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# EDUCATING FOR PEACE

## COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE PAPAL MESSAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WORLD DAY OF PEACE

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### **Abstract**

The goal of the following text is to analyse papal teachings in the context of their messages for the World Day of Peace. The popes' universal messages addressed to people of goodwill throughout the world are related to the Catholic Church's mission. Educating to peace demands a multi-dimensional view and action in the areas of political and social life. The undertaken analysis of documents and an overview of the literature points to complementarity in the popes' messages, an interdisciplinary approach to peace mainly present in the area of social teaching, including political theology. In achieving the research goal, the author systematized the popes' messages into four thematic areas. Every instance of the messages was tightly related to the actual problems facing humanity. The popes' words contained, on the one hand, hope for the world, yet on the other hand, they were a real indication for all people to take on concrete tasks, both rulers and the ruled.

*Keywords:* Holy See, popes, message, peace, World Day of Peace

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### **1. Introduction**

The Catholic Church also has a significant impact on shaping peace and security in the modern world. Its interest in these areas of everyday life results from the very essence of Christianity. The message of peace is an important part of Jesus' evangelical teaching and one of the fundamental issues raised by Christian philosophers, especially Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

The presented text focuses on an analysis of selected examples of activity, support or instructions present in the message of peace, meaning the official, annual message of the pope, the head of the Catholic Church and the Holy See. On every January 1, a message of peace is sent to all people of goodwill. (It has become a tradition that popes usually prepare a message for December 8 (the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary) in the year preceding the next World Day of Peace.) The research process was mainly based on the methods of document analysis and a critical analysis of the literature. The research objective in this text is to systematize the contents of the messages of

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peace. The article attempts to answer a few questions: 1) What is the basis of the Catholic Church's teaching on peace? 2) What is the nature of this teaching? 3) Who is it addressed to? The article attempts to deliberately link the universal contents of the messages within four thematic blocks. The problems that individual popes deal with are identical and complementary. This proves that the highlighted issues are still important and present in the contemporary, peaceful interpersonal and international space.

The problems presented in the following documents clearly emphasize that issues concerning international peace and security are multidimensional and require broad, responsible support by all relevant entities. They strongly emphasize the non-military aspect of security [1]. This approach is entirely consistent with the contemporary post-Cold War view of peace and security. For this reason, it can be stated with all responsibility that the context of the messages has always been extremely up-to-date, innovative and corresponding to the current and future needs of the world and humanity. It is clearly correlated with the Church's mission and teaching [2, 3].

## **2. Results and discussion**

### ***2.1. The Holy See's activity in the social and political space***

The Holy See [4, 5], a formal institution of the Catholic Church, is at the same time a *de facto* subject of international relations, including active and professional diplomacy [6-11]. The voice of the pope and the Church also covers issues of wars, peace and security, and basic problems in the modern world that can affect the lives of an individuals and entire communities.

The Holy See manifests its universal message through many official documents addressed to the world and humanity. It is the voice of peace to people of goodwill. However, a significant part of these documents should be treated as a kind of tool of soft influence on the modern international security policy [12]. Encyclicals, pastoral constitutions, messages of peace and exhortations can be compared to the practices applied by a rational pressure group. It is not in the interest of the Holy See to gain political power or subjugate anyone. The purpose of these activities is to sensitize people to the need for living in peace, to ensure security for all people, especially the weakest, and to support political actions undertaken by sovereign nations and international organizations, including inter-religious and intercultural dialogue [13-15].

It is particularly important to pay attention to non-military factors of great importance in the process of shaping peace and security. Hence, the contents of the presented documents often concern the issues accompanying people's everyday troubles [16]. Therefore, in them, we will find problems affecting an individual, family, nations, states, those concerning, for example, human life, the role of educating the young generation, guaranteeing decent work, a balanced distribution of goods, counteracting poverty, discrimination, injustice, solidarity and many other important issues [17, 18]. Popes do not avoid instructions

concerning political issues, including the responsibility of politicians and the military, including arms reduction and the renunciation of violence.

