Fact Sheet & Questions

Peace Through Justice:
The Message of the Church during the Last Century

Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903):
Pope Leo supported an international forum to guarantee peace and endorsed other international peace conferences; he used his diplomatic skills to broker disputes between Germany and Spain, and between other states and nations.

“A vast number of soldiers and armaments . . . can never secure a sure and lasting peace . . . peace is based upon good order.” Nostris Errorem

“Peace is the daughter of justice.” Molti e Segnalati

“We must defend the weak, prevent war, recall nations to reciprocal obligations of brotherhood [and sisterhood].” Molti e Segnalati

Pope Pius X (1903-1914)
Pope Pius X continued the peace policies of Leo XIII, promoted peace through justice, encouraged the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the peace movements in Europe and the U.S.

Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922)
Called the Pontiff of Peace, Pope Benedict XV opposed WW I and offered peace plans to both sides; he questioned theory of just war; offered principles of peace, including: moral force preferred to force of arms, disarmament, international law to safeguard the rights of all peoples, pardon and forgiveness.

“The Gospel does not have one law of charity for individuals and another for states and nations.” Pacem Dei Munus Pulcherrimum

“True peace depends upon the mutual benevolence and respect for the rights and dignities of others much more than on hosts of armed men.” Alorcbe Fummo

Pope Pius XI (1922-1939)
After first agreeing to concordats with the Italian and German fascists, Pope Pius XI realized the evil in these modern states and issued letters condemning prejudice and persecution.

“The nations of today live in a state of armed peace which is scarcely better than war itself.” Ubi Arcano Dei

“The Peace of Christ can only be the peace of justice according to the words of the prophet ‘the work of justice shall be peace.”’ Ubi Arcano Dei

Pope Pius XII (1939-1958)
Pope Pius XII saw first-hand the horrors of WWII and worked to prevent further conflicts. His motto was “Peace is the fruit of Justice.”

“Peace must be tempered by the impartial scale of justice, which embraces in fraternal charity all peoples and all nations and which does not bear hidden germs of discord and strife.” Summi Maerori

“Unquestionably, people who are needy should be raised to a status that is worthy of man; yet not with force, not with violence, but with laws that are just. What must certainly be done, under the auspices of truth and the guidance of justice, is to eliminate as soon as possible all the differences which separate and divide peoples. Let all remember what war brings in its wake, as we know only too well from experience—nothing but ruin, death and every sort of misery.” Summi Maerori
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(cont.)

Pope John XXIII (1958-1963)
Pope John XXIII issued the peace encyclical *Pacem in Terris* in 1963, stressing the need for disarmament and the obsolescence of war in the modern age, rights of all (including economic rights) and responsibilities of all to be peacemakers, and the international common good supported by organizations such as United Nations. *Pacem in Terris* was addressed to all humans—peace is a part of the natural order for all and peaceful coexistence is crucial to all in this era. Catholics must collaborate with all other peoples of good faith—peacemaking is a program of ecumenical cooperation based on reconciliation. Active solidarity is required from all. All nations must turn from racism, extreme nationalism. The four Pillars of Peace are truth, justice, love, and liberty.

Main Themes of *Pacem in Terris*:

**Human Rights**, as the foundation of peace: “Every human being is a person with rights, including economic rights.”

**Underdevelopment**: “Peace is a healthy and just global society.” Peace is not just an absence of war; peace is an exchange, a communion, a permanent readiness to share with others the best of oneself and one’s resources.

**War no more**: discredits war in the face of nuclear destruction: “It is contrary to reason to hold that war is now a suitable way to restore peace.”

**Disarmament**: “Justice and right reason demand that the arms race should cease.”

**International institutions**: necessary to protect the common good—the United Nations must be fully recognized and supported.

“Peace is a possible human endeavor; Christians must lead because of the message of Christ.” *Pacem in Terris*

“Peace will be but an empty sounding word unless it is founded on the order of truth, built according to justice, vivified and integrated by charity, and put into practice in freedom.” *Pacem in Terris*

“Relations between nations are to be further regulated by justice.” *Pacem in Terris*

“May Jesus Christ banish from the hearts of all whatever may endanger peace. May he transform all into witnesses of truth, justice and love.” *Pacem in Terris*

“Peace is not merely the absence of war. Peace results from that harmony built into human society by its divine Founder, and actualized by all people as they thirst after even greater justice.” *Gaudium et Spes*

Pope Paul VI (1963-1978)
Pope Paul VI promoted a just world order and just global systems and structures as the way to true peace.

