



CONGRESS OF THE COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE OF THE GERMAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

“WARS OF TODAY, PEACE OF TOMORROW”

Berlin, 25th -26th November, 2010

Introduction:

Your Excellencies, My Lord Archbishops and Bishops, Distinguished invited Guests and all you dear Friends: I bring you greetings from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; and on its behalf, I bring you prayerful wishes for a successful congress.

*“There are many books, films, and documentaries that talk about war, people often spend a lot of energy watching the horrors that war causes and the suffering of those who endure them. And every now and then somebody gets up and cries: ‘Never again!’ **But inevitably** everything starts all over again.”*

These are the first lines of *Difendersi senza aggredire*,¹ a book written by Pat Patfoort, a Belgian anthropologist engaged in conflict mediation. The message is clear: it's not enough to show and to document the atrocities of war. The risk, in fact, is that people begin to look at everything with detachment, as if war was a show, or with indifference, since it's always possible to switch over to another TV-channel. War ceases thus to be “real”; it becomes something that happens “somewhere else” and doesn't concern us, that doesn't affect our personal and social conditions, what we consider “our world.

From Indifference to Consciousness:

We must therefore overcome indifference and turn it into consciousness. In fact, although we may be physically far from the arena of war, we cannot be morally and spiritually distanced from it. The shortness of our memory makes things worse, for it makes war ever more possible and likely. We get used to seeing one region of the world living *in peace*, while another region sees people dying *because of a war*. It makes us believe that war is and has been the lot of man right from the time, when Cain

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¹ P. Patfoort, *Difendersi senza aggredire*, Torino 2006, pg. 4

killed his brother Abel. So, it makes us develop an attitude of indifference: an *atarassia*, feeling that neither war nor peace depends on us.

But that's just not true! It is becoming increasingly clear, especially in today's world, how a seemingly "small" and "local" conflict can trigger "global" consequences. But there is still another reason, a deeper one: war and peace originate in the heart of man, and it's impossible to have a divided heart. So, war, to some extent, affects everyone, and peace concerns everyone.

A very lucid picture of this reality was offered by Pope Paul VI in his *Message for the World Day of Peace* in 1974, dedicated to the theme: ***Peace Depends on You Too***. Addressing himself to everyone, believers and non believers alike, the Pope reminds us that:

“The present moment of history, marked as it is by fierce outbreaks of international conflict, by implacable class warfare, outbursts of revolutionary freedoms, the crushing of human rights and fundamental liberties, and by unforeseen symptoms of worldwide economic instability, seems to be destroying the triumphant ideal of Peace as if it were the statue of an idol. In place of the pale and timid abstraction with which Peace seems to be treated in recent political experience and thought, preference is once more being given to the realism of facts and interests, and man is once more thought of as a permanently insoluble problem of a living self-conflict. Man is likened to a being that bears in his heart the destiny of fraternal strife. In the face of this crude and re-emerging realism, we propose not a purely notional concept of Peace, undermined by the reality of new and crushing experiences, but an indomitable idealism—that of Peace—destined to be affirmed progressively. Brethren, men of good will, wise men, suffering people, believe our humble and repeated words, our untiring plea. Peace is the ideal of mankind. Peace is necessary. Peace is a duty. Peace is beneficial.”

A Shared Responsibility

After almost forty years, the call of Pope Paul VI for shared responsibility is as real and pertinent as ever. The era of Pope Paul VI was that of the Cold War, when people thought that somehow everything would end with the decline of the great “ideological blocs and the fall of the Iron Curtain.” But that's not what happened. The end of the Cold War was directly followed by other conflicts. The dream that the end of the Cold War would make for a passage from an *equilibrium of fear*, based on nuclear

deterrence, to a *new order*, based on peace and cooperation,² seems to have vanished with the terrorist attacks in New York, on September 11th, 2001 and the advent of international terrorism.