## ***2.2. The universality of the papal messages for the World Day of Peace***

The World Day of Peace was celebrated for the first time on January 1, 1968. It was established on December 8, 1967, by Pope Paul VI [19]. Since then, every pope has delivered a message of peace to the world on New Year's Eve. This idea included the desire "that then every year, this commemoration be repeated as a hope and as a promise, at the beginning of the calendar which measures and outlines the path of human life in time, that Peace with its just and beneficent equilibrium may dominate the development of events to come" [WDP, 1.1.1968, [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_mes\\_19671208\\_i-world-day-for-peace.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_p-vi_mes_19671208_i-world-day-for-peace.html), accessed on 10.1.2021]. Paul VI was convinced that peace is a great value for all people of goodwill. Moreover, it is an individual, social, state and international challenge. Every subject not only has rights, but also obligations in this respect. Therefore, it should be emphasized that this call is addressed not only to Christians, but to all people who are together and solidarily responsible for the fate of the world. Everyone, regardless of their place of residence, status and social role, must be aware of their daily tasks arising from the obligation to create peace.

John XXIII was known as the 'Pope of Peace', and his work was the inspiration and natural basis for initiating the World Day of Peace [20]. His encyclical *Pacem in terris* crowned his activity in this area. This document, entirely devoted to the cause of peace and security, is still the Holy See's primary tool in shaping its message of peace. John Paul II emphasized this in his message for the XXXVI World Day of Peace in 2003 entitled *Pacem in Terris: a Permanent Commitment*. Pointing to the universal and still valid content of the encyclical as well as the activity and wisdom of its author, in the summary of his peaceful message, John Paul II postulates that we continually "build a world of peace ever more solidly established on the four pillars indicated by Blessed Pope John XXIII in his historic Encyclical: *truth, justice, love, freedom*" [21]. Benedict XVI recalled in his 2007 address that the central figure of a peaceful heritage is the human person, every one of us [22]. He is convinced that concern for peace is expressed in showing respect for each person. This is due to profound humanism, creating a good future for new generations.

The human person and these four pillars from the encyclical *Pacem in terris* are clearly present in the 53 messages of the four popes to date: Paul VI [23], John Paul II [24-28], Benedict XVI [29] and Francis [30, 31]. They always deal with the most important challenges facing the human community [32]. When analysing individual messages, it is necessary to emphasize that they are the Holy See's extremely complementary and complete teaching tool on peace and security. Individual titles, and especially the contents of the messages, although they obviously refer to other Church documents, clearly provide universal

guidelines for the world. Popes immediately react to current events, challenges and threats, including the period of the world's bipolar division until 1989, systemic transformations in the 1990s, armed conflicts (Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine), the spread of terrorist and other threats [33-35].

The key research goal of the article is to systematize the words of the popes contained in the messages for the World Day of Peace so far. In order to achieve this goal, their contents were arranged into four topics. It was assumed that they fully reflect the subjective and objective scopes of papal teaching, present in the titles of documents. This assumption clearly comprises one possible way to interpret this teaching.

### **2.3. *Peace is man's right***

In the first group of selected messages, the popes focused on human rights [36]. Respecting these rights is a basic condition on the way to the peaceful coexistence of people, nations and states. The popes addressed the issue of human rights in practically every message. This issue is multidimensional and, in reality, concerns man's everyday existence. In addition to the cross-sectional interests of the popes, human rights issues found their place in several messages both in their titles and throughout the documents.

In 1969, Paul VI emphasized the importance of developing and respecting human rights to guarantee the effective consolidation of peace: "Peace is today intrinsically linked with the ideal recognition and effective implementation of the Rights of Man. To these fundamental rights there corresponds a fundamental duty, which is Peace. Peace is a duty." [WDP, 1.1.1969, [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_mes\\_19681208\\_ii-world-day-for-peace.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_p-vi_mes_19681208_ii-world-day-for-peace.html), accessed on 10.1.2021] This message was reinforced in 1977 when the pope called for the protection of human life. It unequivocally points to a close correlation between the defence of life and peace. Humanity's progress, as it passed from struggle to peace, where life was sacrificed to protect it, requires everyone's determination. Human life is the greatest value. However, this is possible only when it is based on truth, justice, civil freedom, love of neighbour and faith.