“Development is a new name for peace.” *Populorum Progressio*

“Peace cannot be limited to a mere absence of war, the result of an ever precarious balance of forces. No, peace is something that is built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God, which implies a more perfect form of justice among people.” *Populorum Progressio*

“There is a need to establish a greater justice in the sharing of goods, both within the national communities and on the international level. There is a need to go beyond relationships of force, which never have established justice in a true and lasting manner.” *Octogesima Adveniens*
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**Pope John Paul II (1978- )**  
Pope John Paul II promotes Human Rights--economic and social rights as well as civil and political rights--as the way to peace.

“Peace is built on the foundation of justice.” *Centesimus Annus*

“True peace is never simply the result of military victory, but rather implies both the removal of the causes of war and genuine reconciliation between people.” *Centesimus Annus*

“Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that at the root of war there are usually real and serious grievances: injustices suffered, legitimate aspirations frustrated, poverty, and the exploitation of multitudes of desperate people who see no real possibility of improving their lot by peaceful means. For this reason, another name for peace is development. Just as there is a collective responsibility for avoiding war, so too there is a collective responsibility for promoting development.” *Centesimus Annus*

“In a different world, ruled by concern for the common good of all humanity, or by concern for the spiritual and human development of all instead of by the quest for individual profit, peace would be possible as the result of a more perfect justice among people.” *Centesimus Annus*

“Peace is indivisible. It is either for all or for none. It demands an ever greater degree of rigorous respect for justice and consequently a fair distribution of the results of true development.” *Centesimus Annus*

“Peace is the fruit of solidarity. The goal of peace, so desired by everyone, will certainly be achieved through the putting into effect of social and international justice, but also through the practice of the virtues which favor togetherness, and which teach us to live in unity, so as to build in unity, by giving and receiving, a new society and a better world.” *Centesimus Annus*

**The U.S. Bishops and Peace**  
*The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace* was written by the U.S. Bishops in 1993 in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of their *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response*, and the thirtieth anniversary of Pope John XXIII’s encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth). The underlying theme echoes the message of the Pope and Church leaders worldwide: true peace will only be built on justice, solidarity, and forgiveness.

In their attempt to envision a new world community based on justice, the Bishops note five areas which deserve special attention. They are: strengthening global institutions, securing human rights, assuring sustainable and equitable development, restraining nationalism and eliminating religious violence and building cooperative security.

“We cannot really be peacemakers around the world unless we seek to protect the lives and dignity of the vulnerable in our midst. We must stand up for human life wherever it is threatened. This is the essence of our consistent life ethic and the starting point for genuine peacemaking.” *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace, A Reflection of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on the Tenth Anniversary of The Challenge of Peace*, November 17, 1993, Introduction

“Our country, in this ever shrinking world, should reformulate its policies and programs to address the still widening gap between the rich and the desperately poor. Generous and targeted assistance, sustainable development, economic empowerment of the poor and support for human rights and democracy are essential works of peace.” *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace, A Reflection of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on the Tenth Anniversary of The Challenge of Peace*, November 17, 1993, Introduction
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In the Bishops’ Pastoral Message, *Living With Peace and Hope After Sept. 11*, the bishops again note that peace can only come through global justice.

“Intolerable extremes of misery and a growing gulf between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ characterize much of today’s world, and breed hostility towards economic globalization. This hostility can be addressed, in part, by a comprehensive development agenda, including substantially increased foreign aid, more equitable trade, and continuing efforts to relieve the crushing burden of debt. We who have so much have a responsibility to the world’s needy. We cannot remain last among donor countries in development aid. The United States contributes just one-tenth of one percent of its gross national product in official development assistance.” *Living With Peace and Hope After Sept. 11*, November 14, 2001

“Overcoming poverty in our own nation requires a continuing commitment as well . . . The poor abroad and in our own country must not be asked to bear a disproportionate burden of the sacrifices that will have to be made.” *Living With Peace and Hope After Sept. 11*, November 14, 2001

The Bishops also emphasize **Human Rights** for all people in all countries. They condemn the buildup of arms:

“It is a moral imperative that the U.S. government work to reverse the spread of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, pursue progressive nuclear disarmament, take concrete actions to reduce its own predominant role in the conventional arms trade, and work with other nations to do the same.” *Living With Peace and Hope After Sept. 11*, November 14, 2001

To promote global justice, the Bishops emphasize the **strengthening of the UN and other international institutions.** They realize “prudent action is necessary to build a safer, more just and more peaceful world.”

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church and Peace*

“Respect for and development of human life require peace . . . Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained without . . . respect for the dignity of persons and peoples and the assiduous practice of solidarity.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2304

**Discussion Questions:**

Why do you think the popes and bishops in the 20th Century were so concerned with peace?

Why did they recognize that bringing about justice is a necessary condition for peace in the modern world?

What are ways that Church leaders have defined justice throughout the years?

What specifically have they said about the arms build up and the arms trade?

How can disarmament help promote justice as well as peace?

What are the justice concerns that they have highlighted throughout the years?

How can we all contribute to building peace through justice?