

A resource of 9 sessions
for a slow reading of

Fratelli Tutti

Session Eight:
Paths of Renewed
Encounter



A Summary of Chapter 7 of *Fratelli Tutti*

“Those who work for tranquil social coexistence should never forget that inequality and lack of integral human development make peace impossible” (235).

Pope Francis calls for peacemakers to forge new paths of healing and “renewed encounter” in our fractured world. He begins by explaining that building peace requires “starting anew from the truth,” or facing the reality of the harm done.

The Holy Father writes that, in the difficult work of building a peaceful society, “[there] is an ‘architecture’ of peace, to which different institutions of society contribute, each according to its own area of expertise, but there is also an ‘art’ of peace that involves us all,” including ordinary people and especially the most vulnerable (231).

Pope Francis describes the importance of reconciliation and its relationship to forgiveness, explaining that while forgiveness is central to Christianity, it does not mean forgetting harm done and it cannot be required of victims. Memory is important; we cannot forget tragedies such as the Holocaust or the atomic bombings in Japan, lest we repeat these catastrophic mistakes.

Finally, Pope Francis develops the Church’s teaching on the irrationality of the “false answers” of the death penalty and war, including the use or threat of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. In the modern world “[we] can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits... it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a ‘just war (258).”

Likewise, he says the use of the death penalty makes no sense in a world where it is possible to keep society safe without it. Pope Francis clearly states the Church’s opposition to the use of the death penalty.

This document is the 8th in a series of 9 that offers material for a slow reading of the chapters of *Fratelli Tutti*. It provides

- **A SUMMARY** (page 1) and the **COMPLETE TEXT OF CHAPTER 5** of *Fratelli Tutti* (pages 4–9)
- **DISCUSSION MATERIALS** (page 2-3) - a selection of some key paragraphs and discussion questions
- **ADDITIONAL MATERIALS**, ‘Leaven for the Lump’ (pages 1 and 10-12) – suggestions and links to song, art, poetry, for example – offering complements to the reading of *Fratelli Tutti*, to further engage with its themes.

Leaven for the Lump

- **Songs:** In memory of Harry Patch (*Radiohead* <https://bit.ly/3moBzem>); Song Of Bangladesh (Joan Baez – <https://bit.ly/34s224y>); *Is my team ploughing* (Butterworth/Houseman sung by Bryn Terfel <https://bit.ly/3jpy5WY>)
- **Novels:** *Birdsong*: Sebastian Foulkes; *Regeneration*, Pat Barker; *The Power and the Glory*, Graham Greene; *Dead Man Awlaking*, Helen Prejean
- **Films:** *1917* (Mendes, 2019); *Dunkirk* (Nolan, 2017); *Platoon* (Stone, 1986); *Hurt Locker* (Bigelow, 2008); *Thin Red Line* (Malick, 1998)
- **Art:** Picasso’s *Guernica*. <https://bit.ly/3mmjhKE>



Extracts for discussion

If you have read the whole chapter, what made most impression on you?

Popular vs. populist

158 ... The word 'people' has a deeper meaning that cannot be set forth in purely logical terms. To be part of a people is to be part of a shared identity arising from social and cultural bonds. And that is not something automatic, but rather a slow, difficult process... of advancing towards a common project".[132]

159. "Popular" leaders, those capable of interpreting the feelings and cultural dynamics of a people, and significant trends in society, do exist. The service they provide by their efforts to unite and lead can become the basis of an enduring vision of transformation and growth that would also include making room for others in the pursuit of the common good. But this can degenerate into an unhealthy "populism" when individuals are able to exploit politically a people's culture, under whatever ideological banner, for their own personal advantage or continuing grip on power. Or when, at other times, they seek popularity by appealing to the basest and most selfish inclinations of certain sectors of the population. This becomes all the more serious when, whether in cruder or more subtle forms, it leads to the usurpation of institutions and laws.

160. Closed populist groups distort the word "people", since they are not talking about a true people. The concept of "people" is in fact open-ended. A living and dynamic people, a people with a future, is one constantly open to a new synthesis through its ability to welcome differences. In this way, it does not deny its proper identity, but is open to being mobilized, challenged, broadened and enriched by others, and thus to further growth and development.

- *Where is 'the voice of the people' - or where are 'the voices of the people' heard in our society? In our Church? In our world?*
- *Are there ways in which you go out of your way to hear the voice of those who may disagree with you? Or whose circumstances are very different? Can you share a story of something you learnt from others very different to you?*

The benefits and limits of liberal approaches

164. Charity, unites both the abstract and the institutional – since it calls for an effective process of historical change that embraces everything: institutions, law, technology, experience, professional expertise, scientific analysis, administrative procedures, and so forth. For that matter, "private life cannot exist unless it is protected by public order. A domestic hearth has no real warmth unless it is safeguarded by law, by a state of tranquillity founded on law, and enjoys a minimum of wellbeing ensured by the division of labour, commercial exchange, social justice and political citizenship".

165. ...Love of neighbour is concrete and squanders none of the resources needed to bring about historical change that can benefit the poor and disadvantaged... (There is) need for a greater spirit of fraternity, but also a more efficient worldwide organization to help resolve the problems plaguing the abandoned who are suffering and dying in poor countries. ..(T)here is no one solution, no single acceptable methodology, no economic recipe that can be applied indiscriminately to all. Even the most rigorous scientific studies can propose different courses of action.

