



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 241212h

Thursday 12.12.2024

Press Conference for the Presentation of the Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 58th World Day of Peace

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J.

Intervention of Ms. Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy

Intervention of Mr. Vito Alfieri Fontana

At 11.30 today, a press conference was held at the Holy See Press Office to present the Holy Father Francis' Message for the 58th World Day of Peace, to be held on 1 January 2025, entitled "Forgive us our trespasses: grant us your peace".

The speakers were: His Eminence Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J., prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; Ms. Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of the *Catholic Mobilizing Network*; and Mr. Vito Alfieri Fontana, engineer.

The following are their interventions:

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Card. Michael Czerny, S.J.

Cordial greetings to the journalists here present, to all attending online, and to the esteemed speakers.

Pope Francis will deliver his Message for the 58th World Day of Peace: "Forgive us our Trespasses: Grant us your Peace", at the beginning of the 2025 Jubilee year that focuses on "Pilgrims of Hope". I will comment on both sides of this wonderful pairing.

“Trespases” is a classical English word which means “sins”. French and Spanish have the words *offences* and *ofensas*, and Polish the word *winy*, with a similar meaning.

By contrast, the Pater Noster in Latin says *debita nostra*, and similarly Italian, *i nostri debiti*; Portuguese, *nossas dividas*; and German, *unsere Schuld*.

The ideas of “sins” and “debts” are combined in the biblical meaning of jubilee. The word comes from yobel, the ram's horn announcing the time “of forgiveness and freedom for the entire people” (no. 2) every 50 years. This goes back to the Law of Moses in ancient Biblical times (Leviticus 25, 10-14). The Church has employed this model of Jubilee since the year 1300.

Consistent with the ancient meaning, the Holy Father speaks about the poorer countries,. In our time, he says, this must include the conversion of hearts, the cancellation of foreign or international debt, and paying back the ecological debt. Let us “think of the mercy with which [God] constantly forgives our sins and forgives our every debt” (no. 9).

The Message invites everyone:

1. To strengthen and solidify our faith.
2. To renew our commitment to conversion; and
3. To disarm!

I will now address these three invitations in turn.

1) Faith: Why does the Church celebrate a special Jubilee every 25 or 50 years, and why does she rejoice?

Because the Lord Jesus died and rose again for us. Christ is the joy that the Church rejoices in and proclaims to the world. The risen Christ is the cry of jubilation that rises up in every age, and opens up a vision of the future of humanity. Human fulfilment is to be in communion with the God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When the many injustices in the world fill us with horror, when we are terrified by the senseless evil that human beings keep on perpetrating, it's good to be reminded of the salvation Christ brings. It is good to be reminded of the power of the Holy Spirit, as gentle as “a tiny whispering sound” (1 Kings 19:12), who guides history to the fulfilment of the Father's will—the Father who wills, as Jesus explains, “that I should not lose anything of what [the Father] gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day” (John 6:39).

So, to challenge the many uglinesses that inhabit our time and disfigure the face of humanity and the earth, we fix our gaze on Christ who is our joy and peace.

2) Conversion:

As the Church and as disciples, we need to undergo conversion, constant renewal of mind and heart. The Christian is “a person who has hope” (1 Thes 4:13) and who “waits for Christ” (Phil 3:20; Heb 9:28). Rather than being defined by the past and the errors and sins committed, the Christian yearns constantly for the encounter with the Lord, patiently bearing the fatigue of incompleteness and imperfections, one's own and of others.

Conversion is a path traced by that love for Christ that inspires, transforms, orients, energizes us.

“Love is patient” says St Paul (1Cor 13:14) because it moves us from immediate needs and consumption and a logic of waste and self-interest, to seeking authentic communion, service, the common good, the gift of oneself,

“integral human development” (see *Populorum Progressio* 14).

During the year of the Jubilee, conversion “inspires us to seek to establish the liberating justice of God in our world” (n.3). It is paying attention and listening to the voice of God, but also to the cry of the poor and the earth. It is accepting responsibility for “for the bonds of injustice” which need to be loosened, for the “conflicts that presently plague our human family,” and for “the devastation to which the earth, our common home, has been subjected” (n.4).

3) Disarmament:

The ram's horn sounding loud does not invite us to a moralistic effort at self-improvement, but to a radical change in how we look at reality. When we entrust the present to God and live today in faith and service, the future is no longer under threat. Instead, to expect the Lord, to pay attention and exercise responsibility, are expressed concretely in acting for the good and for unity and for care.

Today and tomorrow are in the merciful and providential hands of God the Father, as Jesus Christ makes abundantly clear and as the Holy Spirit constantly consoles us. Such faith frees our hearts from anguish, to respond and to serve. Relax your face! Smile at your brothers and sisters! Give thanks for the earth, our common home! Recognize in them the presence of the One who smiles at us first.

As if to sum up the Jubilee challenge, Pope Francis invites us, the whole human family, to disarm our hearts (cf. no. 14). Concretely, he proposes three urgent gestures of détente and peace: to forgive the foreign debt, to eliminate the death penalty, and to establish a global Fund to eradicate world hunger (Cf. no. 11).

Intervention of Ms. Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy

The Holy Father's message for the World Day of Peace is a welcome and inspiring call toward peace that illuminates a hope-filled path to attend to unhealed wounds, mend broken relationships, and confront the injustices and suffering in our world. Through the “saving forgiveness offered to all through Jesus Christ,” he calls us to be bearers of God's merciful justice in the world, even in the presence of grave harm.

