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The peace of popes

John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis' irenic discourse

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Abstract

This thesis aims to present the ins and outs of the promotion of peace in the pontifical discourse from 1978 to 2021, based mainly on the speeches delivered by Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis on the occasion of the World Day of Peace, the 1st of January of each year.

Peace is a central theme in Catholic doctrine: already present in the Bible and in Christian tradition, it is progressively integrated into the official texts of the Roman Catholic Church, gradually forming the basis of the Holy See's discourse. With the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963), Pope John XXIII made the promotion of peace a papal priority. In 1992, the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* extended this prerogative to the entire community, and particularly to heads of State.

The annual addresses of Peter's successors have identified several threats to peace, first and foremost war, but also totalitarianism, social and economic injustices, and lack of fraternity and care for nature. According to them, peace is not only the absence of war, but a state where the essential principles of human life are respected, both for individuals and for nations.

The popes also highlighted the various factors that can contribute to the strengthening of peace: the three main ones, according to them, are the protection of human dignity and human rights, including religious freedom and the right to life; respect for the international order, strengthened by dialogue and law; and finally, integral human development, which is based, among other things, on culture, the family and education. In short, peace must be founded on pillars capable of sustaining this edifice in the long term: every human being of good will is therefore invited to contribute to it.

The last three pontiffs, both in their singularity and in respect for papal continuity, have all produced a singular and unique irenic discourse on the international scene to promote peace. This discourse's study is part of the "Peace Studies" school that states that international relations should also be studied and understood through the prism of peace, and not only the ones of power or war.

Keywords: peace; speeches; pope; Holy See; Vatican; John Paul II; Benedict XVI; Francis; war; religious freedom; human rights; international relations; world politics

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Done at Rome, on the 25th of May 2021,

Signature:



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“Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognised as children of God.”

Gospel according to Matthew 5:9¹

¹ Biblical references and quotes will all be taken from the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) version, unless otherwise stated. Published in 1985, this edition is the updated version of the Jerusalem Bible (JB) of 1966. It is now the most widely used Bible in English-speaking countries (outside of the United States of America).

Introduction

“*Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam*” [“*You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community*”] (Matt 16:18a) promised Jesus Christ to his apostle Simon, renamed Peter, in Tabgha, on the shores of Lake Tiberias, before going to Jerusalem where he was crucified. In short, Jesus gave to Peter his benediction to be the disciples’ leader and then to govern the destiny of the future Christian community – the Greek word ἐκκλησία (*ekklêsia*) means “assembly”. These few words, inscribed in the marble on the inner rim of the Basilica Saint Peter’s dome in Rome, are considered as the founding element of the pope’s authority over the whole Roman Catholic Church. And Jesus continued: “*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loosen on earth will be loosed in heaven*” (Matt 16:19). In this respect, these two powers bequeathed to Peter inspired the papal coat of arms, adorned with two keys – one to bind, the other to loosen; one golden for spiritual power, the other silver for temporal power – themselves topped with the papal tiara. For two millennia, the successors of Peter as a bishop of Rome, the one who can be considered as the “first pope”, went through many disputes regarding their particular status within the college of bishops. Since this final thesis is not a theological nor a canonical one, we will not go further into the numerous debates regarding the “Petrine primacy” or the universal authority of the pope, which was an issue especially in the first centuries of Christianity, at the Council of Constantinople (381), and again during the Reformation (1517)². As a brief explanation of the Roman Catholic view, we only need to know that the pope is first the bishop of Rome, and that this charge gives him an authority over all the other bishops in the world. Since 1870, with the First Vatican Council, the bishop of Rome is recognised as having a greater power than his peers: he is indeed charged with the “papal infallibility *ex cathedra*”, which means that the pope cannot be wrong when giving a definitive ruling on a question of faith. But the most important element of Petrine primacy as defined at First Vatican Council is contained in the first dogmatic constitution *Pastor Æternus*, signed on the 18th of July 1870: “*the Roman Church possesses a superiority of ordinary power over all other Churches, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff [...] is immediate.*”³ These two elements are at the core of the centrality of the pope in the governance of the Church⁴, even if he is not alone when he takes decisions, especially when they concern world politics or international relations. Indeed, his infallibility does not apply to the political field, nor to international issues. but peace is not only a question of relations between States and political decisions: the pope has some more direct levers to pacify the world.

² To go further into these debates, one might read the book entitled *Der Päpstliche Primat: Seine Geschichte von der Ursprung bis zur Gegenwart*, by Klaus Schatz, in 1990.

³ First Vatican Council, *Pastor Æternus - Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ*, 1870.

⁴ Bernard Lecomte, *Tous les secrets du Vatican*, Tempus (Paris: Perrin, 2019), 9–28. For all quotations from documents in French or Italian, the translation is that of the author.

The encyclical *Pacem in Terris* given at Rome on the 11th of April 1963 by Pope John XXIII was aimed at “*establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity, and liberty*”⁵ according to the subheading. These four pillars are the deepest roots of the Holy See’s discourse about peace in the Modern Age. Only a few months after the Cuba crisis, the Church, by the voice of the Vicar of Christ – *i.e.* the pope –, declared itself as the main promotor of peace among nations and peoples. John XXIII, 261st pope of the Roman Catholic Church, delivered his encyclical (which will be extensively presented in the first part of this final thesis) at the warmest moment of the so-called “Cold War”, in order to prevent the world to tumble into a new international and deadly conflict. This task of promoting and maintaining peace has remained a priority for the Church since the publication of this text: John XXIII’s successors Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and now Francis have all tried to follow the path that he had unveiled. Their actions have been numerous – fruitful or not – and all led by a will to prevent the advent of new conditions of war. For the purpose of our study, we will not speak about all six pontiffs, but focus ourselves on the three last ones.

From the death of the Dutch Adrian VI on the 14th of September 1523 to the 16th of October 1978, all popes were Italian. Then, the choice of Karol Wojtyła was inconceivable for many: this event was indubitably supposed to become a turning point in papal history. And this movement has not been thwarted, given that his two successors were successively German and Argentinian. In this very first part, it will be interesting to give a succinct presentation of the three last popes. Their brief biographies will help the reader to know them better, and so to have a more global understanding of their opinions on several questions.

Karol Józef Wojtyła was born on the 18th of May 1920 in Wadowice, in Poland. In 1938, he left the hometown for Kraków, where he began to study philosophy. But with the country’s annexing by the Nazis the next year, the university was closed and he was compelled to work at a factory to support his sick father. In 1942, this latter died, leaving the young student orphaned. In spite of the clandestine reopening of the university the same year, he decided to become a priest and entered the seminary in October thanks to the support of the bishop of Kraków who decided to open his palace to seminarians, what was strictly forbidden. The 17th of January 1945, the Red Army freed the city. He then continued his training and was ordained priest on the 1st of November 1946. After two years in Rome, he was first named as a vicar in the parish of Niegowic, and then sent to Kraków from 1949 to 1951. In parallel with his commitment to the youth, he undertook a doctorate in philosophy which he obtained in 1953. In 1958, at only 38 years old, Pius XII called him to become the new auxiliary bishop of Kraków. Therefore, he participated to the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (1962-1965) under John XXIII and Paul VI’s pontificates: there, he took an active part in the drafting of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. The 13th of January 1964, he became archbishop of Kraków, alongside Cardinal Wyszyński, Primate of Poland: this nomination was first welcomed by the Communist regime, which considered Karol Wojtyła as a harmless enemy of the regime. On the contrary, he

⁵ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris - Letter Encyclical on That Peace between All Peoples Must Be Based on Truth, Justice, Love and Freedom*, 1963.

launched himself into a campaign against the Marxist system. On the 26th of June 1967, Paul VI created him Cardinal: at 47 years old, he was then the youngest of the Curia. In Poland, he supported three waves of protests: a students' one in 1968, the two others led by workers in 1970 and 1976. Progressively, he became one of the closest advisors of Paul VI. In particular, he met him eleven times during the 1973-1976 period for the preparation of the spiritual exercises for Lent 1976. This drafting led to an exchange of correspondence between Karol Wojtyła and the German theologian Joseph Ratzinger, who sent him his *Introduction to Christianity*: it was the beginning of a friendship between the two men. This public spotlight and his double-criticism of Western consumerism and Eastern atheism enabled him to gain popularity within the Roman Curia. The 25th and 26th August 1978, he participated in the conclave, during which he was one of the three scrutineers. Albino Luciani, Patriarch of Venice, was elected by his peers and chose the name of John Paul I, as a tribute to his two immediate predecessors. This latter died thirty-three days later, on the 28th of September, and a new conclave was convened. The 16th of October 1978, Karol Wojtyła became the 264th pope and took the same name as his predecessor: John Paul II. His pontificate was inaugurated the 22nd of the month by his inaugural mass, during which he pronounced his famous sentence "*Do not be afraid!*", in the presence of Cardinals, among whom one of his friends, the theologian and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

Born on the 16th of April 1927 at Marktl in Germany, Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger came from a modest family. His father retired as a policeman in 1937, and the family settled in the region of Traunstein, near Austria, where he was taught Latin, Ancient Greek, history and literature. In 1941, at his fourteenth birthday and only two years after his admission to the minor seminary where he received his formation, he was forcibly enlisted in the *Hitlerjugend*. In September 1944, he reached the age of military service and was assigned to the *Wehrmacht* three months later. Learning of Hitler's suicide, he deserted a few days before the German surrender, but he was then interned until the 19th of June 1945 in a camp of war's prisoners in Bad Aibling. After the end of the war, he entered the seminary, thus fulfilling the vocation he had interrupted during the war: from 1946 to 1951 he studied philosophy and theology at Freising and Munich, before being ordained a priest on the 29th of June 1951, the same day as his brother Georg. Then, until 1957, he worked on his thesis to become a lecturer in dogmatics and fundamental theology in several German universities from 1958 to 1969. He took part in the Council as a theological consultant (*peritus*) to the Cardinal-Archbishop of Cologne, Joseph Frings. In 1969, he obtained the chair of dogmatics and history of dogma at the University of Regensburg. Alongside his role as priest, he launched in 1972, together with Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac and several other great theologians, the theological review *Communio*. The 24th of March 1977, he received the title of Archbishop of Munich and Freising. He chose as his motto the quote from the third Epistle of John: "*cooperatores Veritatis*" (co-workers of truth). On the 27th of June, during the last consistory of Pope Paul VI, Joseph Ratzinger was appointed Cardinal-Priest. As already said, he met Karol Wojtyła for the first time in 1977, and at greater length thanks to the two 1978 conclaves. The 25th of November 1981, the newly-elected John Paul II named him Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, one of the dicasteries of the Curia, and President of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and of the International Theological

Commission, forcing him to resign from the pastoral government of the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising. From 1986 to 1992, he presided the commission in charge of the drafting of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Then, on the 6th of November 1998, John Paul II approved the election of Cardinal Ratzinger as vice-dean of the College of Cardinals. Finally, on the 30th of November 2002, John Paul II approved his election by the College of Cardinals, this time as dean. For twenty-three years, he met the Pontiff at least twice a week, to report on the work of his Congregation. John Paul II's death then saddened him greatly. As the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Ratzinger presided the Requiem Mass on the 8th of April. Ten days later, on the 18th of April, the doors of the Sistine Chapel were closed, with 115 Cardinals inside. Joseph Ratzinger, one of only two not having been created Cardinal by the late pope, emerged from the chapel twenty-four hours later as Benedict XVI. He became the 265th pope, at the end of a rapid conclave in which, according to estimations⁶, the alternative candidate would have been the Argentinian Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Aged 78, he was the oldest elected pope since Clement XII in 1730. His enthronement mass was celebrated on April 24th, during which he received in particular the Ring of the Fisherman and the pallium, symbol of his assumption of Christ's charge.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born on the 17th of December 1936 in a popular area of Buenos Aires, in Argentina. Both his parents had Italian origins: his father, Mario Josè Bergoglio, was an immigrant from Piedmont working as an accountant, while his mother, Regina Maria, born in Argentina, was the daughter of Italian immigrants from Liguria. He was the eldest of a family of five children. He received his vocation on the 20th of September 1953 during a confession⁷, although he was already engaged. After training as a chemical engineer, he entered the seminary and then the novitiate of the Society of Jesus on the 11th of March 1958. He completed his studies of letters in Chile and in 1963, returned to Argentina and obtained a master's degree in philosophy. Between 1964 and 1966, he was professor of literature and psychology. Then, from 1967 to 1970 he studied theology and obtained a second master's degree, again at the College of Saint Joseph. He was ordained a priest the 13th of December 1969 and continued his preparation between 1970 and 1971 in Spain, before pronouncing his perpetual profession with the Jesuits in April 1973. On his return to Argentina, he was novice master in San Miguel, professor at the faculty of theology, consultant of the province of the Society of Jesus and finally rector of the college. On July 31st, he was appointed Jesuit Provincial of Argentina, an office he held for six years. Jorge Mario Bergoglio then resumed his work in the university field and, between 1980 and 1986, he was once again rector of Saint Joseph's College, and parish priest again in San Miguel. In March 1986, he went to Germany to complete his doctoral thesis but after difficulties was sent by his superiors to the College of the Saviour in Buenos Aires and then to the Church of the Society of Jesus in the city of Cordoba, as spiritual director and confessor. John Paul II appointed him auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires on the 20th of

⁶ Lucio Brunelli, 'Così eleggemmo papa Ratzinger', *Limes*, 20 September 2005, <https://www.limesonline.com/cosi-eleggemmo-papa-ratzinger/5959>.

