

Pacem in Terris, Peace on Earth

Pope John XXIII, April 11, 1963

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OVERVIEW

In *Peace on Earth*, Pope John XXIII contends that peace can be established only if the social order set down by God is fully observed. Relying extensively on reason and the natural law tradition, John XXIII sketches a list of rights and duties to be followed by individuals, public authorities, national governments, and the world community. Peace needs to be based on an order “founded on truth, built according to justice, vivified and integrated by charity, and put into practice in freedom.”

HISTORICAL NOTE

Written during the first year of Vatican II, *Peace on Earth* was the first encyclical addressed to “all people of good will.” Issued shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and the erection of the Berlin Wall, this document spoke to a world aware of the dangers of nuclear war. Its optimistic tone and development of a philosophy of rights made a significant impression on Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

DOCUMENT OUTLINE

Order Between people

Every human is a person, endowed with intelligence and free will, who has universal and inviolable rights and duties (#9).

Rights

- Rights to life and worthy standard of living, including rights to proper development of life and to basic security (#11).
- Rights of cultural and moral values, including freedom to search for and express opinions, freedom of information, and right to education (#s 12-13).
- Rights to religion and conscience (#14).
- Rights to choose one’s state in life, including rights to establish a family and pursue a religious vocation (#s 15-16).
- Economic rights, including right to work, to a just and sufficient wage, and to hold private property (#s 18-22).
- Rights of meeting and association (#23).
- Right to emigrate and immigrate (#25).
- Political rights, including right to participate in public affairs and juridical protection of rights (#s 26-27).

Duties

- To acknowledge and respect rights of others (#30).
- To collaborate mutually (#31).
- To act for others responsibly (#39).
- To preserve life and live it becomingly (#42).



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- Working classes have gradually gained ground in economic and social affairs (#40).
- Women are participating in public life (#41).
- All nations are becoming independent (#42).

II. Relations between Individuals and Public Authorities in a Single State**Nature of Authority**

- Authority is necessary for the proper functioning of society (#46).
- It derives its force from the moral order which has God for its end (#47).
- A state which uses, as its chief means, punishments and rewards cannot effectively promote the common good (#48).
- A state cannot oblige in matters of conscience (#49).
- A command contrary to God's will is not binding (#51).

Characteristics of Common Good

- Human person must be considered (#55).
- All members of the state share in common good (#56).
- More attention must be given to the less fortunate members of society (#56).
- State must promote material and spiritual welfare of citizens (#57).

Civil Authority

- Chief concern should be to ensure the common good (#59).
- Coordinates social relations in a way that allows people to exercise their rights and duties peacefully (#60).
- A three-fold division of powers—legislative, executive, and judicial—is recommended for public authorities (#68).
- Often a prudent and thoughtful juridical system seems inadequate for society's needs (#71).
- Three requisites for good government:
 - charter of human rights (#75);
 - written constitution (#76);
 - relations between governed and government in terms of rights and duties (#77).



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- Elimination of racism (#86).
- Right to self-development (#86).
- Obligation of mutual assistance (#87).
- Objective use of media (#90).

In Justice

- Recognition of mutual rights and duties (#91).
- Improvement of the situation of ethnic minorities (#96).

Active Solidarity

- Promote by civil authority the common good of the entire human family (#98).
- Fostering of friendly relations in all fields (#100).
- Reduction in imbalances of goods and capital in the world (#101).
- Right of political refugees to migrate (#106).
- Arms race:
 - deprives less developed countries of social and economic progress (#109);
 - creates a climate of fear (#111);
 - “Justice, then, right reason, and consideration for human dignity and life demand that the arms race cease” (#112);
 - peace consists in mutual trust (#114).

In Liberty

- Relations based on freedom; responsibility and enterprise encouraged (#120).
- Respect by the wealthy nations of the value in giving aid without seeking dominance (#125).

III. Relations of People and of Political Communities with the World Community

- Individual countries cannot seek their own interests and develop in isolation given modern conditions of interdependence (#131).
- Under present circumstances, the structures and forms of national governments are inadequate to promote the universal common good (#135).
- Public authority must have the means to promote the common good (#136).
- Need public authority to operate in an effective matter on a world-wide matter (#137).
- The United Nations should be fostered (#145).



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DOCUMENT OUTLINE (continued)

V. Pastoral Exhortations

- People should take an active role in public life and organizations and influence them from within (#147).
- Humans should carry on temporal activities “as acts within the moral order” (#150).
- A unity between faith and action is needed; solid Christian education will help achieve this unity (#s 152-153).
- Distinguish between false philosophical ideas and movements deriving from them (#159).
- Christians need prudence in determining when to collaborate with non-Christians in social and economic affairs (#160).
- “Peace will be but an empty sounding word unless it is founded on the order which the present document has outlined in confident hope: an order founded on truth, built according to justice, vivified and integrated by charity, and put into practice in freedom” (#167).

Discussion Questions

In 1963, Pope John XXIII listed significant “signs of the times.” Which others would you add to (or subtract from) that list today?

In 2003 the Vatican decided to republish *Peace on Earth*. Why do you think the Vatican thought this document was relevant to today’s world issues?

For you and your community, what are the most important rights which Pope John XXIII listed? Explain.

Analyze the peace efforts of your community from the perspective of this encyclical.