The role that respect for human rights plays in the matter of peace was pointed out by John Paul II in 1999. The pope clearly stated: "when the promotion of the dignity of the person is the guiding principle, and when the search for the common good is the overriding commitment, then solid and lasting foundations for building peace are laid. But when human rights are ignored or scorned, and when the pursuit of individual interests unjustly prevails over the common good, then the seeds of instability, rebellion and violence are inevitably sown." [WDP, 1.1.1999, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_14121998\\_xxxii-world-day-for-peace.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_14121998_xxxii-world-day-for-peace.html), accessed on 15.1.2021] Both of these messages were addressed to the world on the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948. Hence, they make all people aware of the need for peaceful coexistence

based on guaranteeing and respecting the rights of every human being. Its catalogue of rights, which is the foundation for the peaceful coexistence of people, was enriched by John Paul II in the content of several messages. In them, he directly points to guaranteeing and respecting freedom (1981), including religious freedom (1988), minorities (1989) and the conscience of every human being (1991).

Benedict XVI in his message for the year 2011 emphasizes the importance of religious freedom, which is helpful and conducive in building lasting peace based on universal values. Moreover, it is an inalienable right. We cannot force anyone to use their rights in a civic activity simply for the sake of peace of mind. This applies in particular to believers, often persecuted and discriminated against for their faith.

In 2015, Francis raised the problem of slavery in a contemporary context. The pope clearly indicates that it is becoming a global misfortune for millions of exploited people who are working in difficult conditions or even sold for other people's profit and well-being. Brotherhood supports peace, not indifference and selfish enrichment at the expense of the weakest [37].

The contemporary experiences of many people, nations and states show that the place of peace in the catalogue of human rights is extremely topical. Peace is still a big challenge throughout the world. Basic human rights are still not respected in many parts of the world. This is related to the clear and decisive resistance of rulers who are against basing political and social relations on freedom and respect for every human being. In addition, more and more often, many areas of life are formed in the spirit of widely promoted liberalism. All people, especially those who rule states and are responsible for material goods, should take into account man's good due to his inherent dignity. We cannot allow a human person to be treated as an object for political, economic or personal development. To a great extent, this also concerns life, from conception to natural death. The phenomena of abortion and euthanasia, including the extent of their execution, are highly controversial today. The Catholic Church does not change its doctrine and teaching in this respect, neither under the influence of social opinion nor due to statutory law.

#### ***2.4. The human person in the family as the heart of peace***

The second thematic area emphasizes the importance of specific entities (persons, institutions) working for peace on Earth. Popes attach key importance in this respect to the family. The vision of the family in the Catholic Church is clearly related to the Gospel message. Within papal documents, one can emphasize such indications contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC, 1992, § 1601f), the encyclical *Lumen fidei* (2013), the exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (FC, 1981) and others.

Paul VI's message in 1974 applies unequivocally to every human being. On the one hand, it is a humble request, and on the other, a special

commitment to humanity. If the world is to survive and exist in peace, then there is a close relationship between every person's responsibility and commitment to promoting peace on Earth. This task must be undertaken by both rulers and the ruled. However, everything begins with creating good models in one's immediate environment, especially in the family.

The dominant message in this respect was announced by John Paul II in 1994. The source of peace is the family, that is, a solid community of a woman and a man, ready to accept and raise every child. The family is the basic environment for socialization and education. Everyone's role, especially those in power, is to care for its strong position, established over many generations. The Polish pope writes: "the family, as the fundamental and essential educating community, is the privileged means for transmitting the religious and cultural values which help the person to acquire his or her own identity. Founded on love and open to the gift of life, the family contains in itself the very future of society; its most special task is to contribute effectively to a future of peace." [WDP, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_08121993\\_xxvii-world-day-for-peace.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121993_xxvii-world-day-for-peace.html), accessed on 12.1.2021]

Every family member is responsible for its duration and happiness. The pope particularly emphasized in the content of these messages the important role of women, who are educators for peace (1995), including children (1996) and young people (1985), the natural heirs of today's efforts for creating a peaceful future. For John Paul II, the young generation is an opportunity for a better and just world. This message became one of the main practical activities of his pontificate. Young people will fulfil the expectations placed on them when they receive support and moral guidance during their education. This appeal was formulated in John Paul II's messages in 1979 and 2004.

