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Press Conference for the presentation of the Message for the 52nd World Day of Peace

Intervention of Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson

Intervention of Rev. Msgr. Bruno Marie Duffé

At 11.00 this morning, at the Holy See Press Office, a press conference was held for the presentation of the Message for the 52nd World Day of Peace on the theme *Good politics at the service of peace*, to be held on 1 January 2019.

The speakers at the conference were: His Eminence Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and the Rev. Msgr. Bruno Marie Duffé, secretary of the same Dicastery.

The following are the interventions:

Intervention of Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson

"*Peace to this house*", is the prayerful wish with which the Holy Father greets and welcomes the world and all of us into the New year, 2019!

This wish of Pope Francis for the human family at the beginning of this new year, according to his *Peace message*, derives from the commissioning words of Jesus to his disciples when he sent them out to preach the Gospel: Jesus said to them: "*Into whatever house you enter, first say: 'Peace to this house! If there is a son of peace, your peace will descend upon him; otherwise it will return to you'*" (Lk.10:5-6).

This greeting of peace with which Jesus sent his disciples into the world echo, in its turn, the greeting of peace with which God sent His Son into the world. The echo is of the message of peace with which the angels announced the *birth* of Jesus in the world. There the angels said to the shepherds keeping watch over their sheep: "*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those whom God favours*" (Lk 2:14).

The good news of Jesus, whether of his birth and of his own coming into the world, or when his disciples travel the world to proclaim him, is always accompanied by peace, and it brings peace. This is what Pope Francis, with his New Year greeting of peace, reminds us all about: *Jesus is God's /Father's gift of peace*, and he is offered wherever the Gospel is preached!

Entrusted to the disciples of Jesus, as they are sent forth to proclaim Jesus, *peace is a gift that is freely offered to every household and the people within it, who must only dispose themselves for it and cooperate with it, as sons of peace!* In this *Message of Peace*, Pope Francis identifies "*the household*" that is offered *the peace of Christ* with our homes, our families, our communities, our countries and all the people within them, as well as the earth/world, *our common home!* It is easily understandable then, that to *dispose ourselves for peace and to cooperate with it, as sons of peace*, means that we should make peace happen: *we should serve peace* in all the instances of household mentioned.

We do have an idea of peace, *this yearning of the human heart*. We know what it is, what characterizes its presence, and what put it to flight. This message mentions some of them under the "*vices of politics*": corruption, denial of rights, violence, *be they active wars or cold wars, no disregard and abuse of rights of people (poor) to healthcare, jobs (job security), housing, education and communication, food and water; not forced to emigrate or seek peace as a refugee; xenophobia and racism, abuse of the environment and natural disasters*. And *serving peace in the household* (that is/may be afflicted with these ills) is what Pope Francis ascribes to Politics, as its true function and attribute in his *Peace Message for 2019*.

Let me now briefly illustrate why it belongs to Politics, as its function and attribute, to serve *peace* in the *household*, in all its different forms presented by the *Message*. Every *house* has its resources that need to be managed and administered for the wellbeing of all dwellers in the house. Some of these resources already exist in the household (natural resources). Others are deemed necessary and useful for living in the household, and are aspired after and worked for, such as peace, justice, harmony etc. If, following the Greeks, we call the household *oikos*, then the management and administration of all its resources for the wellbeing and happiness of its dwellers or citizens is *oikonomos = oikonomics = economics*; and the *dwellers* or *citizens* of the household who either collectively or through their representatives exercise this role are, again following the Greeks, called *politēs*. The citizens' (*politēs*) system or art of overseeing and safeguarding, through *policy formulations* the management of their resources for their mutual wellbeing is *politics*.

Pope Francis' wish and prayer for peace in 2019, then, is that *politics: this oversight, through policies and laws, of resources of domestic, national and global households may bring peace to all the citizens of the households, especially its youth, who may not be robbed of their hope in the future, because politics is so badly done that it deprives them of peace*.

Thanks for your attention, and a very merry Christmas to you all!

Intervention of Rev. Msgr. Bruno Marie Duffé

Presenting politics as a service of peace means giving to this collective responsibility a dignity and a vision, in a global and local context, where politics seems more or less disqualified, at times despised.

In the Message the Holy Father speaks first of all of a mission that finds its inspiration in the mandate the Apostles received when Jesus said to them: "*Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!'*" (Lk 10: 5).

There is a peace to be offered to all those who suffer from violence, pain, and the abuses of power. A peace that we must build together, with the word, dialogue and the safeguarding of law. A peace we must live as a relationship of respect towards our neighbour, towards the poor, and towards Creation, which is our common home. *“Peace be to this house”*.

How is it possible, however, to develop and translate into action the service of peace, and how can politics be peaceful? There is a need for ongoing discernment to find what contributes to the construction of the common good and to refuse that which hinders solidarity... This is the political mission, a daily journey of encounter, dialogue, conciliation and mutual reconciliation.

This discernment is necessary to understand what the Holy Father says when he speaks about good politics. Because this politics that wants and promotes the common good and social peace breaks with the mere search for power, or personal or group interest – which excludes others or does not wish to construct society in a common way. When politics becomes a service, listens to people, all people, welcomes the talents and aspirations of all, with a special attention for the poor and those in need. Good politics does not oppose itself to groups or the community – social, ethnic or religious. It instead promotes many initiatives to nurture the relationships between citizens. To encounter, to listen, to propose and finally to decide for the future of the community: this is a great and noble mission!

We know that peace is as fragile as a flower. There cannot be peace without mutual respect, mutual hospitality and the keeping of promises. Politics is a word that calls for fidelity. And peace cannot be reduced to a relationship of force. It is not a market. It is, rather, a commitment for the present and future generations. But we also know that the future begins today. As a service of peace, politics is care for relations, within a society as well as in the cooperation between states and nations, with the diversity of cultures and histories.

Peace requires first of all the respect for law and human rights. We have celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the approval of the Universal Declaration of human rights, the reference to which highlights the dignity of the human person and fundamental rights (education, health, culture, and also freedom of expression and religion) as conditions for peace.

As Pope John XXIII stated in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963), human rights are at the same time human duties. The reciprocity of rights and duties is a condition for a peaceful society, with the reference – in the Christian faith – to a God of love and forgiveness.

The Holy Father’s Message does not seek to deny the tendencies and vices that lead to the death of politics and of peace: corruption, which is an evil in all countries; the power of money, the relativization of law; xenophobia; racism; the ideology that presents migrants as enemies; and all those discourses that are incompatible with a politics of peace.

The responsibility of peace begins in the heart of the person and in the heart of every family. We pass from the human family to the family of nations. Peace, however, is born in every person. We are members of a single body – says Saint Paul – we have a sole Father Who gives His peace to all.

The Word of God, that Jesus gives to His disciples, makes them “agents of peace”. “Blessed are the peacemakers”! This peace is always peace with others: social peace, but also peace with nature and peace with our conscience.

“Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’” (*Lk 10: 5*).
