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## PEACE ACCORDING TO BLESSED JOHN XXIII

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The four components which Pope John XXIII identified as peace factors can aid us greatly today both in our personal and community lives as well as in the difficult problem of human rights and family, municipal, provincial, national or international situations.

### **PACEM IN TERRIS**

According to Pope Pius XII, there could be no peace without justice: "*Peace is the fruit of justice.*" Fewer than two months before his death Pope John wrote, in his unforgettable encyclical of April 11, 1963 *Pacem in terris*, that there can be no true peace without justice, truth, freedom, and love. These four components are interrelated: if one of them is missing, peace will be short-lived. For Pope Paul VI, "*The new name for peace is the development of nations.*" For Pope John Paul II, there can be no peace where there is no respect of human rights.

### **A NOBLE TASK**

*"An immense task awaits people of good will today, the task of reestablishing social relationships on solid foundations of truth, justice, charity, and freedom, relationships between people, between citizen and state, between states, as well as between individuals, families, intermediate bodies and the state on the one hand and the world community on the other. A noble task among all, since it consists in bringing about the true reign of peace in the order established by God."* [*Pacem in terris*, N<sup>o</sup>. 163]

### **A CENTRE OF LOVE**

And Pope John continues: "*There are too few involved as peacemakers, but they are marvellously deserving from society, and it is right that we praise them publicly. At the same time we urge them to increase their valuable action. We dare hope that many other men and women will join them, especially believers who are pressed on by charity and the call of conscience. It behooves every believer to be in the world of today like a brilliant spark of light, a centre of love and leaven in the dough. And each one will accomplish this according to the degree of his union with God. As a matter of fact, there can be no peace among men if it is not first in them, that is, if each man does not keep within himself the order willed by God.*" [*Pacem in terris*, N<sup>o</sup>. 164] These are words of wisdom, a peace programme as big as the world, a programme which begins with oneself to spread to the end of the earth.

### **PEACEMAKERS**

By urging to be peacemakers and Kingdom agents, I am well aware of the serious commitment I ask of you. To be at peace with oneself can sometimes mean a long process of coming to terms with oneself, with one's potential and limitations. Accepting oneself is not always easy, but this is where peacemaking begins. To make peace with oneself, to drop one's masks, to accept one's place in the world and live out one's mission, all of

this is part of the peacemaking process. Coming to terms with one's past, accepting one's present and future contributes to creating peace. Being at peace with one's neighbour, with those who are close to us, with one's parents and siblings is a vast programme, but one which does good. To be at peace with one's milieu and with one's political leaders is not always an easy task, especially if there is a difference in party affiliation. To become a peacemaker is to freely shoulder one's responsibilities, one's rights and duties. And to be at peace with God : this is a big and major task!

### **A SECRET**

One of my social service professors told us one day: "You want to help others as a social worker, an educator, a pastor, a politician: I will tell you a secret: you will need faith, hope and charity. If you lack faith you will have none in either your neighbour nor in God. If you hope for nothing from yourself, you will hope for nothing from either others nor God. And if you do not love, you will love neither others nor God. The three elements go together."

### **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

And Pope John makes this earnest prayer for peace: "Remove from us all that could endanger the cause of peace, and transform us into witnesses of truth, justice and brotherly love. Enlighten those who preside over the destiny of nations so that, while ensuring the legitimate welfare of their fellow-citizens, they uphold the priceless blessing which is peace. Give us the strength to overcome divisions and reinforce the bonds of mutual love, to be understanding of others and forgiving towards those who have caused us harm. Then, because of you all peoples on earth will form a real community of love, and the sought-after peace will forever blossom in their midst."

### **A MARVELLOUS GIFT**

May the teaching of John XXIII help us discover the marvellous gift of peace, help us grow in truth, justice, charity and freedom, be an inexhaustible source of peace and reconciliation. And as we get close to the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4, let us often pray, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace."

*+ François Thibodeau*

+ François Thibodeau  
Bishop of Edmundston

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