In 2007, Benedict XVI supported the voice of his predecessors in making the human person the central figure of peace. In respecting the rights of every human being, promoting humanism determines the success of efforts for peaceful coexistence. Reducing a person to the level of a consumer, a recipient of goods, causes ideological tensions that lead directly to violence. In 2008, the pope referred directly to the family as a key 'community of peace'. Everything that a person has in the light of life values and attitudes is shaped in the family. This translates into all dimensions and spaces in which a person functions. For Benedict XVI, the youth are an invariably important subject of peaceful relations. In 2012, the pope emphasized the responsibilities placed on young people and those caring for them, pointing to the values related to educating young people for peace. This appeal is also directed to parents, teachers, guardians, and all others involved in the work of shaping personality and attitudes.

Francis points to the importance of the human family in the context of the global responsibility for the fate of those in need, especially migrants and refugees. In 2018, he pointed to the need to support them in the spirit of 4

attitudes: acceptance, protection, promotion and integration. Men, women and children either migrate or flee. Entire families have to find themselves in a new, often unknown reality.

From the Catholic Church's perspective, this dimension of the peaceful message makes it possible to state unequivocally that the effective search and consolidation of peace in the world requires special protection to every person shaping their personality in the family. Future patterns of political and social behaviour are formed in the family. The modern world has a lot of catching up to do in this respect. The family, its durability and the special bonding that creates it are being questioned. Attempts are made to impose, including on Christians, new cultural patterns and partnerships, such as homosexual and polygamous. A child is sometimes treated completely instrumentally (including abortion, child trafficking and hard child labour). The basic functions of the family are transferred to the state level. Peace on earth requires that the natural order be the basis for shaping interpersonal and international relations. The family is one of the most important links in this chain. It is impossible to object to the Catholic Church, which invariably and consistently defends treating the family as the basis for man's total development.

### ***2.5. Peace in the light of relationships and values***

In the third mentioned area, it should be noted that individual popes clearly emphasized the importance of interpersonal, international and interstate relations as well as universal values. In this respect, the issues of reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue, justice and counteracting divisions are particularly dominant. These relations are also the result of the activity and responsibility of politicians.

The problem of reconciliation is clearly visible in Paul VI's messages (1970, 1971, 1975). The pope expressed this most forcefully by emphasizing in the 1971 message that the principle of brotherhood is universal. It is complemented by justice (1972). For this reason, one should advocate cooperation and respect for other people. This is not an easy task in practice. A clear obstacle in this respect is widely promoted individualism and maximizing freedom, understood as exclusively meeting one's needs. This is visible in the proposals addressed to the young generation born in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, among others under the slogans 'live the moment', 'do what you want' and 'it's your life'.

John Paul II notices the need to look anew at oneself and one's neighbour based on truth (1980). At the same time, he does not allow using 'the weapons of falsehood', even if it be partly related to noble purposes. Trust, overcoming fear and prejudices, meaning building a new peace, requires openness to the whole and only truth. The pope also speaks in the same fraternal spirit (1997) as his predecessor. Moreover, he notices that justice is an extremely important value for peace, and it is related to forgiveness (1998). In his 2002 message, the pope

strongly emphasized this context in the light of the terrorist attacks, whose unfortunate symbol became the date of September 11, 2001. John Paul II clearly and forcefully identifies the value of dialogue for peace (1983, 2001).

This dialogue, in conjunction with solidarity and balanced development (1987), while combating divisions and poverty (1986, 1993), is a universal challenge, encompassing the entire world. The responsibility for counteracting any divisions rests on all people, especially those who in any way have an impact on the fate of the world. Pope John Paul II emphasizes this clearly, writing in 1986 that “those upon whom the future of the world depends, regardless of their political philosophy, economic system or religious commitment, are all called to help construct a single peace based on social justice and the dignity and rights of every human person” [WDP, 1.1.1986, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_19851208\\_xix-world-day-for-peace.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19851208_xix-world-day-for-peace.html), accessed on 12.1.2021]. This call is still valid and is a fundamental task for the whole world.

