

## **Jan. 1, 2014 (A) FEAST OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD & WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR PEACE**

These Homily Notes contain a summary of Pope Francis' Message for the World Day of Peace.  
The complete text may be obtained on the Vatican website: vatican.va

On the first day of the New Year, we celebrate the Feast of Mary as Mother of God, and we join in the Church's worldwide day of prayer for peace. What better way can we begin the New Year than to pray to Mary, our spiritual Mother, and the Mother of all who become members of the Body of Christ? We cannot begin to fathom the love and care that Mary has for each of us as our spiritual Mother. To have peace in the world is at the centre of Mary's heart. Only with worldwide peace can true human development take place for all and poverty, hunger, homelessness and lack of health care be overcome and brotherly love prevail.

Every January 1, our Holy Father gives us his message for the World Day for Peace. The subject of his message for 2014 is Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace. Our summary follows in the Holy Father's words:

1. "In this, my first Message for the World Day of Peace, I wish to offer to everyone, individuals and peoples, my best wishes for a life filled with joy and hope. In the heart of every man and woman 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. We should remember that fraternity is generally first learned in the family... The family is the wellspring of all fraternity, and as such it is the foundation and the first pathway to peace, since by its vocation, it is meant to spread its love to the world around it. ...

"Globalization makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers.....

"True brotherhood among people presupposes and demands a transcendent fatherhood. Based on the recognition of this fatherhood, ... each person becomes a "neighbour" who cares for others.

2. "Where is your brother?" (Gen. 4:9)

"... According to the biblical account of creation, all people are descended from common parents, Adam and Eve ... to whom Cain and Abel were born. ...

"Abel is a shepherd, Cain is a farmer. Their profound identity and their vocation is to be brothers.... Cain's murder of Abel bears tragic witness to his radical rejection of their vocation to be brothers ... Cain ... killed Abel out of jealousy ...

"The story of Cain and Abel teaches that we have an inherent calling to fraternity, but also the tragic capacity to betray that calling. ...

### 3. “And you will all be brothers” (Mt. 23:8)

“... Can the men and women of this world ever fully respond to the longing for fraternity placed within them by God the Father?

“... the answer given by the Lord Jesus: “For you have only one Father, who is God, and you are all brothers and sisters” (cf. Mt. 23:8-9). The basis of fraternity is found in God’s fatherhood ... the specific and extraordinarily concrete personal love of God for each man and woman. (cf. Mt. 6:25-30) It is a fatherhood which effectively generates fraternity, because the love of God, once welcomed, becomes the most formidable means of transforming our lives and relationships with others, opening us to solidarity and genuine sharing..

“ In a particular way, human fraternity is regenerated *in* and *by* Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection.... Jesus Christ ... loving the Father unto death on the Cross (cf. Phil. 2:8) has through his resurrection made of us a new humanity, in full communion with the will of God, with his plan, which includes the full realization of our vocation to fraternity.

“He created in himself one people, one new man, one new humanity.

All who accept the life of Christ and live in him acknowledge God as Father and give themselves completely to him, loving him above all things.... In Christ, the other is welcomed and loved as a son or daughter of God, as a brother or sister, not as a stranger, much less as a rival or even an enemy....no one can remain indifferent before the lot of our brothers and sisters.

### 4. Fraternity, the foundation and pathway to peace

“ ... fraternity is the foundation and pathway of peace.

“ Paul VI stated that not only individuals but nations too must encounter one another in a spirit of fraternity.

“ we must also work together to build the common future of the human race. In the first place, this duty falls to those who are most privileged. Their obligations are manifested in three ways: the *duty of solidarity*, which requires richer nations to assist the less developed, the *duty of social justice*, which requires *realignment of relationships* between stronger and weaker peoples in terms of greater fairness: and the *duty of universal charity*, which entails the promotion of a more humane world for all in which each has something to give and to receive ...

“ If then, we consider peace as *opus solidaritatis* (work of solidarity), we cannot fail to acknowledge that fraternity is its principal foundation... peace is either the good of all or it is the good of none. It can be truly attained as the highest quality of life, only if all are guided by solidarity as “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.”... What is needed is the willingness to “lose ourselves” for the sake of others rather than exploiting them, and to “serve them” instead of oppressing them

“Christian solidarity presumes that our neighbour is loved not only as a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but as the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit as another brother or sister. As John Paul noted: “At that point, awareness of the common fatherhood of God. of the brotherhood of all in Christ and of the presence and life-giving action of the Holy Spirit, will bring to our vision of the world a *new criterion* for interpreting it, for changing it.

## 5. Fraternity, a prerequisite for fighting poverty

“... the lack of fraternity between peoples and men and women is a significant cause of poverty. In many societies, we are experiencing a profound poverty of relationships as a result of the lack of solid family and community relationships.... This kind of poverty can be overcome only through the rediscovery and valuing of fraternal relationships in the heart of families and communities, through the sharing of joys and sorrows, of the hardships and triumphs that are a part of human life.

“Moreover, if on the one hand we are seeing a reduction in *absolute poverty*, on the other hand we cannot fail to recognize that there is a serious rise in *relative poverty*, that is, instances of inequality between people and groups who live together in particular regions. In this sense, effective policies are needed to promote the principle of fraternity, securing for people – who are equal in dignity and in fundamental rights – access to capital, services, educational resources, healthcare and technology so that every person has the opportunity to realize his or her life project and can develop fully as a person.