⁷ 'Le quartier de Bergoglio regrette son absence pour Pâques', *Le Point*, 14 March 2013, https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/le-quartier-de-bergoglio-regrette-son-absence-pour-paques-14-03-2013-1639801_24.php.

May 1992. Appointed Coadjutor of Buenos Aires few months earlier, he became Archbishop of Buenos Aires the 28th of February 1998, following the death of Cardinal Antonio Quarracino. For fifteen years, he held this office in this diocese of three million inhabitants. As already explained, he was considered as a *papabile* at the April 2005's conclave, but finally returned to Argentina as a Cardinal. A few months later, in November 2005, Cardinal Bergoglio was elected President of the Argentinian Bishops' Conference and re-elected in 2008: his mandate ended in 2011. Within the Curia, he was a member of three Congregations and one Council. The 11th of February 2013, Benedict XVI, aged 85, announced his desire to abdicate the papacy, and it took effect on the following 28th of February. This resignation, announced in Latin by the pope himself, was the first of its kind since 1415. The 115 Cardinal-electors entered into conclave the 12th of March. The 13th of March 2013, after the traditional proclamation of the "*Habemus Papam!*" from the loggia of Saint Peter, Jorge Mario Bergoglio presented himself to the crowd with his new name, Francis, as a tribute to the *Poverello* of Assisi, "*the man of peace*"⁸ according to the Pope's own words. Becoming the first non-European pope since the Syrian Gregory III (731-741), and the first from the Southern hemisphere and the American continent.

With a more precise knowledge of the main protagonists of the Roman Catholic Church in their "pre-papal life", it is now both easier and important to speak about the State that they represent: the Vatican City State. This State – not to be confused with the Holy See⁹ – is often considered as the heir of the ancient Papal States (754-1870). In 1870, a few weeks after the beginning of the above-mentioned First Vatican Council, Napoleon III and the French army, assaulted in Sedan by the Prussian troops, were under pressure. Then, the emperor decided to repatriate many of his men from Rome, where he had installed a contingent. This decision opened up a great opportunity for the Kingdom of Italy: on the 20th of September, the Porta Pia's battle is a one-way victory for King Victor Emmanuel II's troops. Latium was annexed, Rome taken, and the pope was deprived of any territorial sovereignty, for the first time since 752. The *Risorgimento*, i.e. the Italian unification, was then achieved. In October 1870, Pope Pius IX declared himself "prisoner of the Italian State" in the Vatican: it was the beginning of the so-called "Roman Question", which found its resolution nearly sixty years later, on the 11th of February 1929 with the signature of the Lateran Agreements under Pius XI's pontificate and thanks to Benito Mussolini's initiative¹⁰. Three documents have their origin in these negotiations which occurred in the Lateran Palace, see of the Roman episcopate: if the second, a concordat ruling relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the Italian State, and the third, a financial agreement for the compensation of one billion lire for the loss of the Papal States, are not very significant in terms of international relations, the first is of considerable importance. It consists in a political treaty recognising the full sovereignty of the Holy See in the Vatican City State: in particular, it establishes a map of the territory of the Vatican City State (44 hectares, the smallest State in the world), plus confers an

⁸ Francis, 'Audience to Representatives of the Communications Media - 16 March 2013'.

⁹ The Holy See acts as a spiritual entity, while the Vatican City State does so as a temporal one. The link between these two entities is the pope, the head of the spiritual and the temporal, with absolute power (executive, legislative and judicial).

¹⁰ Lecomte, *Tous les secrets du Vatican*, 76–89.

extraterritorial status on certain properties, including the other three major basilicas in Rome, with exemption from expropriation and taxes¹¹. The Treaty's Preamble solemnly states that: "*whereas it was obligatory, for the purpose of assuring the absolute and visible independence of the Holy See, likewise to guarantee its indisputable sovereignty in international matters, it has been found necessary to create under special conditions the Vatican City, recognizing the full ownership, exclusive and absolute dominion and sovereign jurisdiction of the Holy See over that City [...]*".¹² In sum, the Vatican became, once again, a full State: it now has a railway station, postal services, a currency, a press organ, a radio and television with the right to broadcast... It also acquired an army, the Papal Gendarmerie Corps, entrusted with the duty of protecting public order and security in the Vatican, while the famous Pontifical Swiss Guard, had come to exercise a mostly ceremonial function and protecting borders. To conclude, the Vatican State, the last surviving remnant of the Papal States but which is not subject of international law, became the instrument of the Holy See, defined as the set of higher Catholic institutions (dicasteries) ruled by the pope. For ninety-two years, the pope has not only been the head of the Roman Catholic Church, but also a head of State recognised by other countries. It then has the same rights and duties as them: the Vatican City State is a full subject of public international law, although it does not fulfil all the criteria of statehood. The law professor Ian Brownlie considers that, instead of its peculiar character, the Holy See is, in international law, a *sui generis* entity¹³. For his peer Robert Graham,

the fact that the Holy See is a non-territorial institution is no longer regarded as a reason for denying it international personality. The papacy can act in its own name in the international community. [...] Furthermore, this personality of the Holy See is distinct from the personality of the State of Vatican City. One is a non-territorial institution and the other a State. The papacy as a religious organ is a subject of international law and capable of international rights and duties.¹⁴

Indeed, the Holy See's diplomatic network is one of the most developed: it has 180 diplomatic relationships and is a member State of many international organisations, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It is also a permanent observer in other ones, first of all the United Nations General Assembly, but also the Council of Europe, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) or the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). In brief, it acts as a "normal" State, even if its governance is not only political, but also spiritual and intellectual. It finally appears that the pope enjoys a temporal power as other nations' leaders, but he is also endowed with a moral and spiritual authority that makes him particularly audible. The Holy See, therefore, like any other State, seeks to defend its interests,

¹¹ Frédéric Le Moal, *Les divisions du pape. Le Vatican face aux dictatures (1917-1989)* (Paris: Perrin, 2016), 63–64.

¹² 'Lateran Treaty' (1929).

¹³ Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 63.

¹⁴ Robert A. Graham, *Vatican Diplomacy: A Study of Church and State on the International Plane* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 186–201.

which are not territorial nor economic; rather, it seeks to defend first and foremost a vision of mankind. From this naturally flows a vision of the world in which men live, a world that the Church wants to build on Christ, whom the prophet Isaiah said he was the “*Prince-of-Peace*” (Isa 9:5).

The concept of peace, however, is not only the prerogative of the Roman Catholic Church: it merely interprets peace through the prisms of the Bible and the Christian tradition, without forgetting that this concept has long been of interest to other disciplines. Even if this thesis will deal in depth with Holy See’s and papal doctrine on peace below, it is crucial to present the field of study of it.

The present study is obviously related to the wider field of “Peace Studies” initiated during the 1950s. Scholars of this field have insisted on their willingness to define what “peace” is and to promote it, but their works have been characterised by several other elements. First, this school of thought makes a special commitment to non-violence: the aim clearly defined is to achieve “*peace by peaceful means*”¹⁵, from the eponymous title of Johan Galtung’s work. He was a Norwegian politician who founded the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO) and also the father of irenology – the science to reach peace. Moreover, peace studies are also characterised by a strong interdisciplinarity: it is definitely based on sociology, international relations and political science, but also on philosophy, history, geography, economics and religious studies. At last, they call for a great theoretical, methodological and epistemological variety: in sum, peace studies are not a closed circle of related visions but is gladly enriched by external contributions from other disciplines and methodologies. At the beginning, they were highly criticized for their idealism, their partisanship against nuclear weapons, and the positivism they claim to embody. Galtung developed a critique of traditional safety studies: he considered them as too much focused on war and alleged that they do not seek to study peace systematically. Moreover, he claimed they are contaminated by significant biases and prejudices because they are the product of a group of socially and geographically located men. Conversely, he affirmed that peace studies should focus on global problems, that themselves need to be addressed from a global perspective: the survival of the human being and not that of the State. Johan Galtung defined peace from two compatible definitions: peace is both the absence (at least the reduction) of all kinds of violence and the non-violent and creative transformation of conflicts¹⁶. To conclude on peace studies, it is important to recall that they may be addressed from two standpoints: peace can either be negative, that is, merely the absence of war and physical violence, or positive, when it results in “*the integration of human society*”¹⁷.

Nowadays, peace is at the core of the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church in international relations. If through history popes have been able to promote the sword for conflict resolution, it was always in the name

¹⁵ Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) (Oslo: SAGE Publications, 1996).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁷ Johan Galtung, ‘An Editorial’, *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 1 (1964): 2.

of the “just war” or for territorial purposes – territories they no longer have. They now opt for dialogue and call for the use of human intelligence and charity. In this respect, the traditional message pronounced each 1st of January is one of the most notable ways in which the pope expresses the Roman Catholic Church’s vision on this subject. Since 1968, the first day of the year is indeed considered as the “World Day of Peace”¹⁸, even though the message is actually written several weeks before by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and signed by the pontiff on the 8th of December, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. This thesis does not study them all but concentrates solely on the forty-two speeches of the last three popes, thus excluding the eleven ones delivered by Paul VI, the instigator of this tradition. All speeches are constructed in the same way: after recalling the ongoing conflicts, the misery and suffering of his contemporaries, the pope proposes a way to establish a lasting and genuine peace, addressing both citizens and governments. It is only at the end that their speeches take a catechetical turn, based on biblical examples and precepts, before concluding by exhorting the Christian faithful to be aware of their particular role in promoting peace. Each year, this annual meeting gives to the pope an opportunity to focus on a theme (social issues, respect for human rights, arms race, terrorism, hunger, globalization...). While some speeches are explicitly related to current international events, such as the 1986 message “*Peace is a value with no frontiers. North-South, East-West: only one peace*” during the Cold War, or the 2021 message “*A culture of care as a path to peace*” following the COVID-19 pandemic, others embrace more general topics. For the Holy See, this annual meeting is of prime importance and sets out to the Curia and the Nuncios the Holy Father’s pastoral priorities for the coming year – whereas the speech (in January or February) to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See acts more as a political programme¹⁹.

In short, the purpose of this final thesis is to answer to the following issue: how, both as heirs to the political tradition of the Vatican and as artisans of a personal leadership, have Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis made use of the word to advocate peace, especially in their annual speeches for the World Day of Peace?

This question is interesting because it is more concerned with the reasons and aims behind the defence of peace than with the performance of such an exercise. It is also original insofar as the objective is not only to show the functioning of the Vatican’s admittedly extensive diplomatic apparatus, but rather the way in which each of the popes has been able to reconcile his personal vision with the bureaucracy in place. It will therefore be a question of showing how the tradition (biblical, canonical, ecclesiastical, political or diplomatic) of the Holy See both has been used and overturned by the pontiffs in their endeavour to define and promote peace on the international scene.

¹⁸ This day should not be confused with the United Nations’ International Day of Peace celebrated each 21st of September.

¹⁹ Private interview with Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, 24 May 2021.

In order to answer this question, it will be necessary to set out in a first part the different sources of the peaceful discourse of the Holy See, and therefore of the sovereign pontiffs. In a second part, we will go further into their speeches by listing the main obstacles to peace, both structural and immanent, according to them. Finally, in a third part, we will define the various means valued by the popes to promote the establishment of universal peace.

1. The vision of peace in the Catholic Church

“*Nothing is lost by peace; everything can be lost by war*”²⁰ declared Pius XII the 24th of August 1939. The previous night, the Nazi representative Ribbentrop and the Soviet Foreign Affairs Commissioner Molotov had just signed the non-aggression pact between their two totalitarian regimes. The pope was informed of this agreement during the day and issued a broadcast appeal the same evening urging the powers to continue the negotiations²¹. Like his predecessor Benedict XV, the new pope came up against a wall: he, in turn, could not prevent the outbreak a few days later of a conflict that would set Europe and the world on fire for six years.