The Indian theologian Michael Amaladoss notes that:

“Wars have always been part of history [...] but the twentieth century of our era has been marked by violence in a special way. We have witnessed a kind of globalization and democratization of war and violence. We had two World Wars that affected not only armies, but cities and civilians populations, to the point that more non-belligerents were killed than soldiers. The dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked a new stage of violence and terror. The emergence of more independent nations, after the end of the colonial period in the middle of last century, has generated a growing number of local conflicts, because smaller groups are trying to ensure their autonomy and their independence. These conflicts seem to have increased at the end of the Cold War.”³

From “Coldness” to “Uncertainty”, forms of war today:

The antagonism that characterized the twentieth century, has taken on an even more elusive and dangerous form in the new millennium, as the “*clash of civilizations*,” described in an essay by Samuel Huntington.⁴ This author maintains that, in the “post-Cold War” world, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political or economic, but “cultural.” Can we accept this analysis? Are the conflicts today of a cultural nature? Or are they expressions of the abuse and misuse of culture and religion for other purposes? The issue at stake here is even more vital for Christians, since it raises the question of what values and universal principles unite the human family besides cultural differences.

Currently there are about twenty active conflicts in the world. Of these, eight are in Africa and nine in Asia: that is the majority. Almost in all cases, these are not “inter-national” wars, i.e. fought by one State against another State, but rather “asymmetric” conflicts, that involve States and non-state actors. These conflicts (hostilities) have often lasted for years, causing a large number of innocent victims. If we look at these conflicts, we can see that, though the tensions may bear/assume ethnic, cultural, and

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² Esposito-Watson (ed.), *Religion and Global Order*, Basingstoke 2000, p. 179

³ A. Michael, *Costruire la Pace in un mondo plurale*, Bologna 2008. p. 13

⁴ H. Samuel, *Lo Scontro di civiltà*, Milano 1996.

religious traits, something else completely different triggered them; and in most cases, it is **injustice**. There is always an injustice, an act of abuse, and violence.

War and Peace:

It is important, therefore, to clarify the concepts, in order to make the language consistent with reality. Just think of the words “war” and “peace”, which are perhaps among the most used and abused, just as “hate” and “love” are; How difficult it is to define them, and how easy it is for them to be misunderstood. Let’s ask then: What is “war”? The question is also crucial for the understanding of “peace”; since “peace” is not just the absence of war.

It is noteworthy that the mass media tend to avoid using the word “war”. They prefer the use of the seemingly more politically correct term “conflict.” This tendency runs very many risks, including the increasing misrepresentation (masking) of reality and the tendency of normalizing the presence of conflict in human life and in the world to the point of making man oblivious of its presence (forgotten in the collective imagination of society).

Armed conflict in *media presentation* around the world hardly causes any fear these days; for it is presented not as an act of war, but as (part of) peace operation. In some cases, this may be true; but in general, conflict is thus proposed as a *constitutive and permanent* dimension of the human being. This reading could even find justification in the “conflict of conflicts,” i.e. the one between the flesh and the spirit that St. Paul the Apostle tells us about, which is the cause of all “inner battle.” (Gal.5:16ff.). After all, it seems that we have to accept conflict as a dimension at every level, the personal and interpersonal as well as on the local and global. But we know that this is not true. Certainly, man may experience an inner battle, but conflict cannot be a philosophy of life, or the hermeneutical key of reality. Jesus brought a change, he renewed everything; he made God’s grace visible in order to bring peace into the history of every human being and of all humanity. Man is not called to hate himself and his neighbor but to love his neighbor as himself.

I would like to look again at the word “war.” What is war? The problem is not just theoretical. The classification of a particular situation as war leads to the applicability of certain legal rules and the exclusion of others. Laws applied in times of peace may not be the same applied in times of war. This implies the application of a different standard of protection of the rights and fundamental freedoms.

Legal science, defines “international” war as the armed confrontation between two or more States, and “non-international” war as armed confrontation between a governmental entity and a non-state actor. In both cases, an essential set of principles and general norms of humanitarian law should be applied, as required by the 1949 *Geneva Conventions* and their Additional Protocols. The distinction between war and peace, and the choice of appropriate law is, however, more complex in the fight against international terrorism. Is terrorism war? Are terrorists criminals or soldiers? Are arrested terrorists prisoners of war or convicts? The issues are complex and almost; and our world has to deal with this everyday.

War as a Set of “Parameters”?