“One also sees the need for policies which can lighten an excessive imbalance between incomes. ... the Church’s teaching on the so-called *social mortgage*, which holds that although it is lawful and indeed necessary that people have ownership of goods, insofar as their use is concerned, they possess them as not just their own, but common to others as well, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as themselves.

“Finally, there is yet another form of promoting fraternity – and thus defeating poverty- which must be at the basis of all others. It is the detachment of those who choose to live a sober and essential lifestyle, of those, who by sharing their own wealth, thus manage to experience fraternal communion with others. This is fundamental for following Jesus Christ and being truly Christian. ... many families and responsible citizens firmly believe that it is their fraternal relationship with their neighbours which constitutes their most precious good.

## 6. The rediscovery of fraternity in the economy

“The grave financial and economic crises of the present time find their origin in the progressive distancing of man from God and from his neighbour, in the greedy pursuit of material goods on the one hand, and in the impoverishment of interpersonal and community relations on the other ...

“The succession of economic crises should lead to a timely rethinking of our models of economic development and to a change in lifestyles. Today’s crisis can also provide us with a fruitful opportunity to rediscover the virtues of prudence, temperance, justice and strength. These virtues can help us to recover the fraternal bonds which join us to one another, with deep confidence that human beings need and are capable of something greater than maximizing their individual interest.

## 7. Fraternity extinguishes war

“ ... To all those who live in lands where weapons impose terror and destruction, I assure you of my personal closeness and that of the whole Church, whose mission it is to bring Christ’s love to the defenceless victims of forgotten wars through her prayers for peace, her service to the wounded, the starving, the refugees, the displaced and all those who live in fear. The Church also speaks out in order

to make leaders hear the cry of pain of the suffering and to put an end to every form of hostility, abuse and the violation of fundamental human rights.

“As long as so great a quantity of arms are in circulation as at present, new pretexts can always be found for Initiating hostilities. For this reason, I make my own the appeal of my predecessors for the non-proliferation of arms and for the disarmament of all parties, beginning with nuclear and chemical weapons disarmament.

“We cannot fail to observe that international agreements - while necessary and greatly to be desired – are not sufficient of themselves to protect humanity from the risk of armed conflict. A conversion of hearts is needed which would permit everyone to recognize in the other a brother or sister to care for, and to work together with, in building a fulfilling life for all.

#### 8. Corruption and organized crime threaten fraternity

“... Individual selfishness develops socially – whether it is in the many forms of corruption, so widespread today, or in the formation of criminal organizations, from small groups to those organized on a global scale. .. These organizations gravely offend God, they hurt others and they harm creation.

“ I also think of the heartbreaking drama of drug abuse ... of the devastation of natural resources and ongoing pollution, and the tragedy of the exploitation of labour.... of illicit money trafficking and financial speculation, often predatory and harmful for entire economic and social systems, exposing millions of men and women to poverty..

I think of prostitution, which reaps innocent victims. I think of the abomination of human trafficking, crimes and abuses against minors, the frequently overlooked tragedy of migrants.

Yet human beings can experience conversion; they must never despair of being able to change their lives.

I wish this to be a message of hope and confidence for all, even for those who have committed brutal crimes, for God does not wish the death of the sinner, but that he converts and lives.

“ ... when we look to crime and punishment, we cannot help but think of the inhumane conditions in so many prisons ... the Church does much in these environments, mostly in silence. I exhort everyone to do more ...

#### 9. Fraternity helps to preserve and cultivate nature

... we do not preserve nature; nor do we respect it or consider it a gracious gift for and set at the service of our brothers and sisters.

“In a particular way the *agricultural sector* is the primary productive sector with the crucial vocation of cultivating and protecting natural resources in order to feed humanity...How are we using the earth’s resources? ... It is a truly pressing duty to use the earth’s resources in such a way that all may be free from hunger. It is well known that present production is sufficient, and yet millions of persons continue to suffer and die from hunger , and this is a real scandal....it is a question of justice, equality and respect for every human being ...facilitating an effective and fair access to those essential and primary goods which every person needs and to which he or she has a right.

## 10. Conclusion

“Fraternity needs to be discovered, loved, experienced, proclaimed and witnessed to. But only love, bestowed as a gift from God, enables us to accept and fully experience fraternity.

“We Christians believe that in the Church we are all members of a single body, all mutually necessary, because each has been given a grace for the common good. (cf. Eph. 4:7,25; 1 Cor 12:7)...This entails weaving a fabric of fraternal relationships marked by reciprocity, forgiveness, and complete self-giving. “By this will all know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn 13:35) This is the good news that demands from each one a step forward, listening to the suffering and hopes of others, and walking the demanding path of love that knows how to give and spend itself freely for the good of all our brothers and sisters.

“Every activity must be distinguished by an attitude of service to persons. Service is the soul of that fraternity that builds up peace.

“May Mary, the Mother of Jesus, help us to understand and live every day the fraternity that springs up from the heart of her Son, so as to bring peace to each person on this our beloved earth.”

### Our Mass

We are gathered together in an assembly of peace, joined together in Christ, who reconciles and unites all of us in himself. He is present in this Mass in the saving power of his Death and Resurrection which brought his peace to the world. Through his saving action in this Mass, he puts his power for peace into us, for us to extend it to others.

May Christ shape our hearts so that he may live in us and express his fraternity to others through us

(If priests think that this summary is too long for preaching, they can omit sections 2, 6, 8.& 9.

However, it is of fundamental and vital importance that our people be aware of the meaning of fraternity for building a just society and a lasting peace, as Pope Francis explains.)