Pax Christi International / Catholic Peacebuilding Network
Conference on Nonviolence and Just Peace
Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, President
Rome, 11-13 April 2016

It is an honour for me to address your Conference. The participants give witness to the vitality of Pax Christi International as an ecclesial movement and the Catholic Peacebuilding Network (CPN) as a network. My task is to recall with you the spirit of the movement and of the network, to recall the lessons of figures such as Cardinals Alfrink and Feltin whose experience and wisdom continue to inspire, and to appropriate also the magisterium of Pope Francis.

Founding and growth

The ecclesial movement called Pax Christi was founded immediately after the World War II by Monsignor Theas, who had been deported by the Germans, with the indispensable encouragement of Madame Dortel-Claudot. Its goal and initial focus was Franco-German reconciliation through the active apostolic engagement of Christians from both sides of the Rhine. The specific means were having members meet frequently; they often walked together to pray and to spread the message of peace. Among its supporters were Fr. Robert Bosc and Monsignor Lalande who later headed the peace section of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

A few short years later, the Iron Curtain divided Europe. This blocked the spread of Pax Christi as a movement in Eastern Europe; but links were established with some figures, the majority of whom were Protestant, for example Pastor Ludek Broz of Prague.

Since that Cold War period, times have changed. On the one hand, the Iron Curtain and its associated walls have come down. On the other hand, there are new threats to peace which are global in scope. So it is fitting for the contemporary version of Pax Christi to attain world-wide reach.

Underlying principles

Non-violence has long been the main underlying principle of Pax Christi. Non-Violence is a duty for Christians. Some have taken it to heroic lengths, such as the Tyrolean peasant Franz Jägerstätter who refused to bear arms during the war of 1939. His conscientious objection was punished by decapitation n Berlin; he was beatified as a martyr in 2007by Pope Benedict XVI. There are many more examples that demonstrate the moral fibre that is essential for non-violence and that lead to this conscientious personal commitment.

The core of this Christian teaching was formulated very clearly by St. Ambrose in the Vth century. In his work called *De Officiis* (I 27-29), this Archbishop of Milan posits the following challenge to Christian conscience. A Christian witnesses the unjust attack of a strong man on a weaker person. The situation poses a dilemma for him and he wonders how to respond. If he comes to the aid of the victim of unjust aggression, he will betray his obligation to be non-violent; but if he remains true to non-violence, he will betray his duty to help someone in need.

The thoughts of St. Ambrose on this matter lead us to reflect on the very nature of violence. Every Christian – and anyone else for that matter – sometimes faces the need to make choices that give practical, real-life expression to the values that he or she feels called upon to witness to.

Pope Francis has provided an ancient instance of this practical situation. In a 2008 homily, then Cardinal Bergoglio stated: "In the first Reading we hear how Moses worked taking care of the sheep. He was a shepherd. … He had a great sense of justice because, in Egypt as a young man, when he saw an Egyptian mistreating a man of his people, an Israelite, Moses just went and killed the Egyptian. He could not tolerate it. So he had to escape from Egypt and lived for many years elsewhere, tending sheep."[1]

St. Ambrose's parable helps us to understand what is involved in every violent situation, and to formulate an appropriate definition. There is violence wherever an individual, a group or a State illegitimately imposes its will on another body (an individual, a group or a State) that it dominates, most often by indiscriminate use of force. This silences all opposition and any attempt to re-evaluate the situation.

Unhappily, such violence is widespread. It was the case of slavery at the level of individuals and colonial oppression at the inter-State level, the European conquest and occupation of the lands of indigenous peoples etc.. We might say that one State employs its power to turn another State into a mere tool for its use; one population may do the same to another population. Resistance to such situations generally takes the form of a counter-violence – but this merely

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[1] http://aica.org/aica/documentos_files/Obispos_Argentinos/Bergoglio/2008/2008_07_01.html

substitutes one excessive deployment of power for another. ... such, indeed, was the case of Moses cited above!

The true vision of peace

The Christian position does not accept the reduction of social relationships to choices between being the master or the slave; it calls for a spiritual conversion so that relationships of unjust domination may give way to practices of fraternal love. Such is the value of peace as taught by Christ; and this is the choice that the members of Pax Christi and CPN embrace; and at this Seminar, you have gathered to explore the quest for peace., deep peace rooted in Justice, *shalom:* not mere absence of war, but the fullness of life for all. Your point of departure is that "*As followers of the one who is Peace, who on the cross overcame the violence of our world and who then called for peace and modelled forgiveness, we are called to help move our broken and violated world toward the full flowering of the New Creation, repeating Jesus' way of active, non-violent, persistent, risky, creative peacemaking.* But, this peace, though the deep yearning of human hearts at all times, as St. Pope John XXIII observed, is attained/ established/consolidated **only through the full respect of the divinely established order!** And what is this?

