
“INSTRUMENTS OF YOUR PEACE”



On the occasion of Christmas and the New Year, on the occasion also of the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, I want to say with you the prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love,

Where there is injury, pardon,

Where there is doubt, faith,

Where there is error, truth,

Where there is despair, hope,

Where there is darkness, light, and

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

In pardoning that we are pardoned,

And in dying that we are born to eternal life.

It is in the respect of human rights that the secret of a true and lasting peace is to be found.

PEACE IN OUR FAMILIES

Fifteen years ago Pope John Paul II offered the world a Charter of Rights for the Family. Respect for family rights constitutes one of the most solid bases for peace in the world. Let us see what it says: *"Every person has a right to freely marry and have a family where it is good to live. One must be able to marry freely and out of love. Having a child is the free decision of a couple, but it is also a responsible choice in favour of life. Human life has an eternal value; it must be respected and protected. Parents are the first teachers of their children. The family is there to help one progress, to help all the family members grow and develop. Faith is an important page in a family's history, a page that one has a right to share with all. Society cannot be constructed without the family. Fiscal, economic and social policies must support families and ensure their quality of life. In order to guarantee wholesomeness and its unity, every family needs a balance between work and leisure. Being decently housed and having services adapted to one's needs are two realities that are basic to a family's well-being. Whether native born or newly-arrived, every family has a right to the same social safeguards."*

PEACE TO THE POOR

Despite this Family Charter, despite the most sincere aspirations, despite special social legislation, the number of poor has been climbing steadily both in our milieu and in the world as a whole. Still, the peace promised is also for them, and for them first of all, just as it was for the shepherds of Bethlehem welcoming the message of the Christchild's birth: *"To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"*

PEACE TO THE SICK

How I wish I could be with all those who suffer in body, soul, and spirit, and offer them on Jesus' behalf his message of compassion: *"Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy-burdened, and I will give you rest."* I want to tell them that Jesus shares their pain, their suffering, their woundedness. *"Happy are you poor, for the kingdom of heaven is yours. Happy are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Happy are you who weep, for you shall be consoled."*

PEACE TO THE YOUTH

To you young people I wish this special peace which is composed of self-confidence and trust in your loved ones and in the future. May you truly experience in these days that are bringing us ever closer to the year 2000 the ever-loving presence of Jesus in the world. He is Emmanuel, "God-with-us."

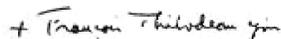
PEACE TO THE ELDERLY

The year 1999 has been dedicated by the United Nations to the elderly of the world. We still count on you. You have done your share to build our world and especially our Church. Your wisdom, experience, and hope help us construct our world, an earth full of care and goodness.

PEACE TO OUR CHURCH

How could we not wish this precious gift of peace to our universal Church? May the prayer of Jesus for his disciples always accompany his Church: *"I leave you peace, my peace I give you."* And may our prayer reflect that of Jesus: *"For your will to be accomplished, grant your Church this peace, and lead it to perfect unity."*

May Peace, Joy, and Health be with you always. Merry Christmas!



+ François Thibodeau

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