But why was the pontiff so anxious to avoid this war? Why does the Catholic Church no longer want war, as it did four centuries earlier when Pius V asked the Spanish monarchy, the Republic of Venice, the Republic of Genoa and the Duchy of Savoy to form the Holy League and defeat the Ottoman navy at Lepanto on the 7th of October 1571? Since the loss of the Papal States in 1870, pontifical interests have indeed changed, and so has the discourse. The two World Wars, summits of violence and cruelty, definitively buried the old vision of the Catholic Church: from now on, it will work for the promotion of peace.

But in order to do so, it still had to build a legitimacy, a discourse, which is based on three main pillars. First of all, we will analyse how the Bible and its related tradition have provided the popes with a raw material in the construction of their new pacifist doctrine. Secondly, we will look at how this new discourse was enshrined in golden letters in the famous *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Finally, we will study the impact of John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in terris* published in 1963.

1.1 The vision of peace in the Bible and in the ecclesiastical tradition

The Bible contains a large number of occurrences of the word “peace”: depending on the translation, it can vary, but is usually around 400. It is also present in the majority of biblical books, from Genesis to Revelation, and *a fortiori* in the four Gospels.

First of all, the importance of the Bible for the Holy See and the popes must be explained. The word “Bible” comes from the Ancient Greek word τὰ βιβλία (*ta biblia*), which means “the books”: after some variations, the Church set the number of books to compose it at 73 at the Council of Trent (1546). It is divided into two “testaments”, the Old and the New: in the first one the relationship between God and his people is evoked, up to the birth of Jesus, which marks the beginning of the new “alliance”, the new “covenant”, which is the etymological meaning of the Hebrew word *berît* which gave the Latin word *testamentum*. The writing

²⁰ Pius XII, ‘Radio-Message of Pope Pius XII to Call for Peace on the 24th of August 1939’.

²¹ Le Moal, *Les divisions du pape*, 142–44.

of these texts took place between the eighth and the second century BC for the Old Testament, and between the second half of the first century AD and the beginning of the second century for the New Testament. The unity of these two books is to be found in Jesus himself, which is the “centre” of the Bible insofar as he is the “summit” of the relationship between God and humanity: for Christians, indeed, the Bible is above all the “place” where God “speaks”, either directly or through the voice of prophets.

It remains that understanding the Bible is not an easy thing. Therefore, the Church has relied on men and women to study it, explain it and finally better transmit it to the people. Some, through their work, have obtained the title of “Doctor of the Church”²² or “Church Father”²³ in order to show the faithful how rich their teaching was and how it conformed to the meaning of the Scriptures.

Having therefore studied the place of peace in the Old Testament and then in the New, it will be necessary to analyse the way in which ecclesiastical tradition has dealt with this question.

1.1.1 Peace in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the idea of peace is inevitably linked to that of man’s place in God’s plan. Insofar as the Bible expresses the fact that God calls his creature and gives it a particular mission, this peace of creation can only be the completion of creatures, the perfect realisation of their being. This peace must therefore be realised in the unity and order of creation, which Adam and Eve broke because of their pride (Gen 3). From the very beginning of the Bible, therefore, we notice that peace cannot be achieved without a certain order, which is found first and foremost in the relationship between God and humanity.

From then on, the history of the “chosen people” in Genesis and Exodus in particular passes through the perpetuation of the “Covenant” between the Creator and his creation. This alliance is supposed to bring peace: peace derives from God and must be established between human beings. Moreover, any rebellion against God is, in the Old Testament, responsible for division between men, or even with God. By shedding the blood of his brother Abel, Cain exposed himself to the condemnation of God (Gen 4); having distanced himself from God; humanity is struck by the flood (Gen 6), with the exception of Noah, who “*found favour in the eyes of Yahweh*” (Gen 6:8); finally, by wanting to rise to the rank of God, the architects of the Tower of Babel bring about the disunity of men, who then speak various languages (Gen 9). Because of sin, humanity deprives itself of the peace promised by God.

²² The number of “Doctors of the Church” today is thirty-six, including four women and two popes.

²³ Conversely, the number of Church Fathers is not formally established, although the Catholic Church tends to assign an end to a “patristic period” and to consider John of Damascus (c. 676-749) and Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636) as the last Fathers.

In the Jewish tradition, peace can only be achieved through respect for the divine Law (Exo 20). In Hebrew, the word to speak about peace is *shalom*, which means completeness, soundness, or welfare. It can relate to the completeness of a thing, a wall for instance, or of a relation, *i.e.* to restore what used to be. Therefore, “to have shalom” means to be in a state of wholeness, without any deficiency or lack. The “modern” meaning of “peace” is also introduced, when it describes, for example, relations between two nations (1 Kings 5). The presence of peace also indicates God’s blessing thanks to men’s obedience: “*the product of uprightness will be peace, the effect of uprightness being quiet and security for ever*” (Isa 32:17).

The Old Testament is finally peppered with mentions of the one whom the prophet Isaiah called the “*Prince-of-Peace*” (Isa 9:5). The biblical texts, and especially those attributed to the prophets, constantly evoke the contribution of peace as an attribute of the saviour of Israel. The prophet Zechariah said that “*he will proclaim peace to the nations*” (Zech 9:10), while Micah even affirmed that “*He himself will be peace!*” (Mic 5:4). From a political point of view, to consider a person as the incarnation of peace is very interesting and has striking consequences for the way in which society is organised, in particular by conceiving it as “subject” to that authority.

The Old Testament also has the merit of enumerating the three dimensions of peace in the Judeo-Christian vision, namely interior, social and universal. It integrates these three dimensions and bases them on a Covenant with God. Peace of heart is a grace from God which is obtained through deep faith. Social peace is the fruit of the recognition of the spirit of fraternity that binds people together. Finally, peace from a universal point of view is acquired through union with Christ, an idea which takes on its full meaning in the New Testament.

1.1.2 Peace in the New Testament

The books of the New Testament are not originally Hebrew texts, like the majority of those of the Old Testament, but written in Greek. Therefore, the word “peace” is not translated by *shalom*, but by εἰρήνη (*eirénē*): it probably means “to tie” or “to join”. The idea here is therefore more to present peace as a vector of unity. It also refers to rest and tranquillity. But as explained above, it is also a term linked to Jesus himself: at his birth, the angels promised “*on earth peace for those he favours*” (Luke 2:14). The word *eirénē* appears in all books of the New Testament – except in the First Epistle of John –, which attests to the importance of the subject the birth of Jesus.

In the Christian theology, Jesus is considered as the embodied proof of God’s love for human beings and the key-element for peace’s return on earth. His advent itself is seen as decisive “*to guide our feet into the way of peace*” (Luke 1:79). For Simeon, to whom the Holy Spirit had promised that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah, this latter is “his” bearer of peace, because at the sight of him, he exclaimed: “*now,*

Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as you promised” (Luke 2:29). In his public life, after the healings he performed, Jesus often concluded his miracles by saying to the newly healed: *“Go in peace”* (Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50; Luke 8:48). And to his disciples, he offered his peace by saying: *“Peace be with you”* (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 21, 26). Indeed, Jesus tried to promote peace among his people: for instance, he invited everybody to *“be at peace with one another”* (Mark 9:50), or even asserted during the Sermon on the Mount that *“peacemakers [...] shall be recognised as children of God”* (Matt 5:9). At the end of what can be considered Jesus’ “farewell speech” (John 14-16), he assured his disciples that all his teachings were aimed only at bringing them the true peace, which he himself is: *“I have told you all this so that you may find peace in me”* (John 16:33). Another passage found in an epistle of Paul also speaks eloquently about Jesus as himself being peace:

For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one entity and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, by destroying in his own person the hostility, that is, the Law of commandments with its decrees. His purpose in this was, by restoring peace, to create a single New Man out of the two of them, and through the cross, to reconcile them both to God in one Body; in his own person he killed the hostility. He came to bring the good news of peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. (Eph 2:14-17)

In spite of this peaceful portrait, a certain passage evoking peace often attracts attention because it seems antinomic in view of the whole gospel message. In both Matthew (10:34-36) and Luke’s (12:51-53) gospels, Jesus explained that *“it is not peace [he has] come to bring, but a sword”* (Matt 10:34). However, when Jesus said that he did not come to bring peace, it would be wrong to understand that he came to bring conflict, but rather that the word of Jesus is a word of contradiction that always comes up against a certain logic in the world. The Gospel might be considered as a word of newness in the world, and something new that appears often creates resistance. The sword, in the language of God, is the Word, because the Word makes the light: it makes a clean cut between life and darkness. Indeed, the true meaning of the word “sword” is “separation”. It derives its etymology from the Latin *spatha*, meaning “spatula”: it appears that there is an evident link between these three terms, which all evoke “tools” that are useful to separate things. Before being a weapon, the sword is therefore a frontier which divides those who work for peace, and its enemies.

To conclude, it appears that the word “peace” is often used to designate a condition of law and order, and a moral commitment that all faithful are supposed to take. *“As much as possible, and to the utmost of your ability, be at peace with everyone”* (Rom 12:18) exhorted Paul, who also wrote: *“let us be always seeking the ways which lead to peace and the ways in which we can support one another”* (Rom 14:19). A virtuous life and a harmonious coexistence are also supposed to bring peace, as he also explained to the Corinthians: *“brothers, we wish you joy; try to grow perfect; encourage one another; have a common mind and live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you”* (2 Cor 13:11); as he did with the Hebrews: *“seek peace with all people”* (Heb 12:14). Peace, lastly, is also considered as a gift of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22),

which “*looks forward to life and peace*” (Rom 8:6). Biblical peace therefore appears both as a divine present and a human responsibility: human beings are supposed to receive it from God and then “*to spread the gospel of peace*” (Eph 6:15).

1.1.3 Tradition

The Apostle James promised that “*the peace sown by peacemakers brings a harvest of justice*” (James 6:18). To establish peace, therefore, peacemakers are required. Theologians, popes, bishops, priests and monks have all tried to define the paths to reach peace. Some of their works have hugely influenced Church’s vision, and the concepts they defined are still relevant. They tried to mention different notions, on various topics: theology, liturgy, faith, but also international relations or politics. On these last subjects, they sought above all to define what relationships should be maintained in the City, between people and with the authorities, always remembering that all form of power comes from God.

One of the most famous thinkers who reflect on this topic is undoubtedly Thomas Aquinas²⁴. In his *De Regno* addressed to Cyprus’ king: “*this, then, is the goal to which he who leads the multitude must aim most: to provide unity of peace*”²⁵, he wrote. In his *Summa Theologiae*, he recalled that peace can be defined as peace within man, peace within the city or peace between cities: according to him, inner peace greatly promotes the strengthening of outer peace, and *vice versa*. Justice and charity, both necessary for man to establish peace, are not considered as incompatible: “*peace is the ‘work of justice’ indirectly, insofar as justice removes the obstacles to peace: but it is the work of charity directly, since charity, according to its very nature, causes peace*”²⁶ for him. One of the first steps towards peace is finally concord among men, insofar as this is what produces true peace: “*peace includes concord and adds something thereto. Hence wherever peace is, there is concord, but there is not peace, wherever there is concord, if we give peace its proper meaning.*”²⁷ In other words, unlike true peace, which is the ability of both parties to act virtuously, concord has the sole purpose of uniting the wills of people among themselves. To sum up Thomas Aquinas’ thought not being simple, it would be interesting to focus on one of his greatest contributions: the theory of just war, which can be a means of achieving true peace.

²⁴ Born in 1225/1226, Thomas Aquinas grew up in an aristocratic family, before joining the Dominican monks in 1244. The famous theologian took an early interest in Aristotelian philosophy, during his studies in Paris and Cologne, under the tutelage of Albertus Magnus. He returns to the Kingdom of Sicily in 1259 and began to write his work, including the *De Regno*, and in 1266 he began to write his masterpiece, the *Summa Theologiae*, which he was to edit until his death in 1274. These two texts are the ones that most evoke the issues of good government, common good and true peace.

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno Ad Regem Cypri*, 1266, 1, [own translation: “Hoc igitur est ad quod maxime rector multitudinis intendere debet, ut pacis unitatem procuret”].

²⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1274, II-II, q. 29, art. 3.

²⁷ Ibid, II-II, q. 29, art. 1.