Let me raise two points that contribute to a Christian assessment of situations of violence. First, consider the distinction between tension and violence. "Violence is evil, … violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, … violence is unworthy of man."[2] The men and women of our age are inclined to cry out against injustice when they think that their aspirations are being frustrated; so they think it is their duty to support every sort of social upheaval that they deem justified because it aims at ending their frustration. This betrays ignorance of the mechanisms by which social structures evolve. Pope Francis gave a very detailed analysis of this phenomenon in his *a braccio* speech to the World Youth Forum on 13 August 2015. Tension, he said, is inevitable; differences between individuals and groups are not always an evil. Moreover, he added, a society without tension would be rather sad; tensions are part of life, and some of them can present opportunities for struggle over ways to create greater fraternity among people and to constantly intensify this search.

Second, we ought to think about what is needed to "establish peace" – a reflection in *Gaudium et Spes* (§78) that led to the establishment of the Pontifical Council which I lead.

Pope Francis speaks in simple terms about peace-making. These terms, found in three paragraphs of *Evangelii Gaudium*, convey the philosophical foundations for building peace, from local harmony to a fraternal international community.

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[2] John Paul II, *Homily,* Drogheda, 29.09.1979.

The Holy Father begins with a focus on the dignity of the human person and the common good:

> Peace in society cannot be understood as pacification or the mere absence of violence resulting from the domination of one part of society over others. Nor does true peace act as a pretext for justifying a social structure which silences or appeases the poor, so that the more affluent can placidly support their lifestyle while others have to make do as they can. Demands involving the distribution of wealth, concern for the poor and human rights cannot be suppressed under the guise of creating a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority. The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. When these values are threatened, a prophetic voice must be raised. (§218)

So the foundation of peace is **justice** *(the respect for the demands of the relationships in which we live----- beginning with the fundamental relationship which result from our creation: God-man, man-man, man and his/her world)*.

In this Pope Francis echoes St. John XXIII, whose *Pacem in Terris* sought peace not in the absence of war but in human hearts, in our *interrelationships and interdependence*. As Pope Paul VI asserted, peace is not "simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day towards the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect justice among men".[3] So "In the end," says Pope Francis, "a peace which is not the result of integral development **(integral human development)** will be doomed; it will always spawn new conflicts and various forms of violence." (§220)

He sums up the positive action needed from every man and every woman this way:

> People in every nation enhance the social dimension of their lives by acting as committed and responsible citizens, not as a mob swayed by the powers that be. Let us not forget that "responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation"[4]. Yet becoming a people demands something more. It is an ongoing process in which every new generation must take part: a slow and arduous effort calling for a desire for integration and a willingness to achieve this through the growth of a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter. (§221)

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[3] Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), 76: AAS 59 (1967), 294-295.
[4] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Letter *Forming Conscience for Faithful Citizenship* (November 2007), 13.

<u>The way ahead</u>

So much has changed in the last sixty years. Seventy years ago, roughly thirty countries voted for the United Nations Charter; now close to two hundred countries profess that the Charter's principles spell out the fundamental order of relations between peoples. True, much remains to be done, and violence still reigns in numerous regions because dialogue in truth has not yet taken place.

Peace will not come about through recourse to a higher level of violence against the perpetrators of injustice, even though it may sometimes be necessary to use force to bring an end to injustice. It is through dialogue that peace grows, a dialogue based on values. The evidence is there in history – or more exactly, in the events that gave rise to Pax Christi. The Treaty of Versailles trusted that reason alone could establish peace. At the time, Lord Ponsonby stated that no government, no matter how immoral, could flaunt the conscience of the entire world by attacking an unarmed State; accordingly, he urged on States a moral obligation to embark on unilateral disarmament. The totalitarian regimes arose from this illusion and proceeded into the catastrophe of World War II. After the War, it was accepted that peace must not be founded on procedures, as the League of Nations envisaged, but on the acceptance of higher moral principles.

These higher principles include the sanctity of the spiritual order. Among other things, the Philadelphia Declaration of 1944 of the International Labour Organization stated: "all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity; ... all national and international policies and measures, in particular those of an economic and financial character, should be judged in this light and accepted only in so far as they may be held to promote and not to hinder the achievement of this fundamental objective…" The application of this moral obligation is what underlies development policies, the political independence of colonial territories, the intensification of international trade and the general rise in standards of living.