As Jubilee 2025 appears on the horizon, grounded in “a hope that does not disappoint,” the Holy Father's message challenges the global Church to confront structures of sin, reminding us that “every individual can be a resource” toward addressing injustice and creating enduring change.

Pope Francis outlines obstacles to peace which are contrary to human dignity and he provides concrete proposals to advance peace and restore dignity. His call to end the death penalty is the reason I am here, as Catholic Mobilizing Network's mission is to mobilize Catholics and people of goodwill in the United States to end the death penalty, advance justice solutions in alignment with Catholic values and promote healing through restorative justice.

Pope Francis asks for our firm commitment to respect the dignity of human life, namely “the elimination of the death penalty in all nations.” Capital punishment is a “structural sin” existing in at least 55 nations across the globe, where nearly 28,000 people find themselves on death row (this statistic, of course, does not include cases in countries where there are no official statistics). In my home country of the United States, 27 of the 50 states have the death penalty.

The system of capital punishment anywhere leaves in its wake ripples of suffering in families, in communities, and in our social systems. We find the criminal legal system can often retraumatize victims or leave them out of the justice process altogether; there is the dehumanization in the isolating confines of death row; evidence of racial bias and rampant discrimination, wrongful convictions, and even executions of innocent people.

Indeed, the death penalty's very existence epitomizes a throwaway culture. Pope Francis says: "This penalty not only compromises the inviolability of life but eliminates every human hope of forgiveness and rehabilitation."

Steadfast, faith-filled advocacy to end the death penalty is an act of profound hope in our world today. And the experience of God's infinite mercy and model of forgiveness buoys our witness.

Forgive Us Our Trespases: Grant Us Your Peace, our theme today, is far from theoretical. Forgiveness opens our hearts to expressions of mercy on the path toward peace — at personal and structural levels.

I carry with me stories about the forgiveness journeys of murder victim family members, of men and women on death row, and of exonerated brothers and sisters — all affirming what the Holy Father suggests about healing and establishing peace. My friends Vicki & Syl Schieber lost their daughter Shannon in 1998. Shannon was murdered while finishing her first year of graduate school. Their suffering was unimaginable; yet they chose to respond in a restorative way. They fought to spare the man who took their daughter's life from a death sentence.

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Schiebers took courageous steps to ensure that their pain did not result in more suffering or feed into a sinful social structure. Compelled by forgiveness, advocating for the life of the man who killed their daughter was a tangible expression of the healing justice they longed for.

Forgiveness is a long journey and dare I say countercultural. So, the Holy Father reminds us that the path toward peace needs graced hope to light our way:

- A compassionate hope that shepherds mercy when our world disposes life.
- A steadfast hope that emerges despite terrible loss and unimaginable harm.
- A persistent hope that continues to pursue justice when all seems lost.
- A restorative hope that chooses not to condemn but instead to work toward healing.
- A reconciling hope that allows the grace of forgiveness to overcome vengeance.

When our hearts are oriented toward a spirit of forgiveness, abolition of the death penalty is a tangible expression of mercy that signals our personal and structural commitment to the pursuit of peace.

Indeed, we are called to be bearers of God's merciful justice in the world. Eliminating the structural sin of the death penalty is essential to building up a culture of life that will sustain our path of peace.

Intervention of Mr. Vito Alfieri Fontana

When I was an arms manufacturer, I thought war was inherent with the human soul. Messages aimed at responsibility and solidarity deserved a shrug if not a few wry comments.

Those in the armaments industry go out of their way to offer customers products that ensure quick and effective solutions to a war. And there are customers who believe it or pretend to believe it. The important thing is that seller and buyer get a good deal.

Wars, on the other hand, plunge quickly into the mud of the trenches, and they continue for years. Maybe the trick is this, to continue supplies indefinitely and multiply prices "or else the front collapses".

In short, life was not bad, moral problems surfaced and disappeared, and I thought that if I did not make the landmines, someone else would.

International tensions kept the work stable, and for one Cold War that ended, another one came in the Middle East and so on....

Then something jams the mechanism: questions from your children asking what you do and why you do it, the pressure of a public opinion discovering the problem of the use of landmines, the invitation to dialogue from the Venerable Don Tonino Bello who asked to think about my life if not to change it.

I did change my life, however, by trying to put some form of remedy to the "before." What was normal for me had become a burden.

You come out of a privileged bubble where that one percent of the population that produces, controls and distributes weapons lives and enter a world you do not expect. A world where billions of people want and hope to live and coexist in peace.

But, as the Holy Father says, the peace consciousness of ordinary people is being torn apart by lies, unnecessary inequality, fear, and lack of livelihood by playing into the hands of the tiny minority that manages and fuels conflicts of all kinds for its own purposes.

Having worked in demining more than fifteen years spent in the Balkans, after the bloody war of the 1990s of the last century, I can say that few times have I and my colleagues been thanked.

Those who are touched by war or any other misfortune that has devastated their lives, meaning land, work, family do not think of receiving help even if it is fraternal but instead demand compensation for the unnecessary pain by which they have been crushed.

With the reclamation work finished, people went back to work without useless talk.

At most, as was the case in Kosovo, they would ask you for wooden beams, bricks and tiles to rebuild their houses and they would have their way.

The great war of the East now calls for the laying of minefields that will have little effect from a military point of view but will represent future revenge for those who will try to return to their homes or try to occupy those abandoned by those who fled.

What debt can people affected by war, famine and exploitation owe to the rest of the world?

I think we need to think like the Holy Father and feel we owe them.