166. Everything, then, depends on our ability to see the need for a change of heart, attitudes and lifestyles. ... The bigger risk does not come from specific objects, material realities or institutions, but from the way that they are used. It has to do with human weakness, the proclivity to selfishness that is part of what the Christian tradition refers to as "concupiscence": the human inclination to be concerned only with myself, my group, my own petty interests. Concupiscence is not a flaw limited to our own day. It has been present from the beginning of humanity, and has simply changed and taken on different forms down the ages, using whatever means each moment of history can provide.

169 ...What is needed is a model of social, political and economic participation "that can include popular movements and invigorate local, national and international governing structures with that torrent of moral energy that springs from including the excluded in the building of a common destiny", while also ensuring that "these experiences of solidarity which grow up from below, from the subsoil of the planet – can come together, be more coordinated, keep on meeting one another". ...Such movements are "social poets" that, in their own way, work, propose, promote and liberate. They help make possible an integral human development that goes beyond "the idea of social policies being a policy

for the poor, but never with the poor and never of the poor, much less part of a project that reunites peoples”....They may be troublesome, and certain “theorists” may find it hard to classify them, yet we must find the courage to acknowledge that, without them, “democracy atrophies, turns into a mere word, a formality; it loses its representative character and becomes disembodied, since it leaves out the people in their daily struggle for dignity, in the building of their future”.[

- *What examples can you name of renewal and reform ‘from below’? Where change has truly come from ‘the people’ and led to change?*
- *What examples can you name where such reform has been thwarted ‘from above’. What do you think provoked the opposition? And why did it succeed?*

The politics we need

178. ...“True statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good. Political powers do not find it easy to assume this duty in the work of nation-building”, much less in forging a common project for the human family, now and in the future. Thinking of those who will come after us does not serve electoral purposes, yet it is what authentic justice demands. ...The earth “is lent to each generation, to be handed on to the generation that follows”.

179. An economy that is an integral part of a political, social, cultural and popular programme directed to the common good could pave the way for “different possibilities which do not involve stifling human creativity and its ideals of progress, but rather directing that energy along new channels”.

- *How might we better do politics in our community?*
- *How might we better know priorities and needs?*
- *How might we better cooperate with those who have the power to help bring them about?*

Political love

180. Recognizing that all people are our brothers and sisters, and seeking forms of social friendship that include everyone, is not merely utopian. It demands a decisive commitment to devising effective means to this end. Any effort along these lines becomes a noble exercise of charity. For whereas individuals can help others in need, when they join together in initiating social processes of fraternity and justice for all, they enter the “field of charity at its most vast, namely political charity”. This entails working for a social and political order whose soul is social charity.

- *When you pray “Your kingdom come on earth and it is in heaven”, what do you mean? What would be an example of that happening?*

FRUITFULNESS OVER RESULTS

196. ...It is truly noble to place our hope in the hidden power of the seeds of goodness we sow, and thus to initiate processes whose fruits will be reaped by others. Good politics combines love with hope and with confidence in the reserves of goodness present in human hearts. ...

197. Viewed in this way, politics is something more noble than posturing, marketing and media spin. These sow nothing but division, conflict and a bleak cynicism incapable of mobilizing people to pursue a common goal. At times, in thinking of the future, we do well to ask ourselves, “Why I am doing this?”, “What is my real aim?” For as time goes on, reflecting on the past, the questions will not be: “How many people endorsed me?”, “How many voted for me?”, “How many had a positive image of me?” The real, and potentially painful, questions will be, “How much love did I put into my work?” “What did I do for the progress of our people?” “What mark did I leave on the life of society?” “What real bonds did I create?” “What positive forces did I unleash?” “How much social peace did I sow?” “What good did I achieve in the position that was entrusted to me?”

- *Do you ask those sorts of questions of yourself or others?*
- *If you do what do you find you can usefully do with the answers?*

CHAPTER SEVEN

PATHS OF RENEWED ENCOUNTER

225. In many parts of the world, there is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds. There is also a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter.

STARTING ANEW FROM THE TRUTH

226. Renewed encounter does not mean returning to a time prior to conflicts. All of us change over time. Pain and conflict transform us. We no longer have use for empty diplomacy, dissimulation, double-speak, hidden agendas and good manners that mask reality. Those who were fierce enemies have to speak from the stark and clear truth. They have to learn how to cultivate a penitential memory, one that can accept the past in order not to cloud the future with their own regrets, problems and plans. Only by basing themselves on the historical truth of events will they be able to make a broad and persevering effort to understand one another and to strive for a new synthesis for the good of all. Every “peace process requires enduring commitment. It is a patient effort to seek truth and justice, to honour the memory of victims and to open the way, step by step, to a shared hope stronger than the desire for vengeance”.^[209] As the Bishops of the Congo have said with regard to one recurring

conflict: “Peace agreements on paper will not be enough. We will have to go further, by respecting the demands of truth regarding the origins of this recurring crisis. The people have the right to know what happened”.^[210]