The theory of “just war” appeared in the Western civilisation with Cicero in his *De Officiis* treaty in 44 BC, before being taken up by several Christian theologians, including Augustine of Hippo²⁸, Thomas Aquinas and Francisco de Vitoria²⁹. The first did not invent the theory of just war, but integrated it into his reflections: for instance, he observed that every prince undertakes war only with a view to peace, since if it is a peace which will be more profitable to him than the one which existed before the conflict, in short, the peace of the winner³⁰. It is merely Thomas Aquinas who brought the concept on stage, by giving the three principles that should prevail in order to state if a war is just:

First, the authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged [...]. And as the care of the common weal is committed to those who are in authority, it is their business to watch over the common weal of the city, kingdom or province subject to them. And just as it is lawful for them to have recourse to the sword in defending that common weal against internal disturbances when they punish evil-doers [...]. Secondly, a just cause is required, namely that those who are attacked, should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault [...]. Thirdly, it is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil.³¹

Finally, Francisco de Vitoria, in *De jure belli*, studied the limits of the use of force to settle quarrels between peoples. For him, it is lawful to wage war but it can only be unleashed as a proportionate response to an attack: “a prince may go even further in a just war and do whatever is necessary in order to obtain peace and security from the enemy”³². Thus, it is not lawful to make war because of religious differences or to annex territory without any reason. This laid the foundations of the theory of legitimate defence, abundantly enriched over the ages, notably by the popes. The tradition and literature produced by the main thinkers of Christianity have been taken up by the Church, which has interpreted and read them in the light of modern conflicts. In view of the world wars that shook the twentieth century, it wished to reaffirm its commitment to peace, especially in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

²⁸ Augustine of Hippo, born in 354, was a Roman municipule in what is now Algeria. He was first fascinated by philosophy and despite the piety of his mother Monica, he did not convert to Christianity until 386, after meeting Ambrose of Milan. Ordained a priest, he became bishop of Hippo in 395 and engaged in the fight against heresies. It was there that he wrote his greatest works: *Confessiones* (397-400), *De trinitate* (410-416), and finally *De Civitate Dei* (410-426). He died in 430.

²⁹ Francisco de Vitoria was born in Burgos in 1480. He was a Spanish theologian, philosopher and jurist of the Salamanca School, which interpreted Thomistic thought. He joined the Dominican order in 1504 and had a great influence on the intellectual life of his time, advising the King Charles V in particular. He died in 1546.

³⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *De Civitate Dei* (Rome, 426AD), XIX, ch. 12.

³¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 40, art. 1.

³² Francisco de Vitoria, *De Jure Belli*, 1532, ch. 3, art. 18.

1.2 The entry into modernity: from the World Wars to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

In the aftermath of the two World Wars, the Catholic Church, which was itself directly confronted to its horrors and to totalitarianisms, tried to continue its call for greater brotherhood. But the Cold War did not make it any easier and recalling its message and that of the gospel was not easy. Therefore, it undertook a great work to clarify its doctrine in a normative and synthetical way. The democratisation of reading and new technologies was then a powerful vector: the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was a milestone within the institution. Its multiple translations helped its dissemination: in 2001, an estimated eight million copies were already sold worldwide³³. For the Curia, the wager seemed to have been successful: if it is not read by the faithful, it became, at least, an important work for the clergy. This also confirmed the popes' belief that the word is a powerful weapon.

In this part, the aim will be to discuss the vision of peace enshrined by the *Catechism*. If this may seem tedious inasmuch as these texts are often unfamiliar to the faithful, it remains that they constitute the *doxa* of the Catholic Church and provide the *forma mentis* of the clergy. They therefore infuse the thinking of many ecclesiastics, especially the bishops, nuncios, cardinals and therefore the pope, who then transpose this doctrine into their pastoral, political and diplomatic line.

First, and in order to understand it as well as possible, it seems important to place the Catholic vision of peace in the wider context of the *Catechism*. Then, it is necessary to explain the two tenets of this discourse: peace for its own sake on the one hand, and the desire to avoid war on the other.

1.2.1 Introductory notes

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) is a catechism promulgated by John Paul II the 11th of October 1992 and solemnly published two months later, on the 7th of December³⁴. It explains the Catholic doctrine in a book, summarising the faith, teaching and morals of the Church. Its main purpose was to update the main teachings of the Catholic Church since the *Catechismus ad parochos* of 1566, which was addressed to priests with a low level of instruction³⁵. Its drafting was suggested by the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985. In 1986, the pontiff formed a commission of twelve Cardinals and bishops, chaired by Cardinal Ratzinger, and assisted by an editorial committee of seven resident bishops. A large number of specialists were also consulted and no less than nine successive drafts were produced until the final

³³ Maurice Simon, 'Le "Catéchisme de l'Église catholique". De Vatican II à Jean-Paul II', *Revue Théologique de Louvain* 32, no. 1 (2001): 21.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

result³⁶. It was then translated in several languages to be spread *urbi et orbi* [“to the city and to the world”], and the Latin “official” version is approved the 8th of September 1997³⁷. According to the academic Maurice Simon, John Paul II had furthermore considered the *Catechism* as “*a means of ensuring everywhere greater doctrinal clarity and certainty and an authoritative interpretation of the Council, of obtaining the publication of catechisms free of errors, omissions or dubious interpretations, of putting an end to teachings which are not in agreement with each other or with the universal magisterium.*”³⁸ It is a reference work for every Catholic regarding dogmas, sacraments, moral life and spiritual life, which aims to facilitate the drafting of local catechisms. It is a large sum whose formulation is intended to be clear and didactic in order to be understood by as many people as possible.

The text is structured into four main parts following a prologue. They successively concern “the profession of faith” (part I), “the celebration of the Christian mystery” (part II), the “life in Christ” (part III) and the “Christian prayer” (part IV), each subdivided into two sections. The second section of the third part pays attention to the “ten commandments”: an equal number of articles is again divided in two chapters, the first dealing with the first three commandments and the second with the seven other ones.

The fifth word given by God to Moses in the Mount Sinai commands: “*you shall not kill*” (Ex 20:13). These commandments are part of Jewish and Christian identities. For the Church, from this commandment flows several moral obligations. Stating that “*human life is sacred*”³⁹ in the introduction of this article, the *Catechism* lists three implications that draw their source from this commandment: the “respect for human life” (subsection 1), the “respect for the dignity of persons” (subsection 2) and the duty for “safeguarding peace” (subsection 3).

It is this final part which pays attention to the importance of peace in human relations. The chapter III.2.2.5.III. is composed of sixteen titles (from 2302 to 2317), which are themselves divided into two subtitles: “peace” (2302-2306) and “avoiding war” (2307-2317). These few articles constitute the core of the Catholic doctrine in terms of peace.

1.2.2 The nature of peace

The first five articles grouped under the subtitle “Peace” provide a wide definition of the nature peace and its obstacles. The article 2302 recalls that Jesus himself asked his disciples to observe the fifth commandment: “*you have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You shall not kill; and if anyone does kill*

³⁶ Bernard Lecomte, *Jean-Paul II*, Folio (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 676.

³⁷ Simon, ‘Le “Catéchisme de l’Église catholique”. De Vatican II à Jean-Paul II’, 20–21.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1992, 2258.

he must answer for it before the court. [...] anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court” (Matt 5:21-22). It implies for Christians to seek the “*peace of heart [because Jesus] denounced murderous anger and hatred as immoral.*”⁴⁰ It pursues defining anger as “*a desire for revenge [which therefore implies that] everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment.*”⁴¹ From the first article, therefore, we notice that in the spirit of the *Catechism*, peace is not only the absence of conflict, but above all peace of heart. In the article 2303, it is then stated that “*deliberate hatred is contrary to charity*”⁴² to the extent that Jesus ordered his apostles not to be bitter towards their neighbor: “*I say this to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; so that you may be children of your Father in heaven*” (Matt 5:44-45). This famous commandment is, moreover, one of the points of rupture with the Old Law, governed by the law of the Talion which prescribed: “*if further harm is done, however, you will award life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stroke for stroke*” (Ex 21:23-25). This paradigm shift is leading to a new vision of human life and therefore to a greater respect for it.

The following article 2304 is a key article for understanding the modern doctrine of the Holy See on peace. It states that “*respect for and development of human life require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity.*”⁴³ In the spirit of the *Catechism*, peace is then not only an end but first and foremost a means to achieve the “*the tranquillity of order*”⁴⁴. This peaceful state of the City can only be reached through both “*the work of justice and the effect of charity*”⁴⁵: if the first pillar is mentioned in the Bible (Isa 32:17), the second is taken from the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, of which a word should be said here.

To summarise it briefly, *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) proposes the following perspective: the Church is in the world without being of the world, as Jesus told to his apostles (John 17:18), and it is united to human history, inseparable from the human condition in which, by living the Gospel, it brings Christ’s presence in the world to life. As the first paragraph of the document states, “*the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men.*”⁴⁶ This text has deeply infused the committee in charge of the drafting of the *Catechism*, one of its principal editors having been Cardinal Wojtyła, who,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 2302.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 2303.

⁴³ Ibid., 2304.

⁴⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei*.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes - Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 1965, 1.

having become Pope John Paul II, then supervised the new writing. The fifth chapter entitled “The Fostering of Peace and the Promotion of a Community of Nations” is composed of an introduction (paragraphs 77 and 78) preceding two sections, related to “The Avoidance of War” (79-82) and claiming for “Setting Up An International Community” (83 to 93). In both of these sections, is developed the idea that “*peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice*”⁴⁷ and it urges Christians “*to do in love what the truth requires, and to join with all true peacemakers in pleading for peace and bringing it about.*”⁴⁸ Since the idea of wars’ avoidance is developed below, it is important to measure here the contribution of *Gaudium et Spes* to the promotion of effective peace between nations. Paul VI claimed in particular that “*it is absolutely necessary for countries to cooperate more advantageously and more closely together and to organize together international bodies and to work tirelessly for the creation of organizations which will foster peace*”⁴⁹, recalling that “*since God the Father is the origin and purpose of all men, we are all called to be brothers.*”⁵⁰ In the Church’s vision, universal fraternity and joint cooperation among human beings are the two states of mind necessary for the desire for earthly peace.

It brings us to the next affirmation of the *Catechism* that “*earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ, the messianic ‘Prince of Peace’ (Isa 9:5)*”⁵¹: for the Catholic Church and the Holy See, the source of all peace is to be found in God. This recalls us that popes are not only heads of peaceful states, but also religious leaders who try to unite their ewes. Therefore, peace among nations is not only promoted for geopolitical purposes, but also for the unification of faithful, regardless of the place where they live. Nonetheless, people have the right to recourse to self-defence, which is legitimate, and if it is done “*in order to safeguard human rights [and that people] bear witness to evangelical charity, provided they do so without harming the rights and obligations of other men and societies.*”⁵² Indeed, the Church teaches that legitimate defence can be a means of maintaining peace, even stating that it “*can be not only a right but a grave duty for someone responsible for another’s life. [...]. To [preserve the common good], those holding legitimate authority have the right to repel by armed force aggressors against the civil community entrusted to their charge.*”⁵³ Thomas Aquinas himself claimed this in the *Summa Theologiae* by stating that killing someone is an act that, “*since one’s intention is to save one’s own life, is not unlawful, seeing that it is natural to everything to keep itself in ‘being’, as far as possible.*”⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 83.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 92.

⁵¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2305.

⁵² Ibid., 2306.

⁵³ Ibid., 2267.

⁵⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 64, art. 7.

To sum up, the teaching of the Catholic Church on the promotion of peace remains singular: it states the duty of every person, faithful or not, to implement the means contributing to the peaceful state of the City, without forgetting that it remains in the image of men, *i.e.* imperfect, and reminds that complete peace can only be known in Heaven.

1.2.3 Preventing war

From articles 2307 to 2317, the *Catechism* is focused on the reasons and guidelines to avoid war, in compliance with the above-mentioned fifth commandment that “*forbids the intentional destruction of human life.*”⁵⁵ It also recalls that “*all citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war*”⁵⁶: for the Holy See, this universal duty considered as a personal involvement is one of the key-element to promote peace.

Nonetheless – and it is a point widely discussed by the popes in their speeches –, the Catholic Church recognises that “*as long as the danger of war remains and there is no competent and sufficiently powerful authority at the international level, governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate defence once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted.*”⁵⁷ But this right is strictly limited by four moral bounds: “*the damage [...] must be lasting, grave, and certain; all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; there must be serious prospects of success; the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated [...].*”⁵⁸ These elements are those of the “*‘just war’ doctrine*”⁵⁹.