Here too, much still remains to be done, and this widens the scope of goals for which Pax Christi might work. What contribution can be made, from the Christian point of view, to consolidating peace by pursuing/respecting the *order established by God:* humanity as a *brotherhood/fraternity* (whence every killing is a fratricide)*, of equal dignity, manifested in their freedom and rights to pursue their common good, from all what God has bestowed on them in his love and providence , in equality and solidarity.*

The tensions of our day grow clearly out of the fact that viewpoints are often different, and even opposed, on how to resolve the tensions and conflicts that divide the international community. It would be dangerous to identify the Gospel message with this or that political program – from this, nationalisms are born, which believe their vocation is to impose their mark on other peoples. The same thing happened with supposedly 'progressive' movements of the past that claimed to find human salvation in an ideology – and then persisted in applying that ideology in spite of the accompanying violations of human rights.

Accordingly, the Christian contribution to peace must take a different path, of practical measures chosen in light of higher duties. The involvement of a Christian in the promotion of peace presupposes a clarity about the knowledge of the *order established by God;* and in the event of divergence of knowledge and understanding of this *order,* promote constant dialogue of everyone about this *order.* The goal is the possibility of establishing a fraternal communion established by Christ when he refused the legions of angels that his Father could have provided in order to save him.

This has implications for the last item on the agenda, on just war theory. The media, and public opinion influenced by the media, convey an incorrect interpretation of the religious concept of just war. Its origins are in St. Augustine, and St. Thomas formulated it clearly; but its fuller treatment arose when Europe was governed by barbarian peoples for whom the only thing that counted was violence. At the same time, however, these peoples regarded the Church as a civilizing Power because of its religious nature. Therefore, what the Church attempted to do was to enlarge the scope of peace by continually reducing the conditions under which a Prince could justify his recourse to the use of force. The Prince, of course, wished to avoid being considered sinful and risking the canonical penalties of the Church. The law of God, which the Church interpreted, was recognized as being normative; it achieved a progressive transformation of consciences, and in fact, the recourse to violence was no longer seen as the only possible way to resolve conflicts. But a shift occurred with the secularization of Western societies, and each Prince claimed the right to decide whether or not his recourse to war was just.

How do we apply the distinction nowadays between just and unjust war? As you would expect, the guidance of Pope Francis is nuanced. He has said the following with regards to ISIS:

> In these cases, where there is an unjust aggression, I can only say that it is licit to stop the unjust aggressor. I emphasize the word: "stop". I'm not saying drop bombs, make war, but stop the aggressor. The means used to stop him would have to be evaluated. Stopping an unjust aggressor is licit. But we also need to remember! How many times, with this excuse of stopping an unjust aggressor, the powers have taken over peoples

and carried on an actual war of conquest! One nation alone cannot determine how to stop an unjust aggressor.[5]

I will end with two observations regarding military matters. First, there is a <u>right to self-defence and therefore to have an army</u>. The Church cannot preach the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount in a vacuum. To be a sufficient norm for political action, they need to be practiced with consideration for actual circumstances and for the good to be achieved, which includes the duty to assist those whose rights have been violated. Pope Pius XII had this in mind when he declared after WWII: "The community of peoples must always be wary of those criminals without any conscience who, to carry out their ambitious plans, do not hesitate to unleash total war. This is why, if other peoples wish to protect their existence and their most precious goods and if they do not want to give free rein to international wrongdoers, their only option is to prepare for the day when they will have to defend themselves… "[6]

Second, one must not lose sight of <u>the spiritual good of combatants</u>. It is legitimate for religious ministers (generally priests) to accompany armies. This is the vocation of those who belong to the military ordinariates.[7] Military chaplains are mentioned in the Geneva Convention of 1864. International law accords appropriate rights to religious ministers who serve armed forces; their exact status varies with the laws of each country and it reflects the cultural tradition.

<u>Conclusion</u>

You are continuing a powerful, inspiring and utterly vital ecclesial tradition. I hope you find renewed vigour in the link that Pope Francis makes between the reduction of violence and the increase in justice, compassion and dialogue. May your deliberations in this Year of Mercy shed clear new light on the path ahead for Pax Christi and the Catholic Peacebuilding Network.

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[5] Pope Francis, Press Conference in flight from Korea to Rome, 18 August 2014.

[6] https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1953/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19531003_diritto-penale.html

[7] Are there any religious congregations which typically do military chaplaincy?