Be that as it may, war is a very complex phenomenon and difficult to decipher, even in its phenomenology. A study of *Caritas Italiana* observes: “Scientific literature tends to make a distinction between ‘armed conflicts’ and the category of ‘violent conflict’ (or deadly conflict), i.e. those conflicts in which violence is exercised, on one side, only against unarmed civilians, for example when genocide and crimes against humanity are perpetrated.”⁵

In order to make it easier to define and to distinguish between these different situations, some have tried to identify “formal” criteria, or “parameters” for identifying and classifying the phenomenon of “war.” And so, for example, the *Conflict Data Project* of the university of Uppsala, Sweden, and the SIPRI Institute classify armed conflict according to the casualties/victims of the casualties. They refer to *minor armed conflict* when there are 25 deaths in battle or less than 1000 death a year. A conflict is an *intermediate armed conflict* when there are at least about 1000 death a year; and it is a *major armed conflict* when the number of death is over 1000 in a year. This approach, as well as others, may help to “classify” the *effects* of war, but it doesn’t “grasp” the *causes* or possible remedies. Moreover, it does not consider the thousands of victims of other types of widespread domestic and urban violence. Above all, it cannot help us to understand the inner dimension of war, which like every evil has its origin in the human heart. So can any war lead to a future peace?

Peace between Prophecy and Commitment

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⁵ *Caritas Italiana, Guerre alla finestra*, (Bologna 2005), pp. 36-37.

Such a question may well have different responses from different circles; but coming from where I left this morning to get here, I should answer the question with reference to the *Social Doctrine of the Church*.

a) The first encyclical, entirely devoted to the theme of Peace, is *Pacem, Dei munus pulcherrimum* (peace, the beautiful task of God) published in 1920 by Benedict XV, “the Pope of the First World War”. That encyclical expresses more systematically the condemnation of war as “senseless slaughter” in the Pope’s *Peace Note* of 1917.

b) Then, we have John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris*, of 1963. This encyclical is the “watershed” in the history of Catholic theological reflection on the issues of war and peace. Going beyond the doctrine of *just war*, he defines Peace as the *Dignity* of the person and of peoples. The reminder of the natural law is also important, because the Pope wants to address himself equally to all “*men of good will*.” But we have something more: Pope John XXIII did not merely indicate a simple goal, but indicated the elements of peace to be built on the four pillars of truth, justice, love, and freedom. These pillars are also the virtues of **communion**, which is what every man was created for: *to be in communion with God and with one another*; and they constitute the **justice** and the **peace** of every man. War is the absence of *peace*, because it destroys *communion* on account of a perceived or real lack of *justice*.

c) In 1967, Paul VI, reiterating the teaching of the Fathers of Vatican II, in particular, in the Constitution: *Gaudium et Spes*, published the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, in which he defined *peace* in terms of *development*, declaring “*the development of peoples as the new the name of peace*”.

d) Then, in 1987, on the 20th anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*, Pope John Paul II published the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, which gave an overview of the teaching of his predecessors and proposed “*solidarity among peoples*” as the new name of peace.

To these four encyclicals of the 20th century should be added

- the Radio Messages of Pope Pius XII, the Pope of the Second World War, which in many ways anticipated the positions that would later take shape in John XXIII and following Pontiffs,
- as well as the *Messages for the World Day of Peace*, an annual celebration instituted by Pope Paul VI in 1968, and which since then constitute essential expressions of the Church’s “doctrine of peace.”

Finally, we need to mention, at least briefly, Pope Benedict XVI's *Caritas in veritate*, which marks yet another step in the evolution of the Church's Magisterium in the field of peace. One concept is especially noteworthy: It is no longer the *development of peoples*, simply understood, which is the name of *peace*. It is *human development, whole and entire*, which is the new name of peace. Thus *peace* is inconceivable without the integral — cultural, moral and spiritual — development of all human beings.

A second element also of interest in *Caritas in veritate*, is the teaching that the construction of peace implies and does require the protection of creation, the theme chosen by the Holy Father for his Message on the World Day of Peace in 2010. The Holy Father, who in *caritas in veritate* taught that integral human development is closely linked to the obligation which flows from man's relationship with the natural environment, (*Civ.* n.48) got more explicit in his peace message. There the Pope wrote: "Respect for creation is of immense consequence, not only because 'creation is the beginning and foundation of God's works', and its preservation has now become essential for the pacific coexistence of mankind. Man's inhumanity to man has given rise to numerous threats to peace and to authentic and integral human development — wars, international and regional conflicts, acts of terrorism and violation of human rights. Yet no less troubling are the threats arising from neglect -- if not downright misuse — of the earth.... For this reason, it is imperative that mankind renew and strengthen 'that covenant between human beings and the environment..'"(n.1).

