

**NEW APPROCHES TO CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND
ACTIVE-HARMONY**

**Christian and Islamic Understanding and Deepening on Dialogue and Peace.
Focusing on Conflict Transformation and Active Harmony.**

**“The Christian Teaching and Practices on Dialogue and Peace:
Focus on Conflict Transformation.”**

The Teaching of Pope John Paul II Outlined

by

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**Academy Member of the Ambrosian Library,
Milan (Italy)**

Ambrosian Library, Milan 2014

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List of Abbreviations:

G.P. II = John Paul II.

**W.D.P. 2003 = World Day of Peace 2003: “Pacem in Terris:
a Permanent Commitment.”**

**P.T. = Pacem in Terris, Encyclical of Pope John XXIII on
“Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty,”
April 11, 1963.**

**W.D.P. 1999 = World Day of Peace 1999: “Respect for Human Rights:
the Secret of True Peace.”**

**W.D.P. 2002 = World Day of Peace 2002: “No Peace without Justice,
No Justice without Forgiveness.”**

**G.S. = “Gaudium et Spes,” (1965 Pastoral Constitution on the Church in
the Modern World of the Second Vatican Council).**

U.D.H.R. = 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Sketch 1

Essential Conditions for Peace:

The four requirements of human spirit: the four pillars of peace (G.P. II, W.D.P. 2003, 3).

- 1. *Truth*, will build peace if every individual sincerely acknowledges not only his rights, but also his own duties towards others.**
- 2. *Justice*, will build peace if in practice everyone respects the rights of others and actually fulfils his duties towards them.**
- 3. *Love*, will build peace if people feel the needs of others as their own and share what they have with others, especially the values of mind and spirit which they possess.**
- 4. *Freedom*, will build peace and make it thrive if, in the choice of the means to that end, people act according to reason and assume responsibility for their own actions.**

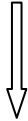
**We have to look at the present and into the future
with the eyes of faith and reason.**

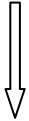
Sketch 2

Human Being's Convictions

(G.P. II, W.D.P. 2003, 4)

1. To acknowledge that people in the world are equal by reason and their natural dignity.
2. To be conscious of certain spiritual values.
3. To deepen meaning of the four pillars of peace.
4. To acknowledge the relationship with God as the foundation and supreme criterion of human being's life.


As an individual


As a society

- Therefore, men and women become aware that their relationship with God, the source of all good, is also the source of their spiritual transformation which can create profound public and political consequences in society.
- They can understand the awareness of human rights as the phenomenon which in its power can change mankind's history.
- They can understand that the road to peace lay in the defence and promotion of basic human rights which every human being enjoys, not as a benefit given by a different social class or conceded by the State but simply because of our humanity. As a consequence, peace and progress could only be achieved by respecting the universal natural law written on the human heart.
- To understand that rights and obligations are universal and inviolable. Therefore they cannot be surrendered.

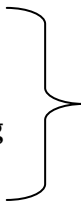
Consequence: every human being is equal in dignity.

Sketch 3

The Universal Common Good

(G.P. II, W.D.P. 2003, 5)

The world is becoming interdependent and global. Therefore the common good of humanity has to be worked out of the international plane. One of the effects of this situation is the urgent need of an international authority which is able to advance such common good. The United Nations organization with all its international branches is the expression which, by the consent of nations and not by coercion, should promote such common good. Consequently, the United Nations fundamental objective must be the recognition, respect, safeguarding and promotion of the rights of the human person (P.T. IV, 136-141).

- The need of a public “authority” on the international level with capacity of advancing the universal common good.
- The necessary fundamental objective of such “authority:”
 - 1. Recognition
 - 2. Respect
 - 3. Safeguarding
 - 4. Promotion

of the right
of the human person.
- On the level of individual States the common good is something that cannot be determined without reference to the human person. Hence, this public “authority” of the world community must promote the rights of the person whether by direct action or by creating sort of conditions in which rulers of individual States can more easily carry out their specific functions for the common good of their people. (P.T. IV, 139).
- The special function of this public “authority” of the world community must be to evaluate and find a solution to economic, social, political and cultural problems which effect the universal common good.