The *Catechism* does not condemn unilaterally all forms of violence and armament: it even states that militaries are “*servants of the security and freedom of nations [and] truly contribute to the common good of the nation and the maintenance of peace.*”⁶⁰ But the Church is also aware of the horror that war can cause and does not hesitate “[*to*] *assert the permanent validity of the moral law during armed conflict*”⁶¹, pleading for the respect of “*non-combatants, wounded soldiers, and prisoners.*”⁶² It finally states that “*the extermination of a people, nation, or ethnic minority must be condemned as a mortal sin. One is morally bound to resist orders that command genocide.*”⁶³

⁵⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2307.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2308.

⁵⁷ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 78.

⁵⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2309.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2310.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2312.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2313.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Finally, there are three articles (2314, 2315 and 2316) relating to the sale of weapons and their accumulation. It should be remembered that this text was written and published in the mid-1980s when the Cold War was not over and the two powers were engaged in an “arms race”. In doing so, the text used to have a contemporary scope which is no less valid today. The affirmation that “*a danger of modern warfare is that it provides the opportunity to those who possess modern scientific weapons [...] to commit such crimes*”⁶⁴ is particularly dissenting. Where many ones claim that accumulating weapons could be a way to ensure the balance of power⁶⁵, the Church considers that “*the arms race does not ensure peace. Far from eliminating the causes of war, it risks aggravating them. [...] Over-armament multiplies reasons for conflict and increases the danger of escalation.*”⁶⁶ The Catechism finally states that “*the production and the sale of arms affect the common good of nations and of the international community. Hence public authorities have the right and duty to regulate them.*”⁶⁷

In the last article and conclusion of this chapter, it is written that “*injustice, excessive economic or social inequalities, envy, distrust, and pride raging among men and nations constantly threaten peace and cause wars. Everything done to overcome these disorders contributes to building up peace and avoiding war.*”⁶⁸ This final call to everyone to take an active role in the promotion of peace is repeatedly used by the Holy See, which regards each human being as responsible for the coming of the reign of God according to the word of Christ: “*the kingdom of God is among you*” (Luke 17:21).

1.3 John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in terris*: a turning point

The 11th of April 1963, live on television, Pope John XXIII signed his last encyclical: *Pacem in Terris*. Its aim was to expose his reflection on “*how establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity, and liberty*”, as the subtitle precises. A few months earlier, in October 1962, he intervened directly in the Cuba crisis, notably by phoning Kennedy and Khrushchev to urge them to negotiate and make peace⁶⁹. For the first time, the pope “*lifts a kind of ban that has [hitherto] weighed on the possibilities of dialogue, or even cooperation, with the communists by distinguishing between those who make mistakes and those who commit them*”⁷⁰: if the rejection of a “total” anti-communism is indeed one of the major aspects of this encyclical, it

⁶⁴ Ibid., 2314.

⁶⁵ The “balance of power” is a central concept in the realist theory of international relations. Introduced by Grotius in the seventeenth century before Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz remobilised it in the second half of the twentieth century, the theory of the balance of power suggests that national security is enhanced when military capacity is distributed in such a way that no single state is strong enough to dominate all the others. Hence, the balance of power refers to the equilibrium relationship that is formed when several more or less equal national powers compete with each other. This competition is supposed to prevent one power from gaining the upper hand over another.

⁶⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2315.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 2316.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 2317.

⁶⁹ Jean-Baptiste Noé, *Géopolitique du Vatican. La puissance de l’influence* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2015), 64–65.

⁷⁰ Le Moal, *Les divisions du pape*, 210–11.

would be abject not to see the other “revolutions” that John XXIII introduced into the pontifical discourse with this encyclical.

After a quick introduction on the two first chapters of this encyclical, the pontiff recalled which natural order must reign among human beings, based on each person’s rights and duties, and how everyone is supposed to behave towards the political authorities. Then, in chapters three and four, he discussed the relationship between political communities and their relationship with the world community. The last chapter regards some pastoral guidelines that the pope addressed to his brother bishops and to the Catholic faithful.

1.3.1 Serving the political community

According to John XXIII, order must reign within the political communities first, since his attention is devoted to *“that order which should prevail among men”*⁷¹, based on the idea *“that each individual man is truly a person”*⁷² with rights and duties.

He enumerated a list of rights that are inherent to each human being: *“the right to live [...], to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life”*⁷³, *“to be looked after [...] whenever through no fault of his own he is deprived of the means of livelihood”*⁷⁴, *“to be respected”*⁷⁵, *“to share in the benefits of culture”*⁷⁶, *“to worship God in accordance with the right dictates of his own conscience, and to profess his religion both in private and in public”*⁷⁷, *“to choose for themselves the kind of life which appeals to them”*⁷⁸ and to parents *“the support and education of children”*⁷⁹, the right *“not only to be given the opportunity to work, but also to be allowed the exercise of personal initiative in the work he does”*⁸⁰ and to proper conditions of work⁸¹, *“to the private ownership of property”*⁸², *“to meet together and to form associations with their fellows”*⁸³, *“to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own State”*⁸⁴, *“to take an active part in public life, and to make his own contribution to the common welfare”*⁸⁵, and finally a right *“to the legal protection of his rights”*⁸⁶. While it would be interesting to develop the pope’s

⁷¹ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 8.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

reasons for declaring the human being to be the holder of each of these rights, it must first of all be borne in mind that, in the eyes of the Church, human dignity is, when considered “*from the standpoint of divine revelation*”⁸⁷, the most superior truth in every respect. It is this philosophical premise which conditions the whole of ecclesial discourse: as the successors of the “good Pope John” recalled, to each person is due respect, not because of his achievements, but because everyone is created “*in the image of God*” (Gen 1:27).

Nevertheless, such an order cannot subsist unless everyone fulfils certain duties, in accordance with natural law, beginning with that of “*recognizing and respecting*” the rights conferred on each person⁸⁸: this reciprocity does not exclude the duty incumbent on each person to “*make his whole-hearted contribution to the creation of a civic order in which rights and duties are ever more diligently and more effectively observed.*”⁸⁹ Indeed, such rights and duties can only be guaranteed by their responsible exercise by each member of the political community⁹⁰. “*Hence, before a society can be considered well-ordered, creative, and consonant with human dignity, it must be based on truth*”⁹¹, declared John XXIII, so that it can be realised in freedom. Peace, in short, derives solely from the fact that society tends to be established in “*truth, justice, charity and freedom*”⁹², which are the four pillars that we already mentioned. For the French historian Christophe Dickès, the pontiff introduced a rupture in this encyclical:

[The 1948 Declaration of Human Rights’] recognition is relative to several titles. Firstly, because the Church has been talking about the protection of the human person for centuries and thus believes that human rights are rooted in Christianity. Moreover, John XXIII and his successors [did] not cease to repeat that rights also imply duties and that they must not be opposed to natural ethics and morality, *i.e.* to the law of God.⁹³

To achieve such a goal, a political authority is required. This latter is not supposed to be nor hegemonic nor denying the rights and duties exposed above. According to the Apostle Paul, “*there is no authority except from God and so whatever authorities exist have been appointed by God. So anyone who disobeys an authority is rebelling against God’s ordinance*” (Rom 13:1-2), insofar the holder of the power acts morally and in a manner non-contrary to natural law. In fact, the Apostle Peter reminded that every man is first of all the subject of a spiritual law and that “*obedience to God comes before obedience to men*” (Acts 5:29). John XXIII recognised that temporal authorities “*derive their authority from God*”⁹⁴ and that they must be considered “*before all else [as] a moral force.*”⁹⁵ He continued: “*consequently, laws and decrees passed in contravention*

⁸⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁹¹ Ibid., 35.

⁹² Ibid., 45.

⁹³ Christophe Dickès, *Le Vatican. Vérités et légendes*, Vérités et légendes (Paris: Perrin, 2018), 250–51.

⁹⁴ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 46.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 48.

*of the moral order, and hence of the divine will, can have no binding force in conscience [...].*⁹⁶ Their role is first the safeguarding and the promotion of the “common good” since it *“is something which affects the needs of the whole man, body and soul. That, then, is the sort of good which rulers of States must take suitable measure to ensure. They must respect the hierarchy of values, and aim at achieving the spiritual as well as the material prosperity of their subjects.”*⁹⁷ The Italian pontiff went even further by refuting the legal value of provisions contrary to human rights⁹⁸: by this affirmation he no longer expressed only a moral judgment, but a political one as well, inasmuch as he exhorted rulers to act in conformity with natural law. Indeed, this encyclical brings a new idea: *“politics is being redefined on the basis of globalisation as a new political sphere, in which the internal-external distinction ceases to have a credible categorical and pragmatic function due to the intrinsic global nature of contemporary challenges. One of the leitmotifs of the encyclical is, in fact, the continuity of the political dimension, which it clearly establishes”*⁹⁹, as the Italian diplomat Pasquale Ferrara explains.

1.3.2 The unity of the human family

Because peace’s *“advantages will be felt everywhere [...] by the whole human race”*¹⁰⁰, everyone must contribute to it. Also, *“nations are the subjects of reciprocal rights and duties. Their relationships, therefore, must likewise be harmonized in accordance with the dictates of truth, justice, willing cooperation, and freedom.”*¹⁰¹ According to John XXIII, it depends on the human dignity of those in power to act *“in their country’s name and in its interests.”*¹⁰² He finally pledged for the need of equality between nations.

To act “in truth” *“calls for [...] the consequent recognition of the inviolable principle that all [political communities] are by nature equal in dignity. Each of them accordingly has the right to exist, to develop, and to possess the necessary means and accept a primary responsibility for its own development.”*¹⁰³ At the same time, a fair political action *“necessitates both the recognition of their mutual rights, and [...] the fulfilment of their respective duties”*¹⁰⁴: from John XXIII’s point of view, therefore, *“it would be criminal in a State to aim at improving itself by the use of methods which involve other nations in injury and unjust oppression.”*¹⁰⁵ Bearing in mind not only the atrocities committed during the Second World War, but also those still persisting in some States during the Cold War, he asserted that *“any attempt to check the vitality and growth of these*

⁹⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 57.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 61.

⁹⁹ Pasquale Ferrara, *Il mondo di Francesco: Bergoglio e la politica internazionale* (Rome: Edizioni San Paolo, 2016), 125.

¹⁰⁰ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 116.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 80.

¹⁰² Ibid., 81.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 86.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 91.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 92.

ethnic minorities is a flagrant violation of justice”¹⁰⁶. Then, a “willing cooperation” “*can be achieved by all kinds of mutual collaboration; and this is already happening in our own day in the economic, social, political, educational, health and athletic spheres – and with beneficial result*”¹⁰⁷: this goal involves facilitating exchanges between people and communities, which could then lead to greater solidarity between them. Lastly, “in freedom” coincides with the idea “*that no country has the right to take any action that would constitute an unjust oppression of other countries, or an unwarranted interference in their affairs. On the contrary, all should help to develop in others an increasing awareness of their duties [...]*”¹⁰⁸: all nations “*must be conscious that they are themselves playing the major role in their economic and social development; that they are themselves to shoulder the main burden of it.*”¹⁰⁹ To conclude, John XXIII evoked his deepest hope, that one day governments and peoples “*will come to a fairer realization of one of the cardinal duties deriving from our common nature: namely, that love, not fear, must dominate the relationships between individuals and between nations.*”¹¹⁰

The attentive reader will readily notice that we have dodged paragraphs 109 to 119, relating to disarmament. Indeed, this passage requires an in-depth study as it lays the foundations for a recurrent theme in papal discourse. The first element that needs to be mentioned is the refutation of the idea, then widely shared, that the balance of power would be based on mutual military deterrence: the pope deplored that “*there is a common belief that under modern conditions peace cannot be assured except on the basis of an equal balance of armaments and that this factor is the probable cause of this stockpiling of armaments.*”¹¹¹ He also noted that, consequently, “*people are living in the grip of constant fear.*”¹¹² From his point of view, however:

Justice, right reason, and the recognition of man’s dignity cry out insistently for a cessation to the arms race. The stock-piles of armaments which have been built up in various countries must be reduced all round and simultaneously by the parties concerned. Nuclear weapons must be banned. A general agreement must be reached on a suitable disarmament program, with an effective system of mutual control. [...] Everyone, however, must realize that, unless this process of disarmament be thoroughgoing and complete, and reach men’s very souls, it is impossible to stop the arms race, or to reduce armaments, or [...] ultimately to abolish them entirely. Everyone must sincerely co-operate in the effort to banish fear and the anxious expectation of war from men’s minds.¹¹³

He also recalled that arms race is detrimental to the development of countries, especially the weakest ones, which “*lack the help they need for their economic and social development.*”¹¹⁴ Finally, he implored the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 95.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 98.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 120.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 123.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 129.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 110.