227. “Truth, in fact, is an inseparable companion of justice and mercy. All three together are essential to building peace; each, moreover, prevents the other from being altered... Truth should not lead to revenge, but rather to reconciliation and forgiveness. Truth means telling families torn apart by pain what happened to their missing relatives. Truth means confessing what happened to minors recruited by cruel and violent people. Truth means recognizing the pain of women who are victims of violence and abuse... Every act of violence committed against a human being is a wound in humanity’s flesh; every violent death diminishes us as people... Violence leads to more violence, hatred to more hatred, death to more death. We must break this cycle which seems inescapable”.^[211]

THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF PEACE

228. The path to peace does not mean making society blandly uniform, but getting people to work together, side-by-side, in pursuing goals that benefit everyone. A wide variety of practical proposals and diverse experiences can help achieve shared objectives and serve the common good. The problems that a society is experiencing need to be clearly identified, so that the existence of different ways of understanding and resolving them can be appreciated. The path to

social unity always entails acknowledging the possibility that others have, at least in part, a legitimate point of view, something worthwhile to contribute, even if they were in error or acted badly. “We should never confine others to what they may have said or done, but value them for the promise that they embody”,^[212] a promise that always brings with it a spark of new hope.

229. The Bishops of South Africa have pointed out that true reconciliation is achieved pro-actively “by forming



a new society, a society based on service to others, rather than the desire to dominate; a society based on sharing what one has with others, rather than the selfish scramble by each for as much wealth as possible; a society in which the value of being together as human beings is ultimately more important than any lesser group, whether it be family, nation, race or culture".[213] As the Bishops of South Korea have pointed out, true peace "can be achieved only when we strive for justice through dialogue, pursuing reconciliation and mutual development".[214]

230. Working to overcome our divisions without losing our identity as individuals presumes that a basic sense of belonging is present in everyone. Indeed, "society benefits when each person and social group feels truly at home. In a family, parents, grandparents and children all feel at home; no one is excluded. If someone has a problem, even a serious one, even if he brought it upon himself, the rest of the family comes to his assistance; they support him. His problems are theirs... In families, everyone contributes to the common purpose; everyone works for the common good, not denying each person's individuality but encouraging and supporting it. They may quarrel, but there is something that does not change: the family bond. Family disputes are always resolved afterwards. The joys and sorrows of each of its members are felt by all. That is what it means to be a family! If only we could view our political opponents or neighbours in the same way that we view our children or our spouse, mother or father! How good would this be! Do we love our society or is it still something remote, something anonymous that does not involve us, something to which we are not committed?"[215]

231. Negotiation often becomes necessary for shaping concrete paths to peace. Yet the processes of change that lead to lasting peace are crafted above all by peoples; each individual can act as an effective leaven by the way he or she lives each day. Great changes are not produced behind desks or in offices. This means that "everyone has a fundamental role to play in a single great creative project: to write a new page of history, a page full of hope, peace and reconciliation".[216] There is an "architecture" of peace, to which different institutions of society contribute, each according to its own area of expertise, but there is also an "art" of peace that involves us all. From the various peace processes that have taken place in different parts of the world, "we have learned that these ways of making peace, of placing reason above revenge, of the delicate

harmony between politics and law, cannot ignore the involvement of ordinary people. Peace is not achieved by normative frameworks and institutional arrangements between well-meaning political or economic groups... It is always helpful to incorporate into our peace processes the experience of those sectors that have often been overlooked, so that communities themselves can influence the development of a collective memory".[217]

232. There is no end to the building of a country's social peace; rather, it is "an open-ended endeavour, a never-ending task that demands the commitment of everyone and challenges us to work tirelessly to build the unity of the nation. Despite obstacles, differences and varying perspectives on the way to achieve peaceful co-existence, this task summons us to persevere in the struggle to promote a 'culture of encounter'. This requires us to place at the centre of all political, social and economic activity the human person, who enjoys the highest dignity, and respect for the common good. May this determination help us flee from the temptation for revenge and the satisfaction of short-term partisan interests".[218] Violent public demonstrations, on one side or the other, do not help in finding solutions. Mainly because, as the Bishops of Colombia have rightly noted, the "origins and objectives of civil demonstrations are not always clear; certain forms of political manipulation are present and in some cases they have been exploited for partisan interests".[219]

Beginning with the least

233. Building social friendship does not only call for rapprochement between groups who took different sides at some troubled period of history, but also for a renewed encounter with the most impoverished and vulnerable sectors of society. For peace "is not merely absence of war but a tireless commitment – especially on the part of those of us charged with greater responsibility – to recognize, protect and concretely restore the dignity, so often overlooked or ignored, of our brothers and sisters, so that they can see themselves as the principal protagonists of the destiny of their nation".[220]

234. Often, the more vulnerable members of society are the victims of unfair generalizations. If at times the poor and the dispossessed react with attitudes that appear antisocial, we should realize that in many cases those reactions are born of a history of scorn and social exclusion. The Latin American Bishops have observed that "only the closeness that makes us friends can enable us to

appreciate deeply the values of the poor today, their legitimate desires, and their own manner of living the faith. The option for the poor should lead us to friendship with the poor”.[221]

235. Those who work for tranquil social coexistence should never forget that inequality and lack of integral human development make peace impossible. Indeed, “without equal opportunities, different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode. When a society – whether local, national or global – is willing to leave a part of itself on the fringes, no political programmes or resources spent on law enforcement or surveillance systems can indefinitely guarantee tranquility”.[222] If we have to begin anew, it must always be from the least of our brothers and sisters.