- These problems, because of their extreme gravity, vastness and urgency, are too difficult for the rulers of individual States to solve. Therefore only the public “authority” can take care of them without, however, limiting the sphere of action of the public authority of individual States, or to arrogate any of their functions to itself (P.T. IV, 141).
- Consequently, it is essential to create world conditions in which the public authorities, citizens and intermediate groups of each nation can:
 1. Carry out their task towards the implementation of the common good.
 2. Fulfill their duties towards the implementation of the human rights.
 3. Claim their rights with greater security.
- This public “authority” must be a credible instrument for maintaining and strengthening world peace. In this sense the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (U.D.H.R.) has been a great step towards the real establishment of peace in the world.
- The U.D.H.R. sets out:
 - the moral foundations on which the evolution of the world is characterized by order rather than disorder.
 - The moral foundations on which the evolution of the world is characterized by dialogue rather than force.

Sketch 4

Religious Freedom: The Heart of Human Rights

(G.P. II, W.D.P. 1999, 5)

- **Religion expresses the deepest aspiration of the human person.**
- **Religion shapes people's vision of the world.**
- **Religion affects people's relationships with others.**
- **Religion offers the answer to the question of the true meaning of life as:**
 1. **Personal life**
 2. **Common life**
- **In this sense, religious freedom constitutes the very heart of human rights.**

PRINCIPLE: People are obliged to follow their conscience in all circumstances and cannot be forced to act against it.

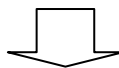
In this sense the U.D.H.R. recognizes that the right of religious freedom includes the right to manifest personal beliefs, whether individually or with others in public or in private (U.D.H.R., Art. 18).

The Reality:

- **There still exist today places where the right to gather for worship is not recognized.**
- **There exist also places where this right is limited to the members of only one religion.**

PRINCIPLE: When an individual State grants special status to one religion, this must not be to the detriment of the others.

- 1. This principle is against the discrimination and the marginalization of entire populations because of their religious beliefs.**
- 2. This principle is against the recourse to violence in the name of religious belief. This attitude, very common today as it was in the past, is a perversion of the teachings of the major religions.**



**PRINCIPLE: The use of violence can never claim a religious justification. It cannot foster
The growth of true religious feeling.**

Sketch 5

Two Powerful Tools of Moral Order

(G.P. II, W.D.P. 2003, 6)

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Moral conviction. | } | They are very important |
| 2. Spiritual integrity. | | For the revolution of conscience (personal spiritual transformation), in order to correct the distorted notions of freedom as license to threaten democracy and free society. (social spiritual transformation). |

At this point two important questions may be made starting from the observation that today in the world there are serious disorders in almost all sectors of social life which affects seriously the life of entire populations with conflicts, anxiety and war.

- What kind of order can replace this disorder so that men and women can live in freedom, justice and security?
- Although there is still disorder in the most part of the world, societies are “ordered” according to different political, economic as well as cultural ways. Therefore, on what principles are these new forms of world order unfolding?

The two already mentioned principles can be applied in order to answer:

1. The problem of order in the world affairs cannot be separated from the issues of moral principle.

2. Therefore, the question of peace cannot be separated from the question of:

Human rights

Human dignity



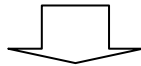
In this sense it is clear that in order to replace the world disorder it is necessary to propose an “order” which is linked to issues of moral principle which are worldwide acknowledged. Such an order cannot find in itself the reason of its justification or its goodness. The reference of this order must always be:

1. the respect of the universal natural law,
2. the respect of the rights of the person,
3. the respect of human dignity.

Consequently, men and women can be guaranteed in their freedom, and dignity by such an order which promotes justice and security for the recognition, respect and safeguarding as well as promotion of the rights of the person.

Concretely: - how to ensure peace and harmony between peoples?
- how to ensure people’s integral development?

