



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD
WORLD DAY OF PEACE

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Library of the Apostolic Palace
Friday, 1st January 2021*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good afternoon and Happy New Year!

We begin this year by placing ourselves under the maternal and loving gaze of Mary Most Holy, celebrated in today's liturgy as Mother of God. Thus once again we resume the journey along the paths of history, entrusting our anxieties and our torments to her, who can do everything. Mary looks at us with maternal tenderness just as she used to look at her Son Jesus, and if we look at the Nativity Scene, [he turns towards the Nativity scene in the hall], we see that Jesus is not in the crib, and they tell me that Our Lady said: "Won't you let me hold this Son of mine in my arms for a bit?". This is what Our Lady does with us: she wants to hold us in her arms to protect us as she protected and loved her Son. The reassuring and comforting gaze of the Holy Virgin is an encouragement to ensure that this time, granted to us by the Lord, be spent on our human and spiritual growth, that it be a time in which hatred and division — and there are many of them — be resolved, that it be a time to feel more like brothers and sisters, a time to build and not to destroy, to take care of one another and of creation. A time to make things grow, a time of peace.

Care of our neighbour and of creation is precisely the theme to which the World Day of Peace, which we are celebrating today, is dedicated: *A Culture of Care as a Path to Peace*. The painful events that marked humanity's journey last year, especially the pandemic, taught us how necessary it is to take an interest in others' problems and to share their concerns. This attitude

represents the path that leads to peace, because it fosters the construction of a society founded on fraternal relationships. Each of us, men and women of this time, is called to make peace happen: each one of us, we are not indifferent to this. We are called to make peace happen each day and in every area of life, taking those brothers and sisters who need a comforting word by the hand, a tender gesture, supportive help. This is a task given to us by God. The Lord has given us the task of being peacemakers.

And peace can be built if we begin to be at peace with ourselves — at peace inside, in our hearts — and with those who are near us, removing the obstacles that prevent us from taking care of those who find themselves in need and in indigence. It means developing a mentality and a culture of “care taking” in order to defeat indifference, to defeat rejection and rivalry — indifference, rejection, rivalry — which unfortunately prevail. To remove these attitudes. And thus, peace is not only the absence of war. Peace is never sterile: no, peace does not exist in a *quirofano* (Spanish for “operating room”). Peace is within life: it is not only the absence of war, but rather a life rich in meaning, rooted in and lived through personal fulfilment and fraternal sharing with others. Then that peace, so longed for and always endangered by violence, by egoism and evil, that peace that is endangered may become possible and achievable if I take it as a task given to me by God.

May the Virgin Mary, who gave birth to the “Prince of Peace” (*Is 9:6*), and who cuddles him this way, with such tenderness in her arms, obtain for us from heaven the precious gift of peace, which cannot be fully pursued by human strength alone. Human strength alone is not enough because peace is above all a gift, a gift of God; it should be implored with unceasing prayer, sustained with patient and respectful dialogue, constructed with an open cooperation with truth and justice and always attentive to the legitimate aspirations of individuals and peoples. My hope is that peace may reign in the hearts of men and women and in families, in places of work and of recreation, in communities and in nations. In families, at work, in nations: peace, peace. Now is the time to think that life today is organized around war, and enmities, by many things that destroy. We want peace. And this is a gift.

On the threshold of this beginning, I extend to everyone my heartfelt greetings for a happy and serene 2021. May each one of us make sure that it be a year of fraternal solidarity and peace for all; a year filled with trusting expectation and hope, which we entrust to the protection of Mary, Mother of God and our Mother.

After the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear Brothers and Sisters, to all of you connected through the media, I wish you a peaceful and serene new year. I thank the President of the Italian Republic, the Honourable Sergio Mattarella, for the greetings he addressed to me yesterday evening in his Message for the end of the year, and I cordially reciprocate his greetings.

I am grateful to all those who in every part of the world, while respecting the restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, have promoted moments of prayer and reflection on the occasion of today's World Day of Peace. I think in particular of yesterday evening's virtual march organized by the Italian episcopate, Pax Christi, Caritas and Catholic Action, as well as the one from this morning organized by Sant'Egidio, being broadcast by streaming worldwide. I thank everyone for these and the many other initiatives in favour of reconciliation and harmony among peoples.

In this context, I express sadness and concern for the latest escalation of violence in Yemen that is causing numerous innocent victims, and I pray so that efforts will be made to find solutions that allow peace to return to that tormented population. Brothers and sisters, let us think of the children in Yemen! Without education, without medicine, hungry. Let us pray together for Yemen.

In addition, I invite you to join the Archdiocese of Owerri in Nigeria in prayer for Bishop Moses Chikwe and his chauffeur who were kidnapped in recent days. Let us ask the Lord that they and all those who are victims of similar actions in Nigeria may return to freedom unharmed and that that beloved country may regain security, harmony and peace.

I offer a special greeting to the *Sternsinger*, the "Star Singers", children and young people in Germany and Austria, who despite being unable to visit families in their homes, found a way to bring their joyful Christmas message to them, and to collect donations for their peers in need.

I wish everyone a year of peace and hope, under the protection of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*