



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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Audience with a delegation of the “Universal Peace Council”

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, a delegation of the Universal Peace Council.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope to those present at the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to meet with you during your visit to Rome and I commend your dedication to the cause of peace in the Holy Land, which sadly has witnessed much violence and suffering through the centuries. Unfortunately, our own day is no different and for over a year now, the dark clouds of conflict have once more engulfed the region of the world you call home. It is terrible, terrible.

The current situation makes the promotion of peace all the more important and I am delighted to see that your delegation is composed of young people from different backgrounds and faiths. This is a clear sign that the desire for peace is rooted in the human heart and is able to bring about unity in diversity. We all know, however, that your task is not easy. As a result, I would like to offer you three brief points to consider.

The first is that we need young people to carry out this important service because they possess a certain idealism, enthusiasm and hope that reminds all of us that a better world is possible, peace is possible. In particular, young people can help others to discover the crucial elements that prepare the way for peace:

forgiveness and a willingness to let go of past prejudices and hurts. Young people are creative, but it is terrible to meet young people who have fallen prey to ideologies. In these cases, ideology takes the place of rational thought and the desire to do good. While we must always remember and learn from history, an unhealthy attachment to past hurts and prejudices can never lead to true and lasting peace. In fact, it only perpetuates the spiral of conflict and division.

The second point is always to engage in dialogue, since it is the principal tool at our disposal. "Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word 'dialogue'" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 198). Dialogue is the only path for peace, for encountering one another. Young people can be great artisans of peace through dialogue.

The third is never to lose hope. Hope never disappoints. Do not lose hope. It is so easy to become discouraged when we see the devastating effects of war and hatred, not to mention poverty, hunger, discrimination and various other realities that threaten the prospect of peace. They are the fruit of war. This may lead us to think that our engagement in dialogue is futile because it produces few concrete results. Perhaps you may have even been criticized for focusing on the need to dialogue in order to advance the cause of peace. In those moments, remember that anything worth doing is not easy. It requires sacrifice and a willingness to recommit ourselves each day, especially when things seem not to go our way. Keep hope alive, dear young people, always bearing in mind that we are all part of one human family. We are all brothers and sisters, and efforts to promote reconciliation, harmony and peace will always be worth our time and effort. And of course, never lose your sense of humour, that healthy joy! That is very important! Do not lose the capacity for joy, which helps us to see things more clearly.

Thank you for your visit and I assure you of my prayers for your commitment to peace in the Holy Land. I bless all of you and I ask, please, to remember me in your prayers. Thank you!
