

## PEACE, THIS INTIMATE HOPE OF OUR HUMANITY

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Pax Christi

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The seventy-fifth anniversary of Pax Christi is a beautiful occasion to remind us that peace, offered by Christ to his disciples, on Easter evening, is a word of life, stronger than death... a word which is inscribed in time, from generation to generation: "Peace be with you! "

Seventy-five years reminds us of the peace which was finally brought and acquired, in 1945, by those who resisted the excesses of the extreme violence and the barbarism of the Second World War of the twentieth century. They resisted, they hoped, they believed: in humankind, sometimes in God, at least in the other. They believed that the word and the law are stronger than the submission, the reduction and the elimination of the other, in his/her singularity and in his/her own beauty.

Seventy-five years is the time needed to build, to re-build, to conciliate and to reconcile, to learn and to transmit. It is also the time of maturity when one can re-read and connect with human history, listening to each other's stories.

That said, seventy-five years can also be a time of forgetfulness, when the weight of habits sometimes leads us towards facility, even fatality, and weakens our vigilance in the face of powers and ideological justifications to use violence. We think of racism and all forms of exclusion present in our contemporary societies.

It is therefore important to stop for a moment and consider the essential conditions for peace, in order to receive and to offer, in our turn, this invitation from Christ: "Peace be with you; as the Father sent me, so I send you. "(John 20, 21)

We know the conditions of peace: Encounter, the word, the law, and hope. These four fundamental points of peace trace the space of a common world that nonviolence practitioners have often described, through their initiatives, their struggles and their testimonies.

Above all, it is about encounter. This "culture of encounter", dear to Pope Francis, requires letting yourself be touched by the other, by the other's views and path, and never getting used to the indifference that breaks human friendship. Encounter reactivates in us the memory of what we believe and what we hope, intimately, for our loved ones and for ourselves. Encounter also makes us come back to ourselves and reconcile ourselves with what we are and what we have become, thanks to the One who loved us and gave us his life. And thanks to all those who have woven the ever-fragile thread of peace.

The word, on the other hand, reveals itself as the highest form of our humanity. It is a sign of our presence to the other. To speak is to be there, to receive and to give. To speak is to build the common house, to stand at the door, to open it when the other knocks. To speak is to give voice and to enter into a covenant. But speaking is more: it is reaching out to the weary and wounded of life: the poorest, the suffering, so that they, in turn, can speak. Peace is the other name for the shared word which opens up space and time and which makes it possible to overcome fear.

Law is precisely an instituted word which guarantees the major conditions of exchange between us. It echoes the human aspiration that we each carry: to be considered in its uniqueness and in its

irreducible dignity. This was indeed the meaning of the reflection proposed by Pope John XXIII, in his encyclical "Pacem in Terris", in 1963, when the world was plunged into what is commonly called "the cold war" - of which we have probably never been out until this day. *When the relations of human society are expressed in terms of rights and duties, people become conscious of spiritual values, understand the meaning and significance of truth, justice, charity and freedom, and become deeply aware that they belong to this world of values. Moreover, when moved by such concerns, they are brought to a better knowledge of the true God Who is personal and transcendent* (Pacem in Terris § 45)

Today, more than ever - encounter, the word and the law - constitute new challenges for community life. This thematic and practical triad offers in fact fundamental support to the nonviolent approach which is never satisfied with arrangements on the backs of the most fragile: migrants, exiles and those who are exploited, exhausted, unemployed, homeless.

Because peace is given as a hope which refuses situations of contempt or of instrumentalization of people. Peace considers the promise and the talents of each person. It expects a lot from everyone because everyone has an irreplaceable role. Because of this, peace is a constant concern for those who take care of our humanity.

What we have learned from great witnesses of nonviolence over the past seventy-five years is that peace is action towards institutions as well as towards oneself. So today, more than ever, it is appropriate to speak of peace as reconciliation with creation, with others and with ourselves, as Pope Francis' message underlined for the World Day of Peace, on January 1st.

In the current context, "to take care", gives us a key to understanding the deep meaning of peace: remembering, without ever getting tired, respect for all life: its rhythms, its wounds and aspirations.

If peace is never won, we perceive that everyone has a part of peace in him, in her. This is undoubtedly the great and beautiful paradox of peace: peace waits to give; it is in our hands. It opens our eyes, every day, to our fragility and to the greatness of all life.

May every peacemaker find in this anniversary of Pax Christi, the "Peace of Christ", given free of charge, without calculation or overbidding and beyond all threat and fear.

May this peace be in us and between us as a hope and a blessing. And may it keep us in the only right relationship: our relationship as brothers and sisters.

Happy birthday to all Pax Christi members and courage to all peacemakers!