



Peace

Ethics in Action for Sustainable and Integral Development



The purpose of this meeting is to answer the question posed by Pope Benedict XVI to the representatives of the world's religions gathered in Assisi to pray for peace: "What is the state of peace today?" Accordingly, Ethics in Action will reflect on how to achieve the *tranquillitas ordinis* (the tranquility of order), as Saint Augustine denoted peace (*De Civitate Dei*, 19, 13)—which people, civilizations and religions consider the greatest good.

In response to this aspiration of individuals and peoples, the United Nations, in synergy with the Magisterium of the Popes, unanimously established the SDGs and, in particular, SDG 16 to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".

The global landscape has changed dramatically since St. John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in terris* addressed the threats to peace back in 1963. What has not changed, however, is the impression that "people are living in the grip of constant fear... afraid that at any moment the impending storm may break upon them with horrific violence" (PT, § 112). Today, peace is being suffocated by "piecemeal" violence, threatened by wars in different countries and continents, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the rise of terrorism by non-state and so-called state actors (some claiming religious motives), the abuses suffered by migrants and victims of human trafficking, and the devastation of the environment.

The political and juridical context for peace-building has changed since 1963—not only by the shattering of the Iron Curtain and the chains of colonialism, but also by the crisis of new

experiments in supra-national governance, the emergence of new populist nationalisms, and large-scale migrations of peoples. At the same time, the social-economic landscape has been transformed by globalization, not only by increased economic and technological interdependence, but also by growing economic disparities and the “globalization of indifference”—with their extreme manifestation in new forms of slavery such as forced labor, prostitution, organ trafficking and organized crime. The work of human beings, too—a vital source of human dignity and purpose—is ceaselessly changing by robots and other technological advances. And the socio-cultural landscape is being reshaped by an explosive growth in information and communications technology, and by the revolution in social norms and morals that define an individualistic society rooted in the technocratic paradigm, at the expense of notions such as virtue, the common good, and social justice.

Commenting on the subtitle of *Pacem in Terris*, “On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty”, St. John Paul II insisted that these “essential requirements of the human spirit” bind the global community together not by coercion or by the mere absence of war, but rather by the most profound human actions of discovering and acknowledging the truth, recognizing the one’s self as another and loving the other as one’s self (in particular those who are suffering), sharing our goods of mind and spirit with others, and freely assuming responsibility for our own choices. Peace, therefore, is not the mere absence of war—it encompasses the conditions that allow for all people to unfold their dignity in the context of the common good.

Convinced that these teachings of St. John XXIII and Pope Francis on peace have a strong relevance for the world today, for leaders of nations as well as for individuals, *Ethics in Action* will reflect on the needed actions and policies, both globally and locally, to advance this holistic notion of peace.

Ethics in Action also seeks to retrieve the moral basis for peace that can be discerned from the different religions. It will ask how and under what circumstances religion can foster peace and human flourishing, and how religious actors can lay the groundwork for true and sustained “peace on earth”. It will also discuss reform of global financial policies and institutions. That complex topic, with its obvious connection to mass migration caused by regional violence and environmental degradation, ties directly to topic of the third meeting of *Ethics in Action* (25-26 May 2017).

We can conclude with a recurrent theme of Pope Francis: “Jesus himself offers a “manual” for this strategy of peacemaking in the Sermon on the Mount. The eight Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:3-10) provide a portrait of the person we could describe as blessed, good and authentic. Blessed are the meek, Jesus tells us, the merciful and the peacemakers, those who are pure in heart, and those who hunger and thirst for justice.” Historic wrongs and injustices can only be overcome if men and women are inspired by this message of happiness and hope, a message that offers a way out of the impasse that so often locks people and nations into a vicious circle of violence. Since 1963, some of the conflicts that seemed insoluble at the time have been resolved and passed into

history, for example Dr Martin Luther King Jr's fight against racial discrimination, Nelson Mandela's reconciliation to overcome apartheid, and the peace treaty between Argentina and Chile, mediated by dialogue. Let us take heart, then, as we struggle for peace and justice, that our common pursuit of a world that respects the dignity of every human person, can and will bear fruit.

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