THE VALUE AND MEANING OF FORGIVENESS

236. There are those who prefer not to talk of reconciliation, for they think that conflict, violence and breakdown are part of the normal functioning of a society. In any human group there are always going to be more or less subtle power struggles between different parties. Others think that promoting forgiveness means yielding ground and influence to others. For this reason, they feel it is better to keep things as they are, maintaining a balance of power between differing groups. Still others believe that reconciliation is a sign of weakness; incapable of truly serious dialogue, they choose to avoid problems by ignoring injustices. Unable to deal with problems, they opt for an apparent peace.

Inevitable conflict

237. Forgiveness and reconciliation are central themes in Christianity and, in various ways, in other religions. Yet there is a risk that an inadequate understanding and presentation of these profound convictions can lead to fatalism, apathy and injustice, or even intolerance and violence.

238. Jesus never promoted violence or intolerance. He openly condemned the use of force to gain power over others: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you” (*Mt* 20:25-26). Instead, the Gospel tells us to forgive “seventy times seven” (*Mt* 18:22) and offers the example of the unmerciful servant who was himself forgiven, yet unable to forgive others in turn (cf. *Mt* 18:23-35).

239. Reading other texts of the New Testament, we can see how the early Christian communities, living in a pagan world marked by widespread corruption and aberrations, sought to show unflinching patience, tolerance and understanding. Some texts are very clear in this regard: we are told to admonish our opponents “with gentleness” (*2 Tim* 2:25) and encouraged “to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone. For we ourselves were once foolish” (*Tit* 3:2-3). The Acts of the Apostles notes that the disciples, albeit persecuted by some of the authorities, “had favour with all the people” (2:47; cf. 4:21.33; 5:13).

240. Yet when we reflect upon forgiveness, peace and social harmony, we also encounter the jarring saying of Christ: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s foes will be members of his own household” (*Mt* 10:34-36). These words need to be understood in the context of the chapter in which they are found, where it is clear that Jesus is speaking of fidelity to our decision to follow him; we are not



to be ashamed of that decision, even if it entails hardships of various sorts, and even our loved ones refuse to accept it. Christ's words do not encourage us to seek conflict, but simply to endure it when it inevitably comes, lest deference to others, for the sake of supposed peace in our families or society, should detract from our own fidelity. Saint John Paul II observed that the Church "does not intend to condemn every possible form of social conflict. The Church is well aware that in the course of history conflicts of interest between different social groups inevitably arise, and that in the face of such conflicts Christians must often take a position, honestly and decisively".[223]

Legitimate conflict and forgiveness

241. Nor does this mean calling for forgiveness when it involves renouncing our own rights, confronting corrupt officials, criminals or those who would debase our dignity. We are called to love everyone, without exception; at the same time, loving an oppressor does not mean allowing him to keep oppressing us, or letting him think that what he does is acceptable. On the contrary, true love for an oppressor means seeking ways to make him cease his oppression; it means stripping him of a power that he does not know how to use, and that diminishes his own humanity and that of others. Forgiveness does not entail allowing oppressors to keep trampling on their own dignity and that of others, or letting criminals continue their wrongdoing. Those who suffer injustice have to defend strenuously their own rights and those of their family, precisely because they must preserve the dignity they have received as a loving gift from God. If a criminal has harmed me or a loved one, no one can forbid me from demanding justice and ensuring that this person – or anyone else – will not harm me, or others, again. This is entirely just; forgiveness does not forbid it but actually demands it.

242. The important thing is not to fuel anger, which is unhealthy for our own soul and the soul of our people, or to become obsessed with taking revenge and destroying the other. No one achieves inner peace or returns to a normal life in that way. The truth is that "no family, no group of neighbours, no ethnic group, much less a nation, has a future if the force that unites them, brings them together and resolves their differences is vengeance and hatred. We cannot come to terms and unite for the sake of revenge, or treating others with the same violence with which they treated us, or plotting opportunities for retaliation under apparently legal auspices".[224] Nothing is gained this way and, in the end, everything is lost.

243. To be sure, "it is no easy task to overcome the bitter legacy of injustices, hostility and mistrust

left by conflict. It can only be done by overcoming evil with good (cf. *Rom* 12:21) and by cultivating those virtues which foster reconciliation, solidarity and peace".[225] In this way, "persons who nourish goodness in their heart find that such goodness leads to a peaceful conscience and to profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties and misunderstandings. Even when affronted, goodness is never weak but rather, shows its strength by refusing to take revenge".[226] Each of us should realize that "even the harsh judgment I hold in my heart against my brother or my sister, the open wound that was never cured, the offense that was never forgiven, the rancour that is only going to hurt me, are all instances of a struggle that I carry within me, a little flame deep in my heart that needs to be extinguished before it turns into a great blaze".[227]

The best way to move on

244. When conflicts are not resolved but kept hidden or buried in the past, silence can lead to complicity in grave misdeeds and sins. Authentic reconciliation does not flee from conflict, but is achieved *in* conflict, resolving it through dialogue and open, honest and patient negotiation. Conflict between different groups "if it abstains from enmities and mutual hatred, gradually changes into an honest discussion of differences founded on a desire for justice".[228]