So, Pope Benedict XVI offers a vision of peace, which we could qualify as a *tranquillitas ordinis*, indeed, a *communio* that manifests itself in a truly human and Christian ecology.

So, what then is peace?

For Pope John XXIII, *peace* rested on the four pillars or virtues of truth, justice, love and freedom. These are the basis for a harmonious development and solidarity among peoples: in a word, ***peace in the world***, and it is not an "unrealistic" goal, **an utopia**.

"*Utopia*", indeed, doesn't indicate an impossible desire. It points to something beautiful but difficult to realize. Something for which we need to *fight a good fight*, even if it means the use of unconventional weapons. It was Pope Paul VI, who, in his *Message for World Day of Peace* in 1976, reminded us of

what *the real weapons of peace* are. In his message, Pope Paul VI recalled the progress made in thinking peace. But he also noted the concomitant manifestation of phenomena contrary to the content and purpose of Peace. He emphasized a very pertinent issue, namely, the “disproportionate growth” of the arms trade. And so, Pope Paul VI asked himself: “Can we give the name *peaceful* to a world that is radically divided by irreconcilable ideologies - ideologies that are powerfully and fiercely organized, ideologies that divide Peoples from one another, and, when they are allowed free rein, subdivide those peoples among themselves, into factions and parties that find their reason for existence and activity in poisoning their ranks with irreconcilable hatred and systematic struggle within the very fabric of society itself?”

“*Utopia*”, for Paul VI, is total disarmament that goes hand in hand with the education to moral principles, principles that are common to all peoples. “Here”, according to the Pontiff, “we enter into the speculative world of ideal humanity, of the new mankind still to be born, still to be educated—mankind stripped of its grievous weight of murderous military weaponry, and rather clothed and strengthened by moral principles which are natural to it. These are principles which already exist, in a theoretical and practically infantile state, weak and still very tender, only at the beginning of their penetration into the profound and operative consciousness of Peoples. Their weakness, which seems irreparable (incurable) to the analysts: so-called realists of historical and anthropological sciences, comes especially from the fact that military disarmament, if it is not to constitute an unpardonable error of impossible optimism, of blind ingenuousness,, should be common and general. Disarmament must be embraced by everyone (all parties concerned), or it is a crime of neglect of self-defense. But does the sword, in the context of the historical and concrete life of man in society, not have its own *raison d'être* in its use for justice and for peace? (cf. *Rom* 13:4).”

Paul VI knows the risks of the modern world, yet he has great confidence in the future of the world. This confidence, which comes straight from the Gospel, should prompt us to ask as the Pope did: “has there not come into the world a transforming dynamism, a hope which is no longer unlikely, a new and effective progress, a future and a longed-for history which can make itself present and real, ever since the Master, the Prophet of the New Testament, proclaimed the decline of the archaic, primitive and instinctual tradition with a Word that had in itself power not only to denounce and to announce, but also to generate, under certain conditions, a new mankind?” These words of the Pope constitute an

appeal addressed to the Christian religion and non-Christians alike to become “concrete” and active promoters of peace.

The Role of the Great Religions

Indeed, religious rhetoric and instrumentalized of religion can be used to justify and sustain the reasons for conflict: this is the case with the Croats, the Serbs and the Muslims in Bosnia. It is the case with the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus. It is the case with the Hindus and the Muslims in India; and it is the case with the Catholics and the Protestants in Northern Ireland. But religion in general and the great religions represent an extraordinary factor of unity and peace for peoples. It’s no accident that religious actors are gaining increasing importance in building peace not only as a feeling or state of mind, but as a concrete commitment in the mediation of conflicts.⁶

Think, for example, of the first *World Day of Prayer for Peace*, in 1986, that brought together, in Assisi, the leaders of the world’s major religions, and whose 25th anniversary will be celebrated in 2011. But let us also consider the role of religious leaders and faith-based organizations that contribute significantly in conflict resolution by consolidating peace, through the restoration of order after the chaos of war. This becomes possible when in truth and reconciliation warring and hostile groups look toward the future with a reconciled heart. We know how difficult and painful this is, but it is possible and necessary. Some experiences teach us that this is the right road to follow.