1. To meet the demand for participatory ways for exercising political authority.
2. To meet the demand for transparency and for accountability in every level of public life.



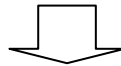
In this way it is possible to reach a nobler vision
of public life and public authority.

Sketch 6

Politics as a Realm of Necessity never Detached from Morality

(G.P. II, W.D.P. 2003, 7)

1. Since human beings are created with the capacity of moral choice, no human activity takes place outside the sphere of moral judgement.
2. Politics is a human activity and therefore it is subject to a distinctive form of moral scrutiny.
3. The same natural law, which governs the life and the conduct of individuals, must also regulate the relations of political communities with one another.

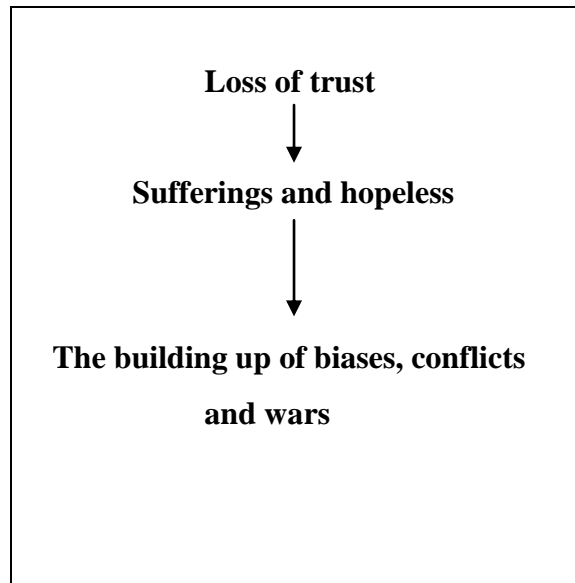


“Politics, whether domestic or international, cannot take place somewhere outside the realm of moral judgement. They are not like a free zone in which the moral law holds no sway,” (G.P. II).

Consequently, there is a need for men and women who, out of conviction, want to implement policies firmly based on the principle of respect for human dignity and human rights for the better solution of domestic and international conflicts.

4. PACTA SUNT SERVANDA (agreements must be observed).

Such conflicts are generated because of the disregard of the promises made to the poor by the wealthier nations. This way of acting is frustrating the poor since they consider such promises vital to their well-being, such as the aid to developing nations. This situation generates mistrust during the international gatherings and mistrust in the international and domestic policies for solving injustice and imbalances in the poor countries.



- **The existence of trust in international relations is a social capital of fundamental value.**

Sketch 7

Culture of Dialogue Path to Peace and Culture of Peace

- Culture of dialogue path to peace (Silsilah perspective).¹
- Culture of peace (G.P. II, W.D.P. 2003, 9).

CULTURE OF DIALOGUE PATH TO PEACE

- It is a response to the continuing search for true peace at the local level as well as the international level.
- It is an energy which can nurture a vision of peace in the present reality of divisions and conflicts.

In this response the dialoguers exchange different thoughts and ideas with the intent to listen to each other. This can be called the first level of dialogue which involves only superficially the dialoguers .

A second level is required for having a real deep exchange: The level of the “encounter.” Here the dialoguers go deep in knowing each other better. They reach a different level than simple words or thoughts. They reach the level of the heart or the level of spiritual understanding.

Stage 1: the dialogue with God.

¹ The “Silsilah Dialogue Movement” has been founded by Dr. Fr. Sebastiano D’Ambra, P.I.M.E., a missionary priest belonging to the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions. The Movement is focused on Interreligious Dialogue among Muslims, Christians and Lumad (Tribal Peoples) in the Philippines. The Movement educates new generations of students and supporters on dialogue-path to peace. Dr. Fr. Paolo Nicelli, P.I.M.E., has been the first Director of the “Silsilah Dialogue Institute” of research on dialogue and peace.

At this level of the heart the dialoguers experience and acknowledge that God becomes the very source of inspiration since He is the One who starts the dialogue with people and guides them to encounter each others in dialogue.