Benedict XVI, in his first address of peace in 2006, upheld his predecessor's message to build peace based on truth. It must come from seeing the importance of God and man's role. The pope writes that “in the firm conviction that she offers an indispensable service to all those who strive to promote peace, she reminds everyone that, if peace is to be authentic and lasting, it must be built on the bedrock of the truth about God and the truth about man” [WDP, 1.1.2006, [http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_b-en-xvi\\_mes\\_20051213\\_xxxix-world-day-peace.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_b-en-xvi_mes_20051213_xxxix-world-day-peace.html), accessed on 10.01.2021]. This message is extremely simple and specific. Moral and normative relativism results from questioning the meaning of truth indicated by the pope. Benedict XVI in 2009 also raised the issues of the importance of fraternity and shared responsibility. The key context is the global problem of poverty. He indicates that it may also have a moral character. Lack of means for a living devastates the whole person, including his spiritual dimension.

Francis also indicated the role of fraternity, meaning shared responsibility for one another, as a key relationship and value [38]. He made these issues the subject of his first message in 2014. The pope recognizes the multidimensionality of global connections and dependencies that result from the dynamic change of contacts based on high mobility and networking. However, this ease in contacting others does not make a person a neighbour. This understanding of the other person is crucial for effectively working for peace. In three messages (2017, 2019 and 2021), Francis also raises the key issue of political responsibility. Good politics is a public service, one devoid of personal interests, violence and subjugating others. This indication is crucial in a world where there is a permanent decline in authorities, ideas and values that stood as the foundations for politics as Aristotle's art for the common good. Inequality and using violence limit human freedom [39]. These place it in a relationship of subjection, diminishing man's inherent dignity. The Pope calls us to “make active nonviolence as our way of life” [WDP, 12.12.2016, <https://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/fr/blog/640-pope-francis-make-active-nonviolence-our-way>



-of-life-a-statement-for-the-50th-catholic-church-s-world-day-of-peace, accessed on 14.1.2021] on various levels, especially the interpersonal, social and international. Only then can the broken world once again truly centre on justice and peace. This theme of 'non-violence' clearly echoes in the teachings of the current Pope.

The thematic issues of the peace messages mentioned in this section seem obvious. They constitute a commonly accepted area of values, declared by the vast majority of people. However, in practice, political, social, economic, religious and cultural divisions still occur. Moreover, they often constitute a serious source of conflict, hindering peaceful coexistence. Successive popes, being aware of these threats, constantly remind us and postulate overcoming these divisions and building a world in which there is fraternal co-responsibility and solidarity. Relativizing values, being guided solely by one's subjective good and individual freedom rules out the possibility of building solidarity and fraternal relationships. Building relationships in light of the papal office involves equal and free people. The natural foundation of order on different levels obviously includes the categories of rulers and the ruled. However, this cannot lead to social divisions, marginalization, exclusion or even persecution. The Church promotes values that all people share.

## ***2.6. Peace as the apostolic message of the Catholic Church***

The fourth highlighted area of issues concerns the instructions related to the Church's apostolic vocation. They are directed not only to Christians and believers (although these groups are especially called to work for peace), but to all mankind. These values are based on truth, morality, and the universal keeping of God's eternal order.

Paul VI emphasizes that, whatever the circumstances, peace is a lasting and possible value (1973). The basic assignments when working for peace are morality (1976) and responsibility for one's words and deeds, especially in keeping contracts. The pope points to the interdependence of responsibility and human morality. He talks about specific 'moral weapons', meaning the necessity to respect contracts. Declared actions and adopted agreements must consequently be reflected in the practice of socio-political activities. Moreover, it is necessary to unequivocally reject and condemn all forms of violence (1978).

John Paul II emphasizes that the world is established by the will of God, who gives people the world to rule, and peace is also His gift (1982). This gift can be wasted by selfish closure to other people, maximizing personal benefits, and hardness of heart. The pope directly wrote about these matters in 1984. Subduing the earth does not mean that it can be exploited in a way that is detached from the natural order (1990). The consequences of ill-considered actions are generally visible. This applies to everyone, no matter what they believe in or their religion. Of course, the pope assigns Christians a special role in this matter (1992).

War, which is the lack of peace, is a tragedy for all believers and non-believers alike (2000). Peace is about overcoming this state; it is a constant commitment. The pope recalled the timeliness of this message in 2003. At that time, he returned to the encyclical *Pacem in terris*. In his last message (2005), three months before his death, John Paul II emphasized how important it was to apply moral law, to stigmatize and fight all manifestations of evil in all its forms: “No man or woman of goodwill can renounce the struggle to overcome evil with good. This fight can be fought effectively only with the weapons of love.” [*Encyclical letter Fratelli Tutti of the holy father Francis on fraternity and social friendship*, 3.10.2020, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html), accessed on 12.1.2021] This is the expected reality and the true message of peace.

