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Message of the Holy Father on the occasion of the 103rd German Catholic Day

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis on the occasion of the 103rd German Catholic Day (*Deutsche Katholikentag*), taking place in Erfurt, Germany, from 29 May to 2 June 2024:

Message of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

I warmly greet all of you who have come together for the 103rd Catholic Day in Erfurt to pray together, exchange ideas, strengthen one another in faith and bear witness to the Gospel of Christ.

“The future belongs to the man of peace”. This is the motto of these days. Psalm 37 gives the reason why the man of peace is promised a future: because he is righteous, because he does what pleases God, because he trusts in God. However, the tragedy of man from the beginning is that he does not trust God, but rather mistrusts Him; that he does not do what pleases God, but instead goes his own way. The original God-ordained unity and harmony of all created things is thus “out of joint”: humanity no longer uses creation in the spirit of the Creator, but abuses and mistreats it in a selfish quest for power and profit. This is how suffering and death came into the world (cf. *Gen 3*). What is meant here is felt and mentioned by many people today - especially young people - from very different cultural and ideological backgrounds. They sense that something is wrong with people and with the world, that we cannot simply carry on as before, that we need a change of heart, a genuine reorientation.

Jesus' mission was characterized by exactly this reorientation of humanity towards God - and thus also a renewal and healing of the relationships with fellow human beings, with creation and, not least, with itself. The peace that Christ brings becomes visible when He gives people new hope, a future in difficult times: the marginalized, the sick, those who were mired in guilt. Christ called injustice by its name and condemned disproportion. In order to restore divine order, Jesus often had to turn human logic and values upside down, which is particularly evident in the Sermon on the Mount. But this is precisely how He establishes peace: “by the

blood of His Cross" (*Col* 1:20). Yes, let us look up to the Cross: there, "violence is not answered with violence, death is not answered with the language of death. In the silence of the Cross, the uproar of weapons ceases and the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace is spoken" (*Homily*, 7 September 2013). The peace of Christ comes from love and devotion. At Easter, it becomes clear that the man of peace has a future.

We Christians are called to continue His mission: Like Him, we want to give new standing to the abandoned, marginalized and lonely, and let them experience that they are not alone. But we also want to campaign publicly, politically, for better living conditions and in particular to give a voice to those who are not listened to. Without justice, there can be no peace. Not only in Europe, but also in other parts of the world, fundamental human rights currently appear to be jeopardized by increasing anti-Semitism, racism and other ideologies that tend towards extremism and violence.

The many moral, social, economic and political crises we are experiencing are all interconnected. Care for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, the protection of life and the family, the defence of the dignity of all human life as well as outer and inner peace all belong together. The problems affect everyone and can only be solved together. Accordingly, a broad-based dialogue with as many voices as possible is required at all levels of social, economic and political life. The numerous discussion events at the *Katholikentag*, with many high-level representatives from important areas of social life, offer a good opportunity for this.

In this context, it is wonderful and important that the *Katholikentag* is also a place of ecumenical togetherness and interreligious dialogue. After all, we need to work together with all people of good will who are prepared to build a peaceful future. Just how powerful the joint witness of Christians can be was experienced in 1989, when people of peace, candle in hand, triggered the Peaceful Revolution. Here in Erfurt, the prayers for peace took place in the *Lorenzkirche* and in the Protestant *Predigerkirche*. This miracle of peaceful change, triggered by praying people, shows us what prayer can do. And so, this remembrance also encourages us today!

The man of peace has a future. This certainty reminds us and encourages us. Let us pray for peace. Let us also pray for each other, that the power of the Holy Spirit will fill us with hope and joy. I sincerely wish you spiritually enriching and fruitful days! I will accompany you in prayer - please pray for me too. May the God of peace bless you.

From the Vatican, May 2024

FRANCIS