245. On numerous occasions, I have spoken of "a principle indispensable to the building of friendship in society: namely, that unity is greater than conflict... This is not to opt for a kind of syncretism, or for the absorption of one into the other, but rather for a resolution which takes place on a higher plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides".[229] All of us know that "when we, as individuals and communities, learn to look beyond ourselves and our particular interests, then understanding and mutual commitment bear fruit... in a setting where conflicts, tensions and even groups once considered inimical can attain a multifaceted unity that gives rise to new life".[230]

MEMORY

246. Of those who have endured much unjust and cruel suffering, a sort of "social forgiveness" must not be demanded. Reconciliation is a personal act, and no one can impose it upon an entire society, however great the need to foster it. In a strictly personal way, someone, by a free and generous decision, can choose not to demand punishment (cf. *Mt* 5:44-46), even if it is quite legitimately demanded by society and its justice system. However, it is not possible to proclaim a "blanket reconciliation" in an effort to bind wounds by decree or to cover injustices in a cloak of oblivion. Who can

claim the right to forgive in the name of others? It is moving to see forgiveness shown by those who are able to leave behind the harm they suffered, but it is also humanly understandable in the case of those who cannot. In any case, forgetting is never the answer.

247. The *Shoah* must not be forgotten. It is “the enduring symbol of the depths to which human evil can sink when, spurred by false ideologies, it fails to recognize the fundamental dignity of each person, which merits unconditional respect regardless of ethnic origin or religious belief”. [231] As I think of it, I cannot help but repeat this prayer: “Lord, remember us in your mercy. Grant us the grace to be ashamed of what we men have done, to be ashamed of this massive idolatry, of having despised and destroyed our own flesh which you formed from the earth, to which you gave life with your own breath of life. Never again, Lord, never again!”. [232]

248. Nor must we forget the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Once again, “I pay homage to all the victims, and I bow before the strength and dignity of those who, having survived those first moments, for years afterward bore in the flesh immense suffering, and in their spirit seeds of death that drained their vital energy... We cannot allow present and future generations to lose the memory of what happened. It is a memory that ensures and encourages the building of a more fair and fraternal future”. [233] Neither must we forget the persecutions, the slave trade and the ethnic killings that continue in various countries, as well as the many other historical events that make us

ashamed of our humanity. They need to be remembered, always and ever anew. We must never grow accustomed or inured to them.

249. Nowadays, it is easy to be tempted to turn the page, to say that all these things happened long ago and we should look to the future. For God’s sake, no! We can never move forward without remembering the past; we do not progress without an honest and unclouded memory. We need to “keep alive the flame of collective conscience, bearing witness to succeeding generations to the horror of what happened”, because that witness “awakens and preserves the memory of the victims, so that the conscience of humanity may rise up in the face of every desire for dominance and destruction”. [234] The victims themselves – individuals, social groups or nations – need to do so, lest they succumb to the mindset that leads to justifying reprisals and every kind of violence in the name of the great evil endured. For this reason, I think not only of the need to remember the atrocities, but also all those who, amid such great inhumanity and corruption, retained their dignity and, with gestures small or large, chose the part of solidarity, forgiveness and fraternity. To remember goodness is also a healthy thing.

Forgiving but not forgetting

250. Forgiving does not mean forgetting. Or better, in the face of a reality that can in no way be denied, relativized or concealed, forgiveness is still possible. In the face of an action that can never be tolerated, justified or excused, we can still forgive. In the face of something that cannot be forgotten for any reason, we can still forgive. Free and heartfelt forgiveness is something noble, a reflection of God’s own infinite ability to forgive. If forgiveness is gratuitous, then it can be shown even to someone who resists repentance and is unable to beg pardon.

251. Those who truly forgive do not forget. Instead, they choose not to yield to the same destructive force that caused them so much suffering. They break the vicious circle; they halt the advance of the forces of destruction. They choose not to spread in society the spirit of revenge that will sooner or later return to take its toll. Revenge never truly satisfies victims. Some crimes are so horrendous



and cruel that the punishment of those who perpetrated them does not serve to repair the harm done. Even killing the criminal would not be enough, nor could any form of torture prove commensurate with the sufferings inflicted on the victim. Revenge resolves nothing.

252. This does not mean impunity. Justice is properly sought solely out of love of justice itself, out of respect for the victims, as a means of preventing new crimes and protecting the common good, not as an alleged outlet for personal anger. Forgiveness is precisely what enables us to pursue justice without falling into a spiral of revenge or the injustice of forgetting.

253. When injustices have occurred on both sides, it is important to take into clear account whether they were equally grave or in any way comparable. Violence perpetrated by the state, using its structures and power, is not on the same level as that perpetrated by particular groups. In any event, one cannot claim that the unjust sufferings of one side alone should be commemorated. The Bishops of Croatia have stated that, “we owe equal respect to every innocent victim. There can be no racial, national, confessional or partisan differences”.^[235]

254. I ask God “to prepare our hearts to encounter our brothers and sisters, so that we may overcome our differences rooted in political thinking, language, culture and religion. Let us ask him to anoint our whole being with the balm of his mercy, which heals the injuries caused by mistakes, misunderstandings and disputes. And let us ask him for the grace to send us forth, in humility and meekness, along the demanding but enriching path of seeking peace”.^[236]

WAR AND THE DEATH PENALTY

255. There are two extreme situations that may come to be seen as solutions in especially dramatic circumstances, without realizing that they are false answers that do not resolve the problems they are meant to solve and ultimately do no more than introduce new elements of destruction in the fabric of national and global society. These are war and the death penalty.