¹¹² Ibid., 111.

¹¹³ Ibid., 112–13.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 109.

nations' leaders to settle their differences *"not by armed force, but in accordance with the principles of right reason"*¹¹⁵, and urged them *"to be unsparing of their labour and efforts to ensure that human affairs follow a rational and dignified course."*¹¹⁶

In the fourth chapter, he finally deplored *"that the shape and structure of political life in the modern world, and the influence exercised by public authority in all the nations of the world are unequal to the task of promoting the common good of all peoples."*¹¹⁷ Seeking to redefine the relationship between individuals and political communities with the global community, he also recalled that *"there will always be an imperative need – born of man's very nature – to promote in sufficient measure the universal common good; the good, that is, of the whole human family."*¹¹⁸ He also urged, as a relatively new development, States to develop international structures to address collective challenges: *"today, [there are] problems which are world-wide in their dimensions [and that] cannot be solved except by a public authority with power, organization and means co-extensive with these problems, and with a world-wide sphere of activity. Consequently the moral order itself demands the establishment of some such general form of public authority."*¹¹⁹ He nevertheless advocated a better application of the so-called "principle of subsidiarity", and argued that such a global authority should be content *"to evaluate and find a solution to economic, social, political and cultural problems which affect the universal common good"*¹²⁰, precisely because *"it is no part of the duty of universal authority to limit the sphere of action of the public authority of individual States, or to arrogate any of their functions to itself"*¹²¹, and that it should on the contrary create sufficient conditions for everyone to be able to fulfil their duties. About the United Nations, John XXIII finally reminded that it *"has the special aim of maintaining and strengthening peace between nations, and of encouraging and assisting friendly relations between them"*¹²², while taking the liberty of expressing certain reservations on some points of the Declaration by United Nations¹²³. Indeed, as Christopher Dickès points out, the pope reinstated the Holy See to its role of international arbiter, while recalling in this text that *"the pope's interventions with human communities [...] are [and should remain] of moral essence."*¹²⁴

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 114.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 117.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 135.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 132.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 117.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 140.

¹²¹ Ibid., 141.

¹²² Ibid., 142.

¹²³ Ibid., 144.

¹²⁴ Dickès, *Le Vatican. Vérités et légendes*, 11.

1.3.3 Guidelines for promoting peace

The last chapter is shorter and especially addressed to faithful, while, for the first time, the John XXIII also invited “*all men of good will*”¹²⁵ to take part in this process. To do so, he enjoined everyone to be trained, since “*no one can insinuate himself into public life unless he be scientifically competent, technically capable, and skilled in the practice of his own profession.*”¹²⁶ Faithful to the Catholic doctrine of the co-creator man, the pope conceived any action in the service of peace as a collaboration to God’s creation and as the exercise of a duty to take an active role in world’s history¹²⁷.

The final lines were meant to be decisive for John XXIII, who evoked a huge task:

Hence among the very serious obligations incumbent upon men of high principles, We must include the task of establishing new relationships in human society, under the mastery and guidance of truth, justice, charity and freedom – relations between individual citizens, between citizens and their respective States, between States, and finally between individuals, families, intermediate associations and States on the one hand, and the world community on the other. There is surely no one who will not consider this a most exalted task, for it is one which is able to bring about true peace in accordance with divinely established order.¹²⁸

This peace is nonetheless not supposed to be conceived as a distant reality: “*the world will never be the dwelling place of peace, till peace has found a home in the heart of each and every man, till every man preserves in himself the order ordained by God to be preserved.*”¹²⁹ He finally recalled that his teaching, if shared by all men of good will, is nothing more than a means to ensure peace on earth¹³⁰.

He concluded by reasserting that “*peace is but an empty word, if it does not rest upon that order [described] in this encyclical. It is an order that is founded on truth, built up on justice, nurtured and animated by charity, and brought into effect under the auspices of freedom.*”¹³¹ These four pillars ought to be the founding elements of human peace, according to John XXIII; a peace that is that which human beings inherit from God, precisely because Jesus said: “*Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you*” (John 14:27).

¹²⁵ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 148.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 150.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 163.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 165.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 166.

¹³¹ Ibid., 167.

2. Threats to peace

In the first chapter, we have seen that peace is considered by the Catholic Church and by popes as a gift from God, which deserves to be respected and reinforced. Indeed, the Holy See is keeping a watchful eye on the international situation, aware that peace is always to be won and that there are many threats. Pope Paul VI, on the occasion of the first World Day of Peace in 1968, considered that “*peace is both necessary and threatened.*”¹³² In his message are to be found various elements identified as threats to peace:

the danger of the survival of selfishness in the relations among nations; the danger of violence into which some populations can allow themselves to be drawn by desperation at not having their right to life and human dignity recognized and respected; the danger, today tremendously increased, of recourse to frightful weapons of extermination, which some nations possess, spending enormous financial means [...]; the danger of believing that international controversies cannot be resolved by the ways of reason [...] but only by means of deterrent and murderous forces.¹³³

Since this speech, popes have tried to identify the pending threats each year. From the study of their speeches, we can see that they are of two types: structural and conjunctural. John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis enumerated many and very diverse obstacles: indeed, we cannot put on the same level the “*globalization of indifference*”¹³⁴, “*the foreign debt of poor countries*”¹³⁵ nor “*the arms race*”¹³⁶, even if all these phenomena threaten peace.

On the one hand, some threats to peace are immanent: it means that they arise in a certain context but can also reappear regularly. On the other hand, there are structural threats: these ones are persistent, regardless of the context and the situation. The purpose of this chapter is then to analyse both of them, one after the other.

2.1 Immanent factors

“*Truly, peace is fragile*”¹³⁷ affirmed John Paul II in 1984, when the war between Iran and Iraq was raging, Sudan was being torn apart and he himself has just allowed the state of war in Poland to be cancelled the 22nd of July 1983¹³⁸. According to him, peace is built on shaky foundations, subject to multiple attacks.

¹³² Paul VI, ‘Message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI for the Observance of a Day of Peace - 1 January 1968’.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Francis, ‘Fraternity: The Foundation and Pathway to Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2014’.

¹³⁵ John Paul II, ‘Do Not Be Overcome by Evil but Overcome Evil with Good - Message for the World Day of Peace 2005’.

¹³⁶ Benedict XVI, ‘The Human Family, a Community of Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2008’.

¹³⁷ John Paul II, ‘From a New Heart, Peace Is Born - Message for the World Day of Peace 1984’.

¹³⁸ Le Moal, *Les divisions du pape*, 277–78.

Two years later, he insisted: “*we are deeply aware that in the present situation peace is also a value that rests on foundations that are very fragile.*”¹³⁹

For the Catholic Church indeed, peace is never won and needs to be protected and consolidated daily. But each pope endorsed a particular approach on some subjects: there is therefore an opposition – that is in fact complementary – to be found in each speech between, on the one hand, recalling the principles of peace according to the Vatican and, on the other, trying to resolve contemporary problems that flourish according to the political, economic, social, cultural or, of course, religious context.

For the analysis of John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis’ speeches, we can list several immanent threats to peace. In a first part, we will evoke the most discussed obstacle to peace: wars and conflicts, increased by the arms race. Then, in a second part, we will try to consider the threat that present inhuman ideologies, namely terrorism and totalitarianism. Finally, it will be interesting to see how all forms of discrimination and exclusion are considered as immanent threats by popes.

2.1.1 Wars and conflicts

While claiming that “*true peace demands more than just the absence of war*”¹⁴⁰, the Holy See is aware of the increasing violence within the society and among nations. As we have already seen, the *Catechism* recalls that citizens and governments must work for the avoidance of war¹⁴¹, because “*war destroys, it does not build up; it weakens the moral foundations of society and creates further divisions and long-lasting tensions. [...] War is the failure of all true humanism.*”¹⁴²

We can find this apparent contradiction in some speeches: in his 2002 speech, for instance, John Paul II said that “[*peace*] is rather the fullness of justice, leading to that tranquillity of order which is much more than a fragile and temporary cessation of hostilities”¹⁴³, but also that ending conflicts is a necessity because “*the continuous recourse to acts of terror and war, which aggravate the situation and diminish hope on all sides, must finally give way to a negotiated solution.*”¹⁴⁴ Indeed, if the end of the war is not the only condition for consolidating peace, no one can deny that it is often a first step. In this sense, his successor also recalled that only “*the silencing of weapons and the cessation of all violence*”¹⁴⁵ make possible to hear the calls and initiatives in favour of peace. As John Paul II declared in 1993, “*to say ‘peace’ is really to speak of much*

¹³⁹ John Paul II, ‘Peace Is a Value with No Frontiers. North-South, East-West: Only One Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 1986’.

¹⁴⁰ John Paul II, ‘Peace and Youth Go Forward Together - Message for the World Day of Peace 1985’.

¹⁴¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2308.

¹⁴² John Paul II, ‘Respect for Human Rights: The Secret of True Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 1999’.

¹⁴³ John Paul II, ‘No Peace without Justice, No Justice without Forgiveness - Message for the World Day of Peace 2002’.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Benedict XVI, ‘Interview during the Flight from Rome to the Czech Republic - 26 September 2009’.

more than the simple absence of war. It is to postulate a condition of authentic respect for the dignity and rights of every human being, a condition enabling him to achieve complete fulfilment."¹⁴⁶

Therefore, the role of the popes has been to denounce the existence of bloody wars and deadly conflicts. First of all, we will study how war is considered by popes as the negation of human nature. Then we will see how they denounced the use of weapons, especially nuclear ones. Finally, we will look at the famous theory of 'just war', which has been widely discussed and questioned for forty-three years.

2.1.1.1 The inhumanity of war

In his 2019 message, Francis explained that *"we are [now] more conscious than ever of the terrible lesson taught by fratricidal wars: peace can never be reduced solely to a balance between power and fear. To threaten others is to lower them to the status of objects and to deny their dignity."*¹⁴⁷ To condemn the very nature of war, popes have first tried to highlight the inhumanity that it causes. On this point, the three pontiffs are unanimous: war is always an attack on the human condition. Violence is a process that denies the humanity of the victim, but also that of the assailant, insofar as *"it is man who kills and not his sword, or in our day, his missiles"*¹⁴⁸: to choose war is then to refuse life¹⁴⁹. Every form of armed conflict should therefore be declared illegitimate, and it is the duty of the popes to condemn, first of all verbally, what the Church considers to be a profound attack on the nature of man. As it is written in *Gaudium et Spes*, *"any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation."*¹⁵⁰ Francis, in his 2014 message, said that the outbreak of armed conflicts is finally a permanent and lasting attack on harmony between human beings: *"for the world's people, armed conflicts are always a deliberate negation of international harmony and create profound divisions and deep wounds which require many years to heal."*¹⁵¹

This idea was taken up by John Paul II who declared in 1980 that *"it is [...] of fundamental importance to recognize, once and for all, that war never helps the human community, that violence destroys and never builds up, that the wounds it causes remain long unhealed, and that as a result of conflicts the already grim condition of the poor deteriorates still further, and new forms of poverty appear."*¹⁵² For popes indeed, there are many reasons to condemn the use of force and wars: they create not only a temporary suffering, but injuries and long-term damages, like poverty. Facing this problem, they advocate for nonviolent policies.

¹⁴⁶ John Paul II, 'If You Want Peace, Reach out to the Poor - Message for the World Day of Peace 1993'.

¹⁴⁷ Francis, 'Good Politics Is at the Service of Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2019'.

¹⁴⁸ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1984'.

¹⁴⁹ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1999'.

¹⁵⁰ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 80.

¹⁵¹ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2014'.

¹⁵² John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1993'.

First, the escalation of violence faced by citizens pushes popes to denounce new forms of warfare. In 1982 already, John Paul II deplored the fact that the new conflicts have three new characteristics: they are worldwide, total and radical, all contributing to the division of the world. He said:

In reality, the confrontations that we witness today are distinguished from those of past history by certain new characteristics. In the first place, they are worldwide: even a local conflict is often an expression of tensions originating elsewhere in the world. In the same way, it often happens that a conflict has profound effects far from where it broke out. Another characteristic is totality: present-day tensions mobilize all the forces of the nations involved [...]. Thirdly, we must stress the radical character of modern conflicts: it is the survival of the whole human race that is at stake in them, given the destructive capacity of present-day military stockpiles.¹⁵³

The year after, he considered that the expression “limited war” itself is a euphemism, “*given the evil that every war represents its price that has to be paid in human lives [and] in suffering [...]*.”¹⁵⁴ He also acknowledged that “*in our time, the number of wars between States has diminished*”¹⁵⁵, but only to recall that “*the armed conflicts taking place within States [...] are quite numerous on practically every continent, and often very violent.*”¹⁵⁶ He finally insisted saying that while “*the extreme complexity of these conflicts makes it very difficult to understand and evaluate the causes and interests at play, one fact cannot be disputed: it is the civilian population which suffers most tragically [...]. Far from being protected, civilians are often the prime target of the conflicting forces [...]*.”¹⁵⁷ There is a crucial point in Catholic doctrine on war: while the Church recognises that regular armies can contribute to safeguarding the common good and maintaining peace¹⁵⁸, it does not fail to recall that it is morally unacceptable for civilians to be involved, against their will and at their expense, in fratricidal fighting.