Truth and Reconciliation

The example of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, is sufficient. “What good does the truth do? How does it help anyone to know where and how their loved ones were killed or buried?” These questions were asked in 2010 by Winnie Mandela, ex-wife of the historic leader of the *African National Congress* and first black South African president, Nelson Mandela, after the April 1994 elections. But the South Africa’s *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* is the best-known case of a country that has come out of a dramatic period in its history, marked by conflict, genocide, serious human rights violations, dictatorships and racist regimes. The need to deal with a tragic past concerns not only a political and legal question, i.e. what to do with State criminals etc.; it also involves the offsetting of the tragedy and the healing of memory..

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⁶ Civico Aldo, “Leader religiosi mediatori di pace”, in *La Società* n.6/2001.

Justice and Forgiveness:

The Commission's experience shows what positive lessons the “new” South Africa experience can teach the world. In the light of the South African experience, Paul Ricoeur’s idea of “active forgetting” as a definition for the role of forgiveness in “peace building” is instructive. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission aims at healing the wounds created by social, ethnic and intercultural conflicts by focusing not on the principle of “attribution of responsibility”, but rather on the “cure.” The prospect of resolving a conflict is somewhat different from that of forgiveness. Yet, each conflict resolution requires forgiveness. This has led Paul Ricoeur⁷ to stress that a past of division and conflict must not affect the present and the future of unity and peace.

When ‘the wars of today’ make ‘the peace of tomorrow’:

Throughout the world, different attempts have been made to create *Truth and Reconciliation Commissions*, through which the power of religion to heal and to repair is invoked to redress past wrongs and the effects of war. But the by far potent tool of religion, which makes the equation: *wars of today, peace of tomorrow*, right is the capacity of religions to prescribe, to stimulate and to encourage a warfare within their adherents which leads to peace within and without. The form that this warfare takes in the religious traditions is **abstinence/fasting** and various forms of **contenance and self-control**; and it is a war waged on one’s instincts, inordinate desires, egoism etc. For, if there is any merit in what *James* says in his letter (4:1ff.), then the real warfare for peace should be waged within our hearts: within the hearts of men. “*Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not your passions that make war within your members? You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but cannot obtain; you fight and wage war.* (James 4:1-2; cfr. too, Mt.).

By way of concluding, we need to recognize that the wars and conflicts in our day, whatever their nature and character: be they interior or exterior, spiritual or material, even in their extreme and tragic forms of degenerating into armed (nuclear) conflict, may never impose limits on our desire and reaching out towards the ideal state of peace. This desire and aspiration are not mere wishes; they must be the duty of all towards all..... to desire and to seek after peace. As Pope Benedict XVI once wrote to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on the occasion of its seminar on *Disarmament, Development and Peace* (2008), though peace is a precious gift of God that must be sought and

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⁷ Cfr. Paul Ricoeur, *La memoria, la storia e l'oblio*, Roma 2003; *Ricordare, perdonare, dimenticare*, Bologna 2004.

preserved using human means, it requires the contribution of all, a unanimous dissemination of the *culture of peace* and a common *education in peace*.⁸ This is in view of the new generation for whom the adult generations have grave responsibility.

Our future, then, is the present of new generations. Accordingly, the duty of the present generations to build peace is out of a sense of solidarity and responsibility towards future generations. The wars of today do not and will not make for the peace of tomorrow. The axiom: *if you want peace prepare for war*, is out of tune and outdated. It has in history caused only misery and pain: more harm than good. War is evil whenever it is directed outside. It inflicts suffering; and the good of *peace* cannot be achieved with evil of the suffering that it inflicts, except for the suffering that brings witnesses to love and bring peace to one's person in imitation of Jesus' revelation of the love of his Father.

Starting today, in a world not yet at peace, all men of good will, especially Christians, are called to be peacemakers, to cultivate dialogue and the meeting of civilizations, to witness the love of God's children precisely by yearning for peace for the future generations. In this way, the love of God, who renews everything, can become incarnate and transform the present and the future of mankind, while waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ, true love and true peace.

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Turkson
(President: Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace)

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⁸ Pontificio Consiglio della Giustizia e della Pace, *Prospettive per un disarmo integrale*, Città del Vaticano 2009, pg.8.
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