



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING PROMOTED BY
THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC LEGISLATORS NETWORK**

Clementine Hall

Thursday, 25 August 2022

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*Your Beatitude,
Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am pleased to offer a warm welcome to all of you who are present for this meeting of the International Catholic Legislators Network. I thank Cardinal Schonborn and Dr Alting von Geusau for their words of greeting, and I am grateful as well to all who have organized this gathering. I also greet His Holiness Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church, and I am happy he is present with us.

You have come together to consider the important theme of advancing justice and peace in the current geopolitical situation, marked as it is by the conflicts and division affecting many areas of the world. In this regard, I want to offer a few brief reflections on three key words that can help guide your discussions during these days: *justice*, *fraternity* and *peace*.

The first word, *justice*, classically defined as the will to give to each person what is his or her due, involves, according to the Biblical tradition, concrete actions aimed at fostering right relationships with God and with others, so that the good of individuals as well as the community can flourish. In our world today, many people cry out for justice, particularly the most vulnerable who often have no voice and who look to civic and political leaders to protect, through effective public policy and

legislation, their dignity as children of God and the inviolability of their fundamental human rights. Here I am thinking, for example, of the poor, of migrants and refugees, of victims of human trafficking, of the sick and elderly and of so many other individuals who risk being exploited or discarded by today's culture that "uses and throws out", the "throw-away" culture. Yours is the challenge of working to safeguard and enhance within the public sphere those right relationships that allow each person to be treated with the respect, and indeed the love, that is due to him or her. As the Lord reminds us: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (*Mt 7:12*; cf. *Lk 6:31*).

This brings us to the second key word: *fraternity*. In fact, a just society cannot exist without the bond of fraternity, that is, without a sense of shared responsibility and concern for the integral development and well-being of each member of our human family. For this reason, "A global community of fraternity based on the practice of social friendship on the part of peoples and nations calls for a better kind of politics, one truly at the service of the common good" (Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, 154). If we are to heal our world, so sorely tried by rivalries and forms of violence that result from a desire to dominate rather than to serve, we need not only responsible citizens but also capable leaders inspired by a fraternal love directed especially towards those in the most precarious conditions of life. With this in mind, I encourage your ongoing efforts, on the national and international levels, to work for the adoption of policies and laws that seek to address, in a spirit of solidarity, the many situations of inequality and injustice threatening the social fabric and the inherent dignity of all people.

Finally, the effort to build our common future demands the constant search for *peace*. Peace is not merely the absence of war. Instead, the path to lasting peace calls for cooperation, especially on the part of those charged with greater responsibility, in pursuing goals that benefit everyone. Peace results from an enduring commitment to mutual dialogue, a patient search for the truth and the willingness to place the authentic good of the community before personal advantage. In such an effort, your work as lawmakers and political leaders is more important than ever. For true peace can be achieved only when we strive, through far-sighted political processes and legislation, to build a social order founded upon universal fraternity and justice for all.

Dear friends, may the Lord enable you to become a leaven for the renewal of civil and political life, witnesses of "political love" (cf. *ibid.*, 180ff.) for those most in need. May your zeal for justice and peace, nourished by a spirit of fraternal solidarity, continue to guide you in the noble pursuit of contributing to the advancement of God's kingdom in our world.

To you, your families and your work, I impart my blessing. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.