Then, the Church also claims that war is one of the main causes of structural poverty in many countries, what is a direct negation of the right to live in good material conditions. From popes’ point of view, war engenders poverty: “*at the present time, there exists yet another situation which is a source of poverty and destitution: the situation caused by war between nations and by conflicts within a given country.*”¹⁵⁹ It also causes great displacement of human populations and “*continue to trigger the movement of peoples within national borders and beyond.*”¹⁶⁰ Then, war infringes on the right of people to live and to settle freely on the land of their ancestors. In this sense, war denies the humanity of numerous people, even by claiming the opposite. Benedict XVI recalled that “*to attain the good of peace there must be a clear and conscious*

¹⁵³ John Paul II, ‘Peace: A Gift of God Entrusted to Us - Message for the World Day of Peace 1982’.

¹⁵⁴ John Paul II, ‘Dialogue for Peace, a Challenge for Our Time - Message for the World Day of Peace 1983’.

¹⁵⁵ John Paul II, “‘Peace on Earth to Those Whom God Loves’ - Message for the World Day of Peace 2000’.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2310.

¹⁵⁹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1993’.

¹⁶⁰ Francis, ‘Migrants and Refugees: Men and Women in Search of Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2018’.

acknowledgment that violence is an unacceptable evil and that it never solves problems. Violence is a lie, for it goes against [...] the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings."¹⁶¹ Finally, war is seen as evidence of humanity's difficulty in responding to its vocation to fraternity: *"the terrible trials of internal and international conflicts, often aggravated by ruthless acts of violence, have an enduring effect on the body and soul of humanity. Every war is a form of fratricide that destroys the human family's innate vocation to brotherhood."*¹⁶² From a Christian point of view, finally, this means that man is unable to detach himself from his sinful nature, because *"the fact of recourse to violence and to war comes from [his] sin, from his blindness of spirit and the disorder of his heart [...]."*¹⁶³

War is also a direct attack on children's innocence. In 1996, John Paul II recalled that *"many of the world's children are innocent victims of war"*¹⁶⁴, alongside reminding that they many of them are even *"forced to take an active part in them."*¹⁶⁵ For the Church, childhood is the most precious part of society, as Jesus himself stated that *"it is to such as these that the kingdom of Heaven belongs"* (Matt 19:14). It is then logic that it takes an active role to defend them and to keep them away from conflicts¹⁶⁶. The suffering of children is, according to John Paul II, further proof of the need to stop wars: *"the memory of the millions of children who have been killed, and the sad faces of so many others who are suffering compel us to take every possible measure to safeguard or re-establish peace, and to bring conflicts and wars to an end."*¹⁶⁷

To build a peaceful society also implies to leave no room for the cult of force. The Bible itself praises weakness, as the Apostle Paul said: *"I am glad of weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions and distress for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong"* (2 Cor 12:10). Therefore, the Church seeks to delegitimise force as a means of political or diplomatic action, preferring dialogue. The criticism of totalitarian regimes took several forms, but here is the question of the legitimacy of the use of force in the context of wars. In 2020, Francis continued to refuse to give any moral assent to the use of force, beware of Machiavelli's logic¹⁶⁸, precisely because the result is often worse:

War, as we know, often begins with the inability to accept the diversity of others, which then fosters attitudes of aggrandizement and domination born of selfishness and pride, hatred and the desire to caricature, exclude and even destroy the other. War is fuelled by a perversion of relationships, by hegemonic ambitions, by abuses of power, by fear of others and by seeing diversity as an obstacle. And these, in turn, are aggravated by the experience of war.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶¹ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2005'.

¹⁶² Francis, 'Peace as a Journey of Hope: Dialogue, Reconciliation and Ecological Conversion - Message for the World Day of Peace 2020'.

¹⁶³ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1984'.

¹⁶⁴ John Paul II, 'Let Us Give Children a Future of Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 1996'.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ John Paul II, 'The Family Creates the Peace of the Human Family - Message for the World Day of Peace 1994'.

¹⁶⁷ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1996'.

¹⁶⁸ Niccolò Machiavelli, *De Principatibus*, 1532.

¹⁶⁹ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2020'.

As John Paul II finally pointed out, “[war and violence] exercise a pernicious influence on people’s minds, suggesting and practically imposing models of behaviour diametrically opposed to peace.”¹⁷⁰ Peace is therefore threatened by a “war mentality” which is developed on the grounds of violence conceived as an inherent and undetachable part of the human condition. Nevertheless, the popes constantly try to plead for nonviolence and they echo calls for peace.

Francis 2017’s message was entitled “Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace”, as to recall that what matters is not the brutal reality but the process in which leaders and citizens choose to engage. On the occasion of this speech, he explained:

[Jesus] taught that the true battlefield, where violence and peace meet, is the human heart [...]. But Christ’s message in this regard offers a radically positive approach. [...] He taught his disciples to love their enemies (Matt 5:44) and to turn the other cheek (Matt 5:39). When he stopped her accusers from stoning the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11), and when, on the night before he died, he told Peter to put away his sword (Matt 26:52), Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence.¹⁷¹

Identification with Jesus is an essential element for the Christian, who must conform his life to that of the one whose name he receives at baptism. He can also draw inspiration from the saints, who, for the Catholic Church, are models of life¹⁷², in his search for peace: “when Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, she clearly stated her own message of active nonviolence: ‘We in our family do not need bombs and guns, to destroy to bring peace – just get together, love one another... And we will be able to overcome all the evil that is in the world’.”¹⁷³ In terms of nonviolence, the Church has indeed supported or taken direct part in its favour, as Francis claimed: “the Church has been involved in nonviolent peacebuilding strategies in many countries, engaging even the most violent parties in efforts to build a just and lasting peace.”¹⁷⁴ But it did not only look to what faithful do, but it also encouraged other initiatives in the favour of peace, as John Paul II in 1983: “more and more movements work [...] in order to cause people to realise the need to eliminate, not only all war, but everything which can lead to war.”¹⁷⁵ Elements that can lead to launch a war are indeed numerous, but one which is often used as a justification for war is strongly denounced by Benedict XVI: violence. “Violence is not overcome by violence”¹⁷⁶ he claimed: from the Church’s point of view, forgiveness is always stronger. “To turn the other cheek” (Matt 5:39) could not be only a motto, but a way of life that govern each response to the offence.

¹⁷⁰ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1994’.

¹⁷¹ Francis, ‘Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2017’.

¹⁷² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 828.

¹⁷³ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2017’.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1983’.

¹⁷⁶ Benedict XVI, ‘Religious Freedom, the Path to Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2011’.

Indeed, behind the condemnation of war is also the belief that good always makes less noise than evil. The popes therefore seek to cultivate hope in the peoples subjected to the wrath of war: *“peace is like the hope which the poet Charles Péguy celebrated¹⁷⁷. It is like a delicate flower struggling to blossom on the stony ground of violence”¹⁷⁸*, Francis said in 2019. Their calls for peace are also aimed at those who govern, to make them aware of the harshness of conflicts: *“many of our brothers and sisters have continued to endure the destructive experience of war, which constitutes a grave and deep wound inflicted on fraternity. [...] The Church also speaks out in order to make leaders hear the cry of pain of the suffering and to put an end to every form of hostility, abuse and the violation of fundamental human rights.”¹⁷⁹* War can then be seen as a threat to peace because it annihilates all possibility to hope and, finally, to believe that a better day could rise. War is the opposite to the human nature precisely because it perceives men only from a material, physical, standpoint: on the contrary, the Church and the popes proclaim that men are also spiritual beings which are called to develop their mental and intellectual life. Their soul is directly attacked by wars and conflicts, and they can therefore feel or be affected in their profound humanness.

Finally, when war seems inevitable, the Church claims for the respect of few rules, as the abovementioned non-involvement of civilians, and those of international humanitarian law. Benedict XVI and Francis adopted the same discourse: while the former said that *“when, despite every effort, war does break out, at least the essential principles of humanity and the basic values of all civil coexistence must be safeguarded; norms of conduct must be established that limit the damage as far as possible and help to alleviate the suffering of civilians and of all the victims of conflicts”¹⁸⁰*; the latter said that, *“especially in situations of conflict, let us respect this, our ‘deepest dignity’”¹⁸¹*, which is the respect of human life.

To conclude, the risk of conflict is constant but can turn into fights due to some external factors. Therefore, many States have large stockpiles of armaments, which are intended to be used only for defensive purposes. Popes have unilaterally condemned such a practice, precisely because they do not consider the silence of weapons as a sufficient condition to build a lasting peace. Benedict XVI made this observation that *“peace cannot be reduced to the simple absence of armed conflict but needs to be understood as [...] an order ‘which must be brought about by humanity in its thirst for ever more perfect justice’¹⁸².”¹⁸³*

¹⁷⁷ Charles Péguy, *Le Porche du Mystère de la deuxième vertu*, 1911.

¹⁷⁸ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2019’.

¹⁷⁹ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2014’.

¹⁸⁰ Benedict XVI, ‘The Human Person, the Heart of Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2007’.

¹⁸¹ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2017’.

¹⁸² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 78.

¹⁸³ Benedict XVI, ‘In Truth, Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2006’.

For his 1980 message, John Paul II signed as usual his message on the 8th of December 1979 in which he deplored that *“the situation in which humanity is living today seems to include a tragic contradiction between the many fervent declarations in favour of peace and the no less real vertiginous escalation in weaponry.”*¹⁸⁴ At that time, he did not yet know that he would deliver it few days after the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan (27th December 1979), the premise of a war that would last ten years and put the two blocks in conflict by interposed fights.

To avoid such an escalation of violence, the Holy See has constantly developed an anti-militarisation discourse, and above all an anti-weapons discourse, especially nuclear ones. Faced with the firepower of some States, this discourse often fell on deaf ears, like in 1914 and in 1939. However, popes have repeated that disarmament is an undeniable criterion for peace. Once again, such a condemnation raises the issue of the legitimacy of self-defence, that will be discussed at the end. On this aspect of the question of war as well, the last three popes share the same vision.

The first reason why popes rejected the arms race is obviously that it maintains a climate of tension and perpetuates the Westphalian order¹⁸⁵ based on power relations. John Paul II considered that *“seeds of war are also being spread by the massive and uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which it seems are passing freely from one area of conflict to another, increasing violence along the way.”*¹⁸⁶ In the same vein, Francis made own his predecessor’s appeal: *“an escalation of intimidation, and the uncontrolled proliferation of arms, is contrary to morality and the search for true peace.”*¹⁸⁷ A true peace cannot be therefore based on intimidation and mutual fear. This “atmosphere” is not unlike that of the Cold War, as Benedict XVI, who himself lived in a divided Germany, reminded:

Another disturbing issue is the desire recently shown by some States to acquire nuclear weapons. This has heightened even more the widespread climate of uncertainty and fear of a possible atomic catastrophe. We are brought back in time to the profound anxieties of the ‘Cold War’ period. [...] The way to ensure a future of peace for everyone is found not only in international accords for the non-

¹⁸⁴ John Paul II, ‘Truth, the Power of Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 1980’.

¹⁸⁵ In 1648, the European powers emerged from decades of politico-religious wars by signing the Treaties of Westphalia (in reality the Treaties of Münster and those of Osnabrück). They led to the establishment of a new political order: the Westphalian order. The fragmentation of Europe thus gave way to the emergence of nation States. This new political organisation, known as inter-State, allows neighbouring States to respect the integrity of borders, supposedly guarantors of peace. It also results in the search for a balance of power which consists of the fact that no State should be hegemonic. Empires no longer have a place in this system and interference is also prohibited. The notion of the Westphalian order was an undeniable contribution to European diplomacy, but also one of the precursors of the concert of nations. The law of the strongest is replaced by a balance between nation States and relative peace is thus established in Europe.

¹⁸⁶ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1999’.