The injustice of war

256. “Deceit is in the mind of those who plan evil, but those who counsel peace have joy” (Prov 12:20). Yet there are those who seek solutions in war, frequently fueled by a breakdown in relations, hegemonic ambitions, abuses of power, fear of others and a tendency to see diversity as an obstacle.^[237] War is not a ghost from the past but a constant threat. Our world is encountering growing difficulties on the slow path to peace upon which it had embarked and which had already begun to bear good fruit.

257. Since conditions that favour the outbreak of wars are once again increasing, I can only reiterate that “war is the negation of all rights and a dramatic as-

sault on the environment. If we want true integral human development for all, we must work tirelessly to avoid war between nations and peoples. To this end, there is a need to ensure the uncontested rule of law and tireless recourse to negotiation, mediation and arbitration, as proposed by the Charter of the United Nations, which constitutes truly a fundamental juridical norm”.^[238] The seventy-five years since the establishment of the United Nations and the experience of the first twenty years of this millennium have shown that the full application of international norms proves truly effective, and that failure to comply with them is detrimental. The Charter of the United Nations, when observed and applied with transparency and sincerity, is an obligatory reference point of justice and a channel of peace. Here there can be no room for disguising false intentions or placing the partisan interests of one country or group above the global common good. If rules are considered simply as means to be used whenever it proves advantageous, and to be ignored when it is not, uncontrollable forces are unleashed that cause grave harm to societies, to the poor and vulnerable, to fraternal relations, to the environment and to cultural treasures, with irretrievable losses for the global community.

258. War can easily be chosen by invoking all sorts of allegedly humanitarian, defensive or precautionary excuses, and even resorting to the manipulation of information. In recent decades, every single war has been ostensibly “justified”. The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks of the possibility of legitimate defence by means of military force, which involves demonstrating that certain “rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy”^[239] have been met. Yet it is easy to fall into an overly broad interpretation of this potential right. In this way, some would also wrongly justify even “preventive” attacks or acts of war that can hardly avoid entailing “evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated”.^[240] At issue is whether the development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and the enormous and growing possibilities offered by new technologies, have granted war an uncontrollable destructive power over great numbers of innocent civilians. The truth is that “never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely”.^[241] We can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits. In view of this, it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a “just war”. Never again war!^[242]

259. It should be added that, with increased globalization, what might appear as an immediate or practical solution for one part of the world initiates a chain of violent and often latent effects that end up harming the entire planet and opening the way to new and worse wars in the future. In today’s world, there are no

longer just isolated outbreaks of war in one country or another; instead, we are experiencing a “world war fought piecemeal”, since the destinies of countries are so closely interconnected on the global scene.

260. In the words of Saint John XXIII, “it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice”.^[243] In making this point amid great international tension, he voiced the growing desire for peace emerging in the Cold War period. He supported the conviction that the arguments for peace are stronger than any calculation of particular interests and confidence in the use of weaponry. The opportunities offered by the end of the Cold War were not, however, adequately seized due to a lack of a vision for the future and a shared consciousness of our common destiny. Instead, it proved easier to pursue partisan interests without upholding the universal common good. The dread spectre of war thus began to gain new ground.

261. Every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil. Let us not remain mired in theoretical discussions, but touch the wounded flesh of the victims. Let us look once more at all those civilians whose killing was considered “collateral damage”. Let us ask the victims themselves. Let us think of the refugees and displaced, those who suffered the effects of atomic radiation or chemical attacks, the mothers who lost their children, and the boys and girls maimed or deprived of their childhood. Let us hear the true stories of these victims of violence, look at reality through their eyes, and listen with an open heart to the stories they tell. In this way, we will be able to grasp the abyss of evil at the heart of war. Nor will it trouble us to be deemed naive for choosing peace.

262. Rules by themselves will not suffice if we continue to think that the solution to current problems is deterrence through fear or the threat of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Indeed, “if we take into consideration the principal threats to peace and security with their many dimensions in this multipolar world of the twenty-first century as, for example, terrorism, asymmetrical conflicts, cybersecurity, environmental problems, poverty, not a few doubts arise regarding the inadequacy of nuclear deterrence as an effective response to such challenges. These concerns are even greater when we consider the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences that would follow from any use of nuclear weapons, with devastating, indiscriminate and uncontrollable effects, over time and space... We need also to ask ourselves how sustainable is a stability based on fear, when it actually increases fear and undermines relationships of trust between peoples. International peace and stability cannot be based on a false sense of security, on the threat of mutual destruction or total annihilation, or on simply maintaining a balance of power... In this

context, the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons becomes both a challenge and a moral and humanitarian imperative... Growing interdependence and globalization mean that any response to the threat of nuclear weapons should be collective and concerted, based on mutual trust. This trust can be built only through dialogue that is truly directed to the common good and not to the protection of veiled or particular interests”.^[244] With the money spent on weapons and other military expenditures, let us establish a global fund^[245] that can finally put an end to hunger and favour development in the most impoverished countries, so that their citizens will not resort to violent or illusory solutions, or have to leave their countries in order to seek a more dignified life.

