



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN A CONFERENCE
SPONSORED BY THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE CELEBRATING
THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF "PACEM IN TERRIS"**

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 3 October 2013*

Video

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning,*

Today I am sharing with you the anniversary of the historic Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, promulgated by Blessed John XXIII on 11 April 1963. Providence wanted this meeting to take place just after the announcement of his canonization. I greet everyone and in particular Cardinal Turkson, whom I thank for the words he has addressed to me on behalf of you all.

The most elderly among us can remember well the era of the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* at the peak of the "Cold War". At the end of 1962 humanity was on the brink of an atomic world war and the Pope raised a dramatic and heart-rending appeal for peace, thus turning to all those in positions of power; saying: "With your hand on your conscience may each one hear the anguished cry which is raised to the skies from all parts of the earth, from the innocent children to the elderly, from the people of the communities: Peace, peace!" (*Radio Message*, 25 October 1962). It was an appeal to men but it was also a petition to Heaven.

The dialogue that began with difficulty between the great rival Blocs during the Pontificate of another Blessed, John Paul II, led to surmounting that phase and opened space for freedom and dialogue. The seeds of peace sown by Blessed John XXIII bore fruit. Yet, in spite of the fall of walls and barriers, the world continues to be in need of peace and the call of *Pacem in Terris*

continues to be extremely timely.

1. But what is the foundation of building peace? *Pacem in Terris* makes us recall this: it consists in the divine origin of man, of society and of authority itself which calls individuals, families, different social groups and States to live out relations of justice and solidarity. It is the duty of all men and women to build peace following the example of Jesus Christ, through these two paths: promoting and exercising justice with truth and love; everyone contributing, according to his means, to integral human development following the logic of solidarity.

Looking at our current reality, I ask myself if we have understood the lesson of *Pacem in Terris*? I ask myself if the words justice and solidarity are only in our dictionary or if we all work so that they become a reality? The Encyclical of Blessed *John XXIII* clearly reminds us that there cannot be true peace and harmony if we do not work for a more just and integral society and if we do not overcome every level of selfish, individualistic, and group interests.

2. Let's move forward a little bit. What consequences does recalling the divine origin of man, society and authority itself have? *Pacem in Terris* focuses on a basic consequence: the value of the person, the dignity of every human being, to be promoted, respected and safeguarded always. It is not only the principle civil and political rights which must be guaranteed — affirms Blessed *John XXIII* — but every person must also be effectively offered access to the basic means of sustenance, food, water, housing, medical care, education the possibility to form and support a family. These are the goals which must be given absolute priority in national and international action and indicate their goodness. It is also important that space be made for the wide range of associations and intermediary bodies that, in the logic of subsidiarity and in the spirit of solidarity, pursue these objectives. The Encyclical certainly affirms the goals and elements which have already been absorbed into our way of thinking, but we must ask ourselves: do they really exist in practice? After 50 years are they reflected in the development of our societies?

3. *Pacem in Terris* did not intend to affirm that the duty of the Church is to give concrete directions on themes which in their complexity must be left open to discussion. It is not dogma which indicates practical solutions in political, economic and social matters but rather dialogue, listening, patience, respect for the other, sincerity and also readiness to revise one's opinion. Basically *John XXIII*'s appeal for peace in 1962 aimed to orient the international debate according to these virtues.

The fundamental principles of *Pacem in Terris* can fruitfully guide the study and discussion on “*res novae*”, the topic of your convention: the education emergency, the influence of the means of mass communication on peoples' conscience, the access to the earth's resources, the positive or negative use of results from biological research, the arms race and the national and international security measures. The global economic crisis is a grave symptom of the lack of respect for man and for the truth with which governments and citizens have taken decisions, they tell us this

clearly. *Pacem in Terris* draws a line that goes from the peace to be built in the hearts of men to reviewing our model of development and of action at all levels so that our world may become a world of peace. I ask myself, are we willing to accept this invitation?

Speaking of peace, speaking of the inhuman global economic crisis that is a grave symptom of the lack of respect for man, I cannot but recall with great distress the victims of the umpteenth tragic shipwreck which occurred off the shore of Lampedusa today. The word 'disgrace' comes to mind! It is a disgrace! Let us pray together to God for those who lost their lives: men, women, children, for their relatives and for all refugees. Let us unite our efforts so that similar tragedies are not repeated! Only through the concerted collaboration of everyone can we help to prevent them.

Dear friends, may the Lord with the intercession of Mary Queen of Peace help us always to welcome in ourselves peace which is a gift of the Risen Christ, and to work always with commitment and creativity for the common good. Thanks.