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Pope Francis' first World Peace Day message

Tony Magliano | Jan. 1, 2014 Making a Difference

A hopeful yet sadly still unfulfilled dream is reflected in the title of Pope Francis' Jan. 1 World Day of Peace message, "Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace."

"In the heart of every man and woman," writes the pope, "is the desire for a full life, including that irrepressible longing for fraternity which draws us to fellowship with others and enables us to see them not as enemies or rivals, but as brothers and sisters to be accepted and embraced.

"Fraternity is an essential human quality, for we are relational beings. A lively awareness of our relatedness helps us to look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother; without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace."

Pope Francis observes that our world is marked by a "globalization of indifference" that leads to a coldness toward "the suffering of others and closed in on ourselves."

Francis adds, "The many situations of inequality, poverty and injustice, are signs not only of a profound lack of fraternity, but also of the absence of a culture of solidarity."

In an age where God is often ignored, Pope Francis counters that true and lasting fraternity must first and foremost be based on the recognition of a common, transcendent Father, and his plan for humanity as presented in sacred Scripture -- especially in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"The succession of economic crises," says the pope, "should lead to a timely rethinking of our models of economic development and to a change in lifestyles."

To a very large extent, we have a brutal, winner-take-all economic model where the rich get fat and the poor are thrown crumbs from the feast.

There are better, far more ethical economic models that use Fair Trade practices that more equitably benefit growers, workers and costumers (see www.fairtradeusa.org [1]).

Here the pope writes, "I would like to remind everyone of that necessary universal destination of all goods which is one of the fundamental principles of the Church's social teaching."

"I appeal forcefully," writes the pope, "to all those who sow violence and death by force of arms: in the person you today see simply as an enemy to be beaten, discover rather your brother or sister, and hold back your hand!

"Give up the way of arms and go out to meet the other in dialogue, pardon and reconciliation, in order to rebuild justice, trust, and hope around you! 'From this standpoint, it is clear that, for the world's peoples, armed conflicts are always a deliberate negation of international harmony, and create profound divisions and deep wounds which require many years to heal.'"

Acknowledging the dangerous fact that the world is flooded with weapons, Pope Francis clearly states, "For this reason, I make my own the appeal of my predecessors for the non-proliferation of arms and for disarmament of all parties, beginning with nuclear and chemical weapons disarmament."

Instead of condoning huge militaries, more weaponry, the lucrative arms trade and the modernization of nuclear weapons, the Holy Father appeals for a halt to the arms trade, and calls for total multilateral disarmament -- starting with nuclear and chemical weapons.

"Give up the way of arms and go out to meet the other in dialogue, pardon and reconciliation, in order to rebuild justice, trust, and hope around you!"

[Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated social justice and peace columnist. He is available to speak at diocesan or parish gatherings about Catholic social teaching. His keynote address, "Advancing the Kingdom of God in the 21st Century," has been well received by diocesan gatherings from Salt Lake City to Baltimore. Tony can be reached at tmag@zoominternet.net [2].]

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