The death penalty

263. There is yet another way to eliminate others, one aimed not at countries but at individuals. It is the death penalty. Saint John Paul II stated clearly and firmly that the death penalty is inadequate from a moral standpoint and no longer necessary from that of penal justice.^[246] There can be no stepping back from this position. Today we state clearly that “the death penalty is inadmissible”^[247] and the Church is firmly committed to calling for its abolition worldwide.^[248]

264. In the New Testament, while individuals are asked not to take justice into their own hands (cf. Rom 12:17.19), there is also a recognition of the need for authorities to impose penalties on evildoers (cf. Rom 13:4; 1 Pet 2:14). Indeed, “civic life, structured around an organized community, needs rules of coexistence, the wilful violation of which demands appropriate redress”.^[249] This means that legitimate public authority can and must “inflict punishments according to the seriousness of the crimes”^[250] and that judicial power be guaranteed a “necessary independence in the realm of law”.^[251]

265. From the earliest centuries of the Church, some were clearly opposed to capital punishment. Lactantius, for example, held that “there ought to be no exception at all; that it is always unlawful to put a man to death”.^[252] Pope Nicholas I urged that efforts be made “to free from the punishment of death not only each of the innocent, but all the guilty as well”.^[253] During the trial of the murderers of two priests, Saint Augustine asked the judge not to take the life of the assassins with this argument: “We do not object to your depriving these wicked men of the freedom to commit further crimes. Our desire is rather that justice be satisfied without the taking of their lives or the maiming of their bodies in any part. And, at the same time, that by the coercive measures provided by the law, they be turned from their irrational fury to the calmness of men of sound mind, and from their evil deeds to some useful employment. This too is considered a condemnation, but who does not see that, when savage violence is re-



strained and remedies meant to produce repentance are provided, it should be considered a benefit rather than a mere punitive measure... Do not let the atrocity of their sins feed a desire for vengeance, but desire instead to heal the wounds which those deeds have inflicted on their souls".[254]

266. Fear and resentment can easily lead to viewing punishment in a vindictive and even cruel way, rather than as part of a process of healing and reintegration into society. Nowadays, "in some political sectors and certain media, public and private violence and revenge are incited, not only against those responsible for committing crimes, but also against those suspected, whether proven or not, of breaking the law... There is at times a tendency to deliberately fabricate enemies: stereotyped figures who represent all the characteristics that society perceives or interprets as threatening. The mechanisms that form these images are the same that allowed the spread of racist ideas in their time".[255] This has made all the more dangerous the growing practice in some countries of resorting to preventive custody, imprisonment without trial and especially the death penalty.

267. Here I would stress that "it is impossible to imagine that states today have no other means than capital punishment to protect the lives of other peo-

ple from the unjust aggressor". Particularly serious in this regard are so-called extrajudicial or extralegal executions, which are "homicides deliberately committed by certain states and by their agents, often passed off as clashes with criminals or presented as the unintended consequences of the reasonable, necessary and proportionate use of force in applying the law".[256]

268. "The arguments against the death penalty are numerous and well-known. The Church has rightly called attention to several of these, such as the possibility of judicial error and the use made of such punishment by totalitarian and dictatorial regimes as a means of suppressing political dissidence or persecuting religious and cultural minorities, all victims whom the legislation of those regimes consider 'delinquents'. All Christians and people of good will are today called to work not only for the abolition of the death penalty, legal or illegal, in all its forms, but also to work for the improvement of prison conditions, out of respect for the human dignity of persons deprived of their freedom. I would link this to life imprisonment... A life sentence is a secret death penalty".[257]

269. Let us keep in mind that "not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this".[258] The firm rejection of the death penalty shows to what extent it is possible to recognize the inalienable dignity of every human being and to accept that he or she has a place in this universe. If I do not deny that dignity to the worst of criminals, I will not deny it to anyone. I will give everyone the possibility of sharing this planet with me, despite all our differences.

270. I ask Christians who remain hesitant on this point, and those tempted to yield to violence in any form, to keep in mind the words of the book of Isaiah: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares" (2:4). For us, this prophecy took flesh in Christ Jesus who, seeing a disciple tempted to violence, said firmly: "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Mt 26:52). These words echoed the ancient warning: "I will require a reckoning for human life. Whoever sheds the blood of a man, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen 9:5-6). Jesus' reaction, which sprang from his heart, bridges the gap of the centuries and reaches the present as an enduring appeal.