In 2010, Benedict XVI recalled the responsibility of caring for the world, ensuring its resources and the survival of future generations. An ill-considered exploration of the Earth will inevitably lead to conflicts and divisions. As a consequence, the direct result of this may be war. Peace requires responsibility. If we “want to cultivate peace, [we must] protect creation” [*WDP*, 1.1.2010, [http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20091208\\_xliiii-world-day-peace.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliiii-world-day-peace.html), accessed on 13.1.2021]. These words were confirmed in the last peaceful message of Benedict XVI in 2013. Two months before resigning from the office of the Bishop of Rome, he pointed to the extremely current and profound truth that peace is God’s gift, but also a result of man’s actions. Every person must, therefore, cooperate with the Creator when working to subdue the earth in a spirit of peace, order, stability, life and the fulfilment of the promises flowing from the Eight Beatitudes.

Francis took up this theme in his 2016 message, writing about the need to move away from indifference, both towards God and fellowman. The way to peaceful coexistence is true solidarity, embracing all peoples and nations. Francis’ message in 2020 undertakes a unique ecology of peace. It is understood as a necessary departure from hatred, hostility and fratricidal struggle. The pope refers both to the common good understood as a social and political space, as well as to the environmental space. The land is being ruthlessly robbed. Therefore, “faced with the consequences of our hostility towards others, our lack of respect for our common home or our abusive exploitation of natural resources - seen only as a source of immediate profit, regardless of local communities, the common good and nature itself - we are in need of an ecological conversion” [*WDP*, 1.1.2020, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20191208\\_messaggio-53giornatamondiale-pace2020.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20191208_messaggio-53giornatamondiale-pace2020.html), accessed on 13.1.2021].

The peaceful messages of the popes are thus essentially open to every believer, both those who seek and those who do not share faith in God. Forgiveness, reconciliation, and social justice are an inspiration for Christians;

they result from the Decalogue and the Gospel. Other religions have their foundations and a source of values. Non-believers rely on universal, human values, also sharing and fully accepting them. All people of goodwill desire peace and want to contribute to this work. Therefore, this peaceful message is not merely the Church's pastoral voice to its faithful. Peace depends on every person who wants to live in a stable and safe earthly reality. An obstacle to peaceful, steady development is bringing people in opposition to one another due to the existing natural differences, including cultural and religious. Increasing this division leads to tragic consequences. The most striking example of this is terrorism, which ruins dialogue and reconciliation.

### **3. Conclusions**

The above-selected fragments concerning the activity of the popes and the Holy See regarding peace prompt us to present some general reflections and conclusions. They result from the research assumptions and systematizing the subject matter and are the result of formulated answers to the questions posed in the introduction.

First, the Holy See addresses its message on peace and many other important, human issues with a sense of responsibility for the fate of the world. As an equal subject of international relations, it has 'soft' tools of real influence on current international politics. The peace messages are an example of this. This message is obvious from the perspective of the Catholic Church's moral duty and evangelical responsibility. However, this is also a contribution by Christians to international relations. Thus, the Holy See is a real pressure group in the contemporary international reality, which all subjects of world politics take into account, and this is clearly visible in the last century, especially during John Paul II's pontificate.

Second, peace is a universal value. Believers and non-believers alike share the responsibility for this work, and we all want to live in a world where everyone has the right to live in peace. Hence, the voice of the Church is not limited to Christians. Of course, they have a special duty to cultivate daily peaceful coexistence. However, unbelievers have an equal obligation to make efforts in this regard.

Third, peace on earth is entirely possible. It is not a naive, utopian vision that stands in stark contrast to the so-called political realism. The world is not perfect, and there are significant levels of evil, hatred and confrontation. However, overcoming these obstacles and mutual prejudices is evidence of a mature humanity that is responsible for the fate of the world. If it were otherwise, the political efforts of heads of state and diplomats to stabilize the world would be utterly futile.

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