Let us understand this in its half-century context. One of the great lessons, if not the greatest lesson, that humanity learnt, especially, from the world wars (1914-1918, 1939-1945), was that safeguarding the well-being and interest of humanity, and especially peace, is the task of all. Thus, after the First World War, the League of Nations was developed as a fruit of the Paris Conference which ended that war. It was the first international organization whose principal mission was to maintain world peace. It sought, as stated in its *Covenant*, to prevent wars through collective security and disarmament, and to settle international disputes through political means: negotiation and arbitration.¹¹

Though the League’s initiative reflected humanity’s sense of brotherhood and its desire for peace, it failed to prevent World War II and safeguard the peace of the nations. The Second World War ensued. But humanity’s desire for peace and human flourishing once again recovered, as it found the energy from within itself to step over its betrayal to form the United Nations (1945). Inheriting most of the ideals and values of the League of Nations, the United Nations aimed to stop wars between countries, and to provide a platform for dialogue, cooperation in international law, security, economic development, social progress and human rights.

But the building-block of *nation* has persistently been a stumbling-block. The humanly established order does not inherently promote peace, because nations compete. Even when these nations resolve to seek peace via an arrangement like the League of Nations or the United

¹¹ Wikipedia, *The League of Nations* (cf. Covenant of the League of Nations).

Nations, the starting point of *nation* scuttles the enterprise: ultimately, a nation will pursue its interests above those of any set of nations, let alone of all nations. The sovereign nation considers the *particular good* of its own constituent citizenry to be a higher value than the *common good* of all. Nations are prone to the faults that the Apostle James identified when he asked: “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (Jm 4, 1-3).

Here is the origin of conflicts. Envy and greed and other base human tendencies have not disappeared, they are still present and they continue to motivate even what we call diplomacy and national interests. Often these tendencies are disguised by the terms ‘security’, ‘national security’, ‘the priority of security’. Such interests have a largely egotistic origin and lead to many of these consequences. For example, how did the first Europeans settle in North or South America during the 16th century? With better weapons than what the native peoples had. Or how did Europeans colonize Africa? Always with better tools of war. Weapons have always been the most important element in the spread of power and domination: an imposition always motivated by one thing only, the quest for goods and wealth. This tendency unfortunately still obtains today.

Pope John’s radical insight was to write about peace rather than about absence of war, and to address *Pacem in terris* to *all people* and only secondarily to *all nations*. History showed him and has shown all of us the inadequacy of the humanly established order. Peace can be neither established nor guaranteed except by “diligent observance of the divinely established order.” And although he expects the Church to be most acutely attentive, he embraces all people in this vision. This pan-human intuition of the ultimate common good can animate *everyone* of good will – as *Lumen Gentium* (16) explains, only those are excluded who exercise their freedom to choose cynicism, selfishness, and collaboration with Evil.

The pressing question now is the manner in which everyone of good will may make peace-building their own personal practice, rather than leaving it to a few in high office.

C. Peace-Building with *Pacem in terris* as our guide

i. Peace-understanding

Pacem in terris was issued in 1963 when the Cold War was at its height. Although many of the problems of that period persist today, our context is different now in important ways, especially because of rapid globalization. It causes myriad new stresses. The flows of information, services,

innovation, hard goods, pollution, investment, diseases, displaced people, fashions etc., are so global, so fast and pervasive, that no nation has the capacity to achieve common good on its own. This only reinforces the need for *everyone* to be the agents as well as the beneficiaries of peace.

The attainment of peace, according to the teaching of Pope John XXIII, is not essentially with reference to and by the observance of some institutional setup, like the United Nations and its declarations,¹² however universally representative it may be. *Peace on earth* is achieved ultimately with reference to the truth about God and the observance of his established order that includes men and women and the human world. This is the *anthropological* basis and thrust of the encyclical. Its starting point and core topic is human beings, humans created by God, endowed with dignity and bearers of rights and duties. I would define it as both the key to and the guide for peace. It is also the starting point for understanding the relationships among all people, with the purpose of assuring those rights for all.