Pope Francis

Footnotes

- [209] *Message for the 2020 World Day of Peace* (8 December 2019), 2: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 13 December 2019, p. 8.
- [210] EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF THE CONGO, *Message au Peuple de Dieu et aux femmes et aux hommes de bonne volonté* (9 May 2018).
- [211] *Address at the National Reconciliation Encounter*, Villavicencio, Colombia (8 September 2017): AAS 109 (2017), 1063-1064, 1066.
- [212] *Message for the 2020 World Day of Peace* (8 December 2019), 3: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 13 December 2019, p. 8.
- [213] SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, *Pastoral Letter on Christian Hope in the Current Crisis* (May 1986).
- [214] CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF KOREA, *Appeal of the Catholic Church in Korea for Peace on the Korean Peninsula* (15 August 2017).
- [215] *Meeting with Political, Economic and Civic Leaders*, Quito, Ecuador (7 July 2015): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 9 July 2015, p. 9.
- [216] *Interreligious Meeting with Youth*, Maputo, Mozambique (5 September 2019): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 6 September 2019, p. 7.
- [217] *Homily*, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia (10 September 2017): AAS 109 (2017), 1086.
- [218] *Meeting with Authorities, the Diplomatic Corps and Representatives of Civil Society*, Bogotá, Colombia (7 September 2017): AAS 109 (2017), 1029.
- [219] BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF COLOMBIA, *Por el bien de Colombia: diálogo, reconciliación y desarrollo integral* (26 November 2019), 4.
- [220] *Meeting with the Authorities, Civil Society and the Diplomatic Corps*, Maputo, Mozambique (5 September 2019): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 6 September 2019, p. 6.
- [221] FIFTH GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN BISHOPS, *Aparecida Document* (29 June 2007), 398.
- [222] Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 59: AAS 105 (2013), 1044.
- [223] Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (1 May 1991), 14: AAS 83 (1991), 810.
- [224] *Homily at Mass for the Progress of Peoples*, Maputo, Mozambique (6 September 2019): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 7 September 2019, p. 8.
- [225] *Arrival Ceremony*, Colombo, Sri Lanka (13 January 2015): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 January 2015, p. 7.
- [226] *Meeting with the Children of the "Bethany Centre" and Representatives of other Charitable Centres of Albania*, Tirana, Albania (21 September 2014): *Insegnamenti* II, 2 (2014), 288.
- [227] *Video Message to the TED Conference in Vancouver* (26 April 2017): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 27 April 2017, p. 7.
- [228] PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno* (15 May 1931): AAS 23 (1931), 213.
- [229] Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 228: AAS 105 (2013), 1113.
- [230] *Meeting with the Civil Authorities, Civil Society and the Diplomatic Corps*, Riga, Latvia (24 September 2018): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 24-25 September 2018, p. 7.
- [231] *Arrival Ceremony*, Tel Aviv, Israel (25 May 2014): *Insegnamenti* II, 1 (2014), 604.
- [232] *Visit to the Yad Vashem Memorial*, Jerusalem (26 May 2014): AAS 106 (2014), 228.
- [233] *Address at the Peace Memorial*, Hiroshima, Japan (24 November 2019): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 25-26 November 2019, p. 8.
- [234] *Message for the 2020 World Day of Peace* (8 December 2019), 2: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 13 December 2019, p. 8.
- [235] CROATIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, *Letter on the Fiftieth*

Anniversary of the End of the Second World War (1 May 1995).

- [236] *Homily*, Amman, Jordan (24 May 2014): *Insegnamenti* II, 1 (2014), 593.
- [237] Cf. *Message for the 2020 World Day of Peace* (8 December 2019), 1: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 13 December 2019, p. 8.
- [238] *Address to the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations*, New York (25 September 2015): AAS 107 (2015), 1041-1042.
- [239] No. 2309. [240] *Ibid.*
- [241] Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 104: AAS 107 (2015), 888.
- [242] Saint Augustine, who forged a concept of "just war" that we no longer uphold in our own day, also said that "it is a higher glory still to stay war itself with a word, than to slay men with the sword, and to procure or maintain peace by peace, not by war" (*Epistola* 229, 2: PL 33, 1020).
- [243] Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (11 April 1963): AAS 55 (1963), 291.
- [244] *Message to the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons* (23 March 2017): AAS 109 (2017), 394-396.
- [245] Cf. SAINT PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967): AAS 59 (1967), 282.
- [246] Cf. Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae* (25 March 1995), 56: AAS 87 (1995), 463-464.
- [247] *Address on the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (11 October 2017): AAS 109 (2017), 1196.
- [248] Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Letter to the Bishops Regarding the Revision of No. 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the Death Penalty* (1 August 2018): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 3 August 2018, p. 8.
- [249] *Address to Delegates of the International Association of Penal Law* (23 October 2014): AAS 106 (2014), 840.
- [250] PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 402.
- [251] SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the National Association of Magistrates* (31 March 2000), 4: AAS 92 (2000), 633.
- [252] *Divinae Institutiones* VI, 20, 17: PL 6, 708.
- [253] *Epistola* 97 (*Responsa ad consulta Bulgarorum*), 25: PL 119, 991. "ipsi (Christo) non solum innoxios quosque, verum etiam et noxios a mortis exitio satagite cunctos eruere..."
- [254] *Epistola ad Marcellinum* 133, 1.2: PL 33, 509.
- [255] *Address to Delegates of the International Association of Penal Law* (23 October 2014): AAS 106 (2014), 840-841.
- [256] *Ibid.*, 842. [257] *Ibid.*

Acknowledgements

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Images. All images from photographs © Allen Morris. **Page 1:** St Francis, Basilica of St Francis, Assisi, 2014; Stained Glass, Metropolitan Cathedral, Liverpool, 2006; **Page 4.** Sculpture to victims of camps, Park Arts Muzeon, Moscow, 2015 Hot Spot, Tate Modern Gallery, 2016. **Page 6** 'Father Forgive', Coventry Cathedral, 2014 **Page 8** Auschwitz, Poland. 2015 **Page 9** Door to Gibbet, Beaumaris Gaol, 2019