In this dialogue God invites the dialoguers to recognize Him by obeying Him and loving Him (the level of faith).

Stage 2: the dialogue with themselves.

From the previous stage the dialoguers are led to know better themselves, their “I,” their aspirations and their needs in relation to the others and not in an individualistic manner. They feel in solidarity with the others because they feel accomplished in themselves for the deep relationship which they experience with God.

Here starts the real style of life in dialogue which is before all else the attitude to listen to God, to listen to ourselves and to listen to the others and to assume in ourselves, in mind, heart, soul and body, God’s style of life in dialogue:

- Sincerity: to be sincere to one another.
- Sensitivity: to be compassionate with one another and specially with the unprivileged.
- Solidarity: to respond with responsibility to the needs of the others, specially the unprivileged.

Stage 3: the dialogue with our neighbors.

Everybody have needs and aspirations such as:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Truth- Justice- Love- Freedom | } which can be expressed correctly in: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Unity- Solidarity- Moral convictions- Spiritual integrity |
|--|--|--|

All these needs and aspirations can only be accomplished in the respect of human dignity and human rights, showing the attitude of discovering the presence of God in other people.

In this sense it is possible to reach the real level of an “encounter” based on sincerity, sensitivity and solidarity towards our neighbors.

This stage of dialogue with other people, based on the recognition that God is present in every human being, leads the dialoguers to understand themselves in relation to the others, and therefore, leads them to share the needs and the aspirations of other people.

Stage 3: The dialogue with society.

The following factors:

1. The life in dialogue as the attitude of listening to the others and discovering the presence of God in other people.
2. Sincerity, sensitivity and solidarity.

Can generate a real dialogue with society transforming it from within, due to the presence of people who are spiritually transformed in their hearts. People committed to life in dialogue do not want to refuse society; actually they want to dialogue with it and to shape it according to the four pillars of peace:

- Truth
- Justice
- Love
- Freedom

Stage4: the dialogue with creation.

Creation is also the expression of the love of God for humanity. God wants to dialogue with us through creation. Therefore, to respect it means to enter the natural order of good relationship with our Creator and to accomplish our vocation as people who are responsible of taking care of creation. Hence, we have to use of creation without destroying the natural order created by God.

CULTURE OF PEACE

All the structures or mechanisms of peace such as:

- **Juridical**
- **Political**
- **Economic**

are the effect of the accumulated wisdom and experience of people committed in dialogue. These people are making gestures of peace which can be summarized:

- **Gesture of peace of people who first of all foster peace in their own hearts.**
- **Gesture of peace of people who appreciate fully the community dimension of their lives in relation to reality and the different circumstances which are happening in the world and in society.**
- **Gesture of peace made by groups or movements which create a real culture of peace or a real tradition of peace in society.**

In this sense religion has a vital role in fostering gestures of peace and in consolidating peace.

Sketch 8

The Restoration of Moral Order

(G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 1-2)

After September 11, 2001 and the attempt of Bali in Indonesia, the world feels a profound fear for the future. Terrorism, which was located only in certain parts of the world, and mostly isolated by government action of different countries, showed a stronger power to perpetuate horrific destructions at the international level.

Pope John Paul II said that:

“...the Church testifies to her hope, based on the conviction that evil, the mysterium iniquitatis, does not have the final word in human affairs. The history of salvation, narrated in Sacred Scripture, sheds clear light on the entire history of the world and shows us that the human events are always accompanied by the merciful Providence of God, who knows how to touch even the most hardened of hearts and bring good fruits even from what seems utterly barren soil... by grace of God, a world in which the power of evil seems once again to have taken the upper hand will in fact be transformed into a world in which the noblest aspirations of the human heart will triumph, a world in which true peace will prevail,” (G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 1).

1. How do we restore the moral and social order subjected to the present violence?

Only a response which combines justice and forgiveness can restore the moral and social order.

2. How can we speak of justice and forgiveness as the source and condition of peace?

- Justice → source
 - Forgiveness → condition
- } of
peace

It is necessary to consider that forgiveness is the opposite of resentment and revenge, not of justice. Therefore, we have to struggle for peace through justice and forgiveness no matter how difficult this may be.

In order to have a true justice it is required the attitude of forgiveness which brings people beyond their own biases, resentment and revenge.

The Second Vatican Council expresses strongly this concept:

“...the fruit of that right ordering of things with which the divine founder has invested human society and which must be actualized by man thirsting for an ever more perfect reign of justice,” (G.S. 78).

There is in the mind of the fathers of the Council the idea that the fruit of that right ordering of things which is peace is the effect of a continuing struggle against sin. Since human nature is weak and wounded by sin, the establishment of peace requires a long and continuous effort to control our passions. This is the deep spiritual action generated in our hearts by the attitude of forgiveness as the condition for having true peace.

Consequently, peace is the fruit of love, since it comes from the extreme act of love that, according to Christian Tradition, Jesus Christ, the Lord, extended from the cross to all human beings and to all creation, in forgiving those who were killing Him. In this sense, the love of Christ went beyond what human justice could accomplish, and because of that event of the cross even today love is more powerful than human justice.

However, love, which is expressed by the act of forgiveness, is never opposed to human justice, but it can shape human justice according to God's will, making it the expression of divine justice for the respect of human dignity. In this sense we can have a true human justice.

Although human beings are under the joke of sin, they can vanquish sin by coming together in charity, which is another expression of love towards the establishment of true peace. Even violence itself will be vanquished by this attitude of forgiveness making true the words of the prophet:

“They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more,” (Is. 2:4).

PRINCIPLE: *“True peace is the fruit of justice, the moral virtue and legal guarantee which ensures full respect for rights and responsibilities, and the just distribution of benefits and burdens. But because human justice is always fragile and imperfect, subject as it is to the limitations and egoism of individuals and groups it must include and, as it were, be completed by the forgiveness which heals and rebuilds troubled human relations from their foundations,”*
(G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 3).

- Consequently, forgiveness is never opposed to human justice, since to forgive means to overlook the need to right the wrong done.
- Actually forgiveness is the fullness of justice, since it involves the deepest healing of the wounds of human hearts.
- The attitude of forgiveness leads to the harmonious order which is the new moral order and not the fragile and temporary cessation of hostilities.

Sketch 9

The Reality of International Terrorism

(G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 4-6)

True peace which is founded on justice and forgiveness is threatened today by international terrorism which has developed its ways of destruction. Such a new form of power which is able to act almost undisturbed can count on:

- **Sophisticated networks of:**

- political
 - economic
 - technical
- } **collusion**

Terrorism has huge financial resources and developed wide-ranging strategies of terror for killing innocent people.

Terrorism comes from hatred generating isolation, mistrust and threat.

Terrorism adds violence to violence involving entire generations of people in violence and division.

Terrorism is built on contempt for human life.

Terrorism commits intolerable crimes against humanity.

Terrorism despairs of humanity, of life, of the future.

PRINCIPLE: *“There exist a right to defend oneself against terrorism, a right which, as always, must be exercised with respect for moral and legal limits in the choice of ends and means,”* (G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 5).

PRINCIPLE: *“The guilty must be correctly identified, since criminal culpability is always personal and cannot be extended to nations, ethnic group or religion to which the terrorist may belong,”* (G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 5).

In this contest it is important the international cooperation of every country for fighting terrorism through resolute political, diplomatic and economic decisions which may show the real commitment of nations to change situations of oppression and marginalization which, in fact, support terrorist activity. The recruitment of terrorists becomes easier in situation where injustice brings about the violation of human rights creating that mistrust and threat already mentioned.

However, it is important to remind that the existing injustice in the world can never be used to excuse terrorism, considering that the most part of the victims of terrorist attacks are coming from the developing world which already live at the limit of human dignity and human survival. The chaos of political and economic order which terrorists want to create is effecting grievously everybody, but in a special way poor people.

PRINCIPLE: *“The terrorist claim to be acting on behalf of the poor is a patent falsehood,”* (G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 5).

Sketch 10

The Fundamental beliefs of Terrorism

(G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 6-7)

Terrorists think that the truth in which they believe and the suffering they provoke are so absolute and necessary for the accomplishment of their ideological purposes.

Therefore, for them destroying even innocent lives is justified.

This is the extreme aspect of fundamentalism in its radical form, which is called “radicalism.”

Actually, the fundamentalist approach to religion is not negative in itself, since in its research for truth fundamentalism proposes the fundamentals of faith as the foundation on which building up life, religious life and the relationships with the others as well as society.

Something different is radicalism, which is the result of a *fanatic fundamentalism*, which states that one’s own vision of the truth and of religion must be forced upon everyone else.

Different is the Christian approach to truth, which states that even when truth has been reached it can never be imposed but only proposed. Respect for people’s conscience must be always safeguarded in any circumstance of life whether inside or outside the sphere of religion. The meaning of Christian approach to truth is that people can only propose the truth to the others who are then responsible to accept it. The imposition of what people consider to be the truth by violent means is an offence to human dignity.

Actually, such an imposition is “...ultimately an offence against God whose image that person bears,” (G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 6).

Therefore, *fanatic fundamentalism* or radicalism is an attitude “radically” opposed to the belief in God. In this sense, terrorism, which is always founded on radicalism, exploits not only people but also God, making Him an idol to be used to perpetuate terror and to kill innocent people.

When religious leaders or even the ordinary believers use religion to impose their own understanding of truth in saying that they are terrorists in the name of God they commit a

profanation of religion. All the more when they perpetuate violence to others in God's name they make a clear profanation of religion. Therefore, they cannot condone or preach Terrorism.

Christian response to these fundamental beliefs of terrorism comes through the three pillars of mercy:

- Following the teaching of Jesus Christ, *"...we can and must be merciful because mercy has been shown us by a God who is love (cf. 1 Jn. 4:7-12),"* (G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 7).
- Jesus Christ, the God who enters into history to redeem us is the God of mercy and forgiveness who tells us to go all over the world and to learn what mercy means, *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners,"* (Mt. 9:13).
- Since we Christians have been baptized in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we must be men and women of mercy and forgiveness.

Sketch 11

The Meaning of Forgiveness

(G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 8-10)

- What is the meaning of forgiveness?
- Why do we have to forgive?

Forgiveness is a personal choice, a decision of the heart to go against the natural instinct to pay back evil with evil. The **measure** of this decision is the love of God who wants us to go back to Him in spite of our sins. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God Himself, becomes the spiritual model of forgiveness when he forgave His persecutors from the cross, (Lk. 23:34).

Forgiveness has a divine source and criterion which can be acknowledged by **human reasoning** and through **personal experience** when we do wrong. Human beings can experience their limitations and their weaknesses. However, they hope of being able to start all over again without remaining slaves of their own mistakes and failures for looking at the future for a more positive commitment and trust.

Forgiveness is a fully human act in the meaning that it is a personal initiative in the pattern of human relationships through which people express themselves with both good and bad acts. These acts are made in the context of family, groups, society, etc. Therefore, society in itself is in great need of forgiveness, it needs to be reconciled within human relations at domestic and international level.

However, the reality of life shows us that **the incapacity to forgive create serious consequences:**

- The conflicts are prolonged.
- There is an high cost provoked by conflicts in terms of human development.
- The resources are used as weapons rather than for development, peace and justice.

- The delay of development generates other poverty and misery which add anger with anger.



All of this happens because of the failure to forgive.

Therefore:

- **Peace is essential for development.**
- **True peace is made possible only through forgiveness.**
- **In order to promote a culture of forgiveness, people must go beyond the situation of mutual condemnation and discrimination.**
- **The culture of forgiveness must involve families, groups, societies, states.**

Consequently, *“The ability to forgive lies at the very basis of the idea of a future society marked by justice and solidarity,”* (G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 9).

Forgiveness involves a great spiritual strength and moral courage, since it leads to a fuller humanity which is more radiant with the splendor of the Creator.

Sketch 12

The Power of Prayer in Building Peace

(G.P. II, W.D.P. 2002, 14-15)

Prayer for peace is the very essence in order to build peace, order, justice and freedom.

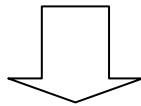
Prayer for peace is the power to open the human heart to God's love in order to renew the world and creation in going beyond the obstacles of violence and threat.

Prayer for peace is the opportunity given to people to pray for justice, for the right-ordering of relations among nations.

Prayer for peace is the opportunity given to people to pray for freedom, especially for religious freedom which is the center of every basic human and civil right.

Prayer for peace is to seek God's forgiveness and to implore the courage to forgive those who have sinned against us.

Prayer for peace is to hope for a better world marked by the mercy of God.



Therefore, no peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness and prayer is the worthy way to ask forgiveness to God and to share forgiveness to the others.

Appendix:

The Word Peace

Peace: it is a term which comes from the Latin word “pax, pacis”

- **Root: pak-**
- **Verb: “paco” (root: pak-; pacas, pacâvi, pacâtum, pacâre) which means to resume peace, to calm or to placate. Metaphorically this term means to resume peace in all regions with authority. According to Roman understanding “paco” means to submit or to tame a population referred to “pax romana.”**
- **Verb: “pango” (root: pak-; pangis, panxi and pepigi, pactum, pangere) which in its perfect tense “pepigi” means to stipulate, to enter into..., to make an agreement of peace with someone, (es: *pepigisse pacem cum aliquo*, to make peace to someone).**
- **The Ancient Greek form is the verb “ ” (pegnûmi), which means to build something, for instance (peace).**

The first meaning of the word peace is related to a state of tranquillity or quiet.

The second meaning of the word peace is related a state of freedom of civil disturbance.

The third meaning of the word peace is related to a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom.

The fourth meaning of the word peace is related to freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions.

The fifth meaning of the word peace is related to harmony in personal relations.

The sixth meaning of the word peace is related to a state or period of mutual concord between governments or a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity.

The seventh meaning of the word peace is related to a greeting or farewell.

Christian Interpretation and Meaning of the Word Peace

According to Christian perspective, peace is not what the Ancient Romans called “pax romana,” a generic tolerance towards everybody, where at the end the last word on issues such as the political freedom of peoples and individuals was reserved to the Roman power.

Under the Roman empire every kingdom was allowed to express its power in organizing the institutional and political life within the state borders without any possibility of limiting the application of the Roman law and the Roman policy in their territories.

Such a policy stated the Roman prerogative of exercising political, legal and economic as well as military power on internal affairs. Even in religious matters it was permitted to worship any divinity. However, such an apparent religious freedom could never lessen the divine image of the emperor causing persecution and death to those who denied the divinity of the emperor.

On the contrary Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the one through whom all things in heaven and on earth were to be reconciled to God, the Father.

Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection are the historical signs of that lasting peace which cannot only be the establishment of a period of absence of war.

Peace means to live in human hearts and in the world the beautiful words that Jesus taught to his disciple in the sermon on the mount, the beatitudes:

“Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognized as children of God,” (Mt. 5:9).

Therefore, from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ comes to us by grace our belonging to God the Father. We are his children by adoption in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

The sacrament of baptism underlines this aspect of “Sonship” with God because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who becomes our Lord and Savior to be followed.

To follow Jesus means to assume in our hearts His attitude of love and forgiveness which is the very condition for building His reign of love and peace here in the world, involving all the aspect of human life included politics and the safeguard and promotion of human dignity.

Consequently, for us Christians building peace starts from our relationship with the person of Jesus Christ, recognizing and accepting that He is God and our Savior and that only in Him humankind can be saved at the end of the world. On these basis the reign of love and peace can find its real foundation in the world. A reign that can last forever since it is founded on Jesus’ love and compassion.