¹⁸⁷ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2019’.

proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also in the determined commitment to seek their reduction and definitive dismantling.¹⁸⁸

Then, popes stressed out the idea that, since the first atomic bombings in Japan in August 1945, the war has taken on a terrible new light. Indeed, the risk of annihilation has become immanent to all wars: the appearance of the nuclear threat makes the risk of escalation permanent. While for states, nuclear weapons have become a means of deterrence, the popes do not see this technological advance in the same standpoint. For example, Christian Masset, French Ambassador to Italy, believes that States with nuclear weapons are being called upon to contribute to the stability of the international order¹⁸⁹, which is the classic discourse of nuclear-armed States, and can prevent a war from escalating. For the Holy See, the reality is quite different: in *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII already considered that “*in this age which boasts of its atomic power, it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice.*”¹⁹⁰ In sum, the Church condemns the “dehumanisation of war” caused by the presence of weapons of total destruction¹⁹¹.

Not only the recourse but also the possession of atomic weapons is violently condemned by John Paul II: “*the spectre of nuclear weapons [...] remains the most dramatic and compelling example of [subjection by the force of power]. Nuclear weapons are so powerful in their destructive capacities, and nuclear strategies are so inclusive in their designs, that the popular imagination is often paralyzed by fear. This fear is not groundless.*”¹⁹² Indirectly, the Polish pontiff claimed that States with nuclear weapons, even if for deterrence purposes, exert and maintain a climate of fear over their own population. His German successor was equally incisive when he stated that

The increasing sale and purchase of arms – conventional but very sophisticated – is causing dire results. While the major powers have avoided direct conflict, their rivalries have often been acted out in other parts of the world. Local problems and regional difference are aggravated and perpetuated through armaments supplied by wealthier countries and by the ideologizing of local conflicts by powers that seek regional advantage by exploiting the condition of the poor and defenceless.¹⁹³

For Francis at last, “*as long as so great a quantity of arms [is] in circulation as at present, new pretexts can always be found for initiating hostilities.*”¹⁹⁴ By saying so, he stretched a very interesting point: The possession of weapons by a neighbouring or rival nation is in fact the main cause of arms acquisition by countries. In the name of their own defence, they increase their striking power and can thus create fear on the part of other

¹⁸⁸ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2007’.

¹⁸⁹ Private interview with Christian Masset, French Ambassador to Italy, 9 March 2021.

¹⁹⁰ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 127.

¹⁹¹ Blandine Chélini-Pont, Roland Dubertrand, and Valentine Zuber, *Géopolitique des religions. Un nouveau rôle du religieux dans les relations internationales ?*, Géopolitique (Paris: Le Cavalier Bleu, 2019), 26.

¹⁹² John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1986’.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2014’.

countries, which will in turn be tempted to equip themselves with weapons. It is precisely this vicious circle that is vehemently denounced by the popes, as Francis explained in 2020: *“mistrust and fear weaken relationships and increase the risk of violence, creating a vicious circle that can never lead to a relationship of peace. Even nuclear deterrence can only produce the illusion of security. We cannot claim to maintain stability in the world through the fear of annihilation, in a volatile situation, suspended on the brink of a nuclear abyss [...]”*¹⁹⁵

The cost of war is also put forward by the popes to criticise the military policy of certain States. As Benedict XVI pointed out, *“an excessive increase in military expenditure risks accelerating the arms race, producing pockets of underdevelopment and desperation, so that it can paradoxically become a cause of instability, tension and conflict.”*¹⁹⁶ According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute¹⁹⁷, in 1990, as a result of the arms race between the two blocs, defence spending amounted to US\$1.411 billion, a high level but already decreasing compared to previous years, what represents 3.27% of world GDP. With military spending reaching an all-time low in 2018 at 2.14% of world GDP, one might be tempted to think that globalisation has led to a decline in arms investment. But this figure is misleading: in the same year, US\$1,780 billion was spent on them, the highest amount in history. For popes, this money could be devoted to more noble expenses: *“money ought not to be used for war, nor for destroying and killing, but for defending the dignity of man, for improving his life and for building a truly open, free and harmonious society”*¹⁹⁸ claimed John Paul II, also calling on the leaders to take *“steps to stop the growth of the arms industry and of arms trafficking.”*¹⁹⁹ His successor insisted:

The resources which would be saved could then be employed in projects of development capable of benefiting all their people, especially the poor. In this regard, one can only note with dismay the evidence of a continuing growth in military expenditure and the flourishing arms trade, while the political and juridic process established by the international community for promoting disarmament is bogged down in general indifference.²⁰⁰

In reality, the Vatican’s desire for disarmament is rather close to the idealistic theory and clashes with the more realistic doctrine of “arms control”. It does not imply a reduction in existing arsenals: it involves agreements to prohibit certain means or restrict certain practices, or to set “ceilings” that each party must not exceed²⁰¹. However, the popes have called for respect for international law, especially in the context of the

¹⁹⁵ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2020’.

¹⁹⁶ Benedict XVI, ‘Fighting Poverty to Build Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2009’.

¹⁹⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, ‘SIPRI Military Expenditure Database’, n.d., <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

¹⁹⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1993’.

¹⁹⁹ John Paul II, ‘Offer Forgiveness and Receive Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 1997’.

²⁰⁰ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2006’.

²⁰¹ Bruno Tertrais, ‘Le contrôle international des armes nucléaires’, in *L’arme nucléaire, Que sais-je ?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008), 104–21.

1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons²⁰², which the Holy See itself signed in 1971 as an observer member of the UN. But this agreement is fragile and threatened. The violent entry into the third millennium and the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Central African Republic, Chad or between Israel and Lebanon have not made the Holy See's fears disappear. Benedict XVI stressed this point twice in his 2006 and 2008 speeches. He first stated that *"the truth of peace requires that all [...] agree to change their course by clear and firm decisions and strive for a progressive and concerted nuclear disarmament."*²⁰³ Two years later, he insisted:

One must acknowledge with regret the growing number of States engaged in the arms race: even some developing nations allot a significant portion of their scant domestic product to the purchase of weapons. The responsibility for this baneful commerce is not limited: the countries of the industrially developed world profit immensely from the sale of arms, while the ruling oligarchies in many poor countries wish to reinforce their stronghold by acquiring ever more sophisticated weaponry. In difficult times such as these, it is truly necessary for all persons of good will to come together to reach concrete agreements aimed at an effective demilitarization, especially in the area of nuclear arms. [...] I feel bound to entreat those in authority to resume with greater determination negotiations for a progressive and mutually agreed dismantling of existing nuclear weapons.²⁰⁴

Moreover, the popes – and particularly John Paul II – are part of the process initiated by the Helsinki Accords (1975). One of the agreements' document provides for the progressive disarmament of the European continent to allow for greater security. The second chapter of the *Document on confidence-building measures and certain aspects of security and disarmament* is entitled "Questions relating to disarmament" and states:

The participating States recognize the interest of all of them in efforts aimed at lessening military confrontation and promoting disarmament which are designed to complement political détente in Europe and to strengthen their security. They are convinced of the necessity to take effective measures in these fields which by their scope and by their nature constitute steps towards the ultimate achievement of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, and which should result in strengthening peace and security throughout the world.²⁰⁵

The Polish pope expressed his particular concern with this security issue in his 2001 message: *"the alarming increase of arms, together with the halting progress of commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, runs the risk of feeding and expanding a culture of competition and conflict, a culture involving not only States but also non-institutional entities, such as paramilitary groups and terrorist organizations."*²⁰⁶ This speech is not only addressed to States, but also to other international actors which are suspected to develop *"a 'culture of war',*

²⁰² Of the 195 States eligible to be party of the treaty (the 193 UN members, plus the Holy See and Palestine), 191 of them have at least signed it (but not necessarily ratified), while four of them remain non-parties, namely India, Israel, Pakistan and South Sudan.

²⁰³ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2006'.

²⁰⁴ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2008'.

²⁰⁵ Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, 'Helsinki Accords Final Act' (1975).

²⁰⁶ John Paul II, 'Dialogue between Cultures for a Civilization of Love and Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2001'.

not only in its most detestable form, namely, the power to wage war used as an instrument of supremacy, but also in the less odious but no less destructive form of recourse to arms as an expeditious way to solve a problem.”²⁰⁷

More recently, Francis have tried to propose a counter-model to that of violence, considering that *“violence is not the cure for our broken world. Countering violence with violence leads at best to [...] enormous suffering, because vast amounts of resources are diverted to military ends and away from the everyday needs of [...] the great majority of people in our world. At worst, it can lead to the death, physical and spiritual, of many people, if not of all.”*²⁰⁸ Compared to Benedict XVI, Francis is also known for his greater diplomatic presence, especially on the arms front. But where the Argentinian pontiff appears to be more at odds – what he is in many respects – is above all on the question of the theory of the “just war”, a stumbling block in ecclesiastical discourse.

2.1.1.3 Are there just wars?

As we have seen, the popes have repeatedly condemned the use of force and weapons, which cause violence, misery and destruction. Nevertheless, the Church knows that men, whom it believes to be marked by the original sin²⁰⁹, will not be able to reach perfection on earth, which is part of the Kantian ideal of perpetual peace²¹⁰: therefore, it was the first institution to develop a ‘just war’ theory to accept war as a means to put an end to even more cruel acts. But nowadays, this theory has been undermined: indeed, the “just war” argument has become a means of justifying certain acts that are contrary to natural law. After Cicero, the bishop Augustine of Hippo, as we have already said, was one of its main Christian instigators, before being generously completed, especially by Thomas Aquinas nine centuries later. Following the classical philosophers, the Catholic Church has tried to develop a doctrine on the subject.

However, it was not the only one to do so. Indeed, in international law, nothing unilaterally condemns the use of force as a means to put an end to atrocities. The article 51 of the United Nations’ Charter is clear: *“nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.”*²¹¹ The right to war (*jus ad bellum*) is composed of several principles, which are similar to those of the Church. The decision shall be taken by a proper authority and accompanied by a public statement; is supposed to be taken for a just cause; with a probability of success;

²⁰⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1997’.

²⁰⁸ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2017’.

²⁰⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 404.

²¹⁰ Emmanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, 1795.

²¹¹ United Nations, ‘Charter of the United Nations’ (1945).

with due regard to proportionality in relation to the act suffered; and if no other way to solve the problem is supposed to exist (last resort).

Two elements finally appear to be more controversial: proportionality and just cause. In its *Compendium of the Social Doctrine*, the Church has tried to highlight some on the existence of “just wars”. This document was published in 2004 by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace at the request of John Paul II. It is divided into three parts, with twelve chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. Its aim is to deal with questions on divine providence, the Church as the mission of Jesus and its social doctrine, the human person and human rights, the family in society, human work and the economy, the political and international communities, the environment, promoting peace, pastoral actions and the activities of the laity. At paragraph 500, the writers stated that “*a war of aggression is intrinsically immoral. In the tragic case where such a war breaks out, leaders of the State that has been attacked have the right and the duty to organize a defence even using the force of arms. To be licit, the use of force must correspond to certain strict conditions*”²¹², which are those contained in the *Catechism*:

The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave and certain; all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; there must be serious prospects of success; the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition. These are the traditional elements enumerated in what is called the “just war” doctrine. The evaluation of these conditions for moral legitimacy belongs to the prudential judgment of those who have responsibility for the common good.²¹³

But the *Compendium* also reminds what is written in *Gaudium et Spes*: “*it is one thing to wage a war of self-defence; it is quite another to seek to impose domination on another nation. The possession of war potential does not justify the use of force for political or military objectives.*”²¹⁴ With respect to the United Nations’ Charter, the text recalls that it was written “*with the intention of preserving future generations from the scourge of war [and] is based on a generalized prohibition of a recourse to force to resolve disputes between States, with the exception of two cases: legitimate defence and measures taken by the Security Council within the area of its responsibilities for maintaining peace.*”²¹⁵ Therefore, the so-called “just war” theory appears of very-limited scope.

But beyond doctrine, popes have been able to show personal initiative. For instance, Paul VI said: “*it is our clear duty, then, to strain every muscle as we work for the time when all war can be completely outlawed*

²¹² Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church to His Holiness John Paul II Master of Social Doctrine and Evangelical Witness to Justice and Peace*, 2004, 500.

²¹³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2309.

²¹⁴ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 79.

²¹⁵ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 501.

by international consent.”²¹⁶ According to him, war must be declared “outlawed”: the *jus ad bellum* is challenged. However, the most unequivocal pope on this subject is undoubtedly Francis. In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, published on the 4th of October 2020, he crossed the Rubicon by questioning the “just war” theