

## **Pope: 'Peace is made with our hands not just by the powerful'**

**By Salvatore Cernuzio and Lisa Zengarini: 15 May 2024**

“Peace is made with our hands”. It is not only built by the powerful "with their choices and their international treaties," we too can build peace, "in our homes, in the family, among neighbours, in our workplaces, in the neighbourhoods where we live". Pope Francis offered that reminder in the preface to a new book collecting texts and reflections on the relationship between justice and peace.

“If justice is lacking, peace is threatened; without peace, justice is compromised”, the Pope writes. “It is more true than ever that justice, understood as the virtue of giving what is owed to God and others, is closely linked to peace, in the most authentic and proper sense of the Hebrew word ‘shalom’”. A term that indicates "not so much the absence of war but the fullness of life and prosperity".

Peace makes justice possible, first among the "victims" of every conflict, just as "peace becomes a precondition for a just society". However, the Pope notes that both of these two dimensions of humanity have "a price" to pay: "fighting one's own selfishness", that is, "putting what is ‘mine’ before what is ‘ours’". In this regard, the Pope cites the unequivocal words of "a great Veronese citizen" who grew up in Germany, Fr. Romano Guardini: "Freedom does not consist in following personal or political will, but what is required by the nature of being".

The Pope recalls how some members of the White Rose, the group of young Germans who denounced Nazism in Munich, "were nourished by Guardini's philosophical and religious writings." “From those readings,” he notes, “arose the nonviolent action of those boys and girls who, by writing clandestine leaflets distributed in the city, tried to awaken people's consciences, numbed by Hitler's totalitarianism. And they paid their choice of conscience and freedom with their lives."

Peace is built with small gestures words and habits, Pope Francis further explains: “We can build peace by helping a migrant who is begging on the street, by visiting an elderly person who is alone and has no one to talk to, by multiplying gestures of care and respect towards our poor planet Earth, so mistreated by our exploitative selfishness, welcoming every unborn child who comes into the world, a gesture which was an authentic act of peace for Saint Mother Teresa ”.

Against the backdrop of a "piecemeal" world war, there are therefore "small pieces of peace" which "if welded together, build a great peace". “In these daily and easily attainable choices of peace and justice, the Pope concludes. we can sow the beginning of a new world,”, “where death will not have the last word and life will flourish for everyone”.

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