Accordingly, Blessed Pope John devoted the first section of *Pacem in terris* to the order that should exist among all people and thus first affirmed the nature of personhood. He opened this section by anchoring human rights and duties in human nature: “Any well-regulated and productive association of men in society demands the acceptance of one fundamental principle: that each individual man is truly a person. His is a nature endowed with intelligence and free will. As such he has rights and duties, which together flow as a direct consequence from his nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore altogether inalienable.”¹³

Human rights are *universal* for they are present in all human beings without exception of time, place or subject. They are *inviolable* insofar as they are inherent in the human person and in human dignity, and because the proclamation of these rights demands their respect fully by all people, everywhere and for all people. Finally, these rights are *inalienable* insofar as no one can legitimately deprive another person, whoever they may be, of these rights, since this would do violence to their nature.¹⁴ Let us understand our *right* to peace and our *duty* to work for peace within these parameters.

¹² Pope John XXIII does, indeed, recognize and commend highly the setup of the United Nations by the family of Nations and the development of its various agencies and declarations, particularly, its *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, (cf. *Pacem in terris*, §143).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴ Cf., *Compendium on the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 153.

ii. Peace-building: three guides

Let us now examine three approaches to building on these truths.

a. A focus on rights

The encyclical stresses the rights of all people. After having introduced the value of the human person at the outset, the Holy Father went on to describe those rights which belong to men and women by nature, by creation. Human beings have the right to live; to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life; and to the necessary health and social services. Men and women also have various rights under these headings: rights pertaining to moral and cultural values; the right to worship God according to one's conscience; the right to choose freely one's state in life; economic rights; the right of meeting and association; the right to emigrate and immigrate; and political rights.¹⁵

Pope John affirmed as well that *along with rights come duties*, as a matter of natural law. First, one's duties are to oneself: "Thus, for example, the right to live involves the duty to preserve one's life; the right to a decent standard of living, the duty to live in a becoming fashion; the right to be free to seek out the truth, the duty to devote oneself to an ever deeper and wider search for it." Second, this gives rise to reciprocity of rights and duties between persons. One person's natural right gives rise to a corresponding duty in others of respecting that right. We are not only called to claim our human rights but we are also called to respect the human rights of others.¹⁶

b. The Prayer of St. Francis: our existential desires

Now lest we take human rights in too limited a fashion, I offer you an insight from Monsignor (later Cardinal) Pietro Pavan, the material writer of the Encyclical. He once explained: "Human beings – men and women – have already acquired ... their *personal* dignity: a dignity understood *not* in the moral but in the *existential* sense. And it is this dignity which becomes recognized and attributed to every human being in virtue of his very nature only for the fact that he is a person."¹⁷

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28-30.

¹⁷ "E' indubbio che un segno dei tempi che maggiormente contraddistingue e caratterizza questa nostra epoca è la maggiore consapevolezza che gli esseri umani – uomini e donne – hanno già acquistato o stanno per acquistare *della loro dignità di persona*: una dignità intesa *non* in senso morale, ma in senso *esistenziale*. E' cioè la dignità che viene riconosciuta e attribuita ad ogni essere umano in virtù della sua stessa natura solo per il fatto che è persona." Pietro Pavan, *Pace in terra: Commento all'enciclica Pacem in terris*, Treviso: San Liberale, 2003, pp. 121-22.

This leads me to another approach we can take to building peace. Many of you are familiar with the beautiful prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, which in its popular English versions begins with the words “Make me a channel of your peace” or an “instrument of peace.” This prayer addresses the satisfaction of existential yearnings: by countering hatred with love, despair with hope, darkness with light, sadness with joy, injury with pardon, doubt with faith; by understanding, consoling, pardoning, giving and loving; by bringing peace; and in doing all this, we attain eternal life.¹⁸

c. The teaching of Pope Francis

The Prayer of St. Francis leads us to think our current Holy Father. Less than a month into his pontificate, Pope Francis is already giving us a sense of how he wishes the Church to be a ‘channel for peace.’ In his address to the Diplomatic Corps on 22 March, Pope Francis asserted that “what matters to the Holy See [is] the good of every person upon this earth!”¹⁹ He followed this by noting three key characteristics of St. Francis of Assisi – love for the poor²⁰, the striving for peace for which truth is essential, and care for all of nature.

Further, he suggests a link between peace-building and bridge-building. Pope Francis referred to his title of

“Pontiff, that is, a builder of bridges with God and between people. My wish is that the dialogue between us should help to build bridges connecting all people, in such a way that everyone can see in the other not an enemy, not a rival, but a brother or sister to be welcomed and embraced! ... [The] dialogue between places and cultures a great distance apart matters greatly to me, this dialogue between one end of the world and the other, which today are growing ever closer, more interdependent, more in need of opportunities to meet and to create real spaces of authentic fraternity.”

Indeed, proper arrangements between nations and careful observance of others’ rights are essential in this globalized era, but they are not enough. We must also build bridges of true dialogue and true fraternity if we are to build peace. In this he explicitly included “dialogue with Islam. At the Mass marking the beginning of my ministry, I greatly appreciated the presence of so many civil and religious leaders from the Islamic world. And it is also important to intensify outreach to non-believers, so that the differences which divide and hurt us may never prevail, but rather the desire to build true links of friendship between all peoples, despite their diversity.”²¹

¹⁸ The phrases presented here reflect a popular hymn version, adapted and set to music by Sebastian Temple, ©1967 by OCP Publications

¹⁹ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco_20130322_corpo-diplomatico_en.html

²⁰ "Human rights are violated not only by terrorism, repression, assassinations, but also by extreme poverty and unjust economic structures that cause great inequalities." Cited in "Extreme poverty is also a violation of human rights, says Argentinean cardinal," *Catholic News Agency*, 1 October 2009, retrieved 13 March 2013.

²¹ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco_20130322_corpo-diplomatico_en.html

D. Conclusion

I began my remarks with *Pacem in terris* and the actions of senior Church figures within world affairs. Then we drew on its Biblical sources to better understand its key ideas. This led to several guides for our future peace-building efforts, which will be the legacy of *Pacem in terris*.

I would like to conclude with this exhortation by Pope Francis in his *Urbis et Orbi* address:

Let us accept the grace of Christ's Resurrection! Let us be renewed by God's mercy, let us be loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too; and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish. ... Peace in the whole world, still divided by greed looking for easy gain, wounded by the selfishness which threatens human life and the family, selfishness that continues in human trafficking, the most extensive form of slavery in this twenty-first century; human trafficking is the most extensive form of slavery in this twenty-first century! Peace to the whole world, torn apart by violence linked to drug trafficking and by the iniquitous exploitation of natural resources! Peace to this our Earth! May the risen Jesus bring comfort to the victims of natural disasters and make us responsible guardians of creation.²²

Over lunch you will be discussing *Solidarity and U.S. Foreign Policy*. What opportunities will you discern for connecting the humanly-established order with the divinely-established order? I hope that as you savor your meal, you will also savor some of the tenets of Good Pope John's teaching in *Pacem in terris* and the hints we have already seen and heard from Pope Francis that help us to be peace-makers, peace-builders, channels and instruments of peace.

I thank the Conference organizers once again, and all you participants, for this opportunity to enhance the study and practice of Catholic peace building. May the Holy Spirit assist us all to build *pacem in terris*, starting today and never giving up on this most human and most holy mission.

Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson
President

²² http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/messages/urbi/documents/papa-francesco_20130331_urbi-et-orbi-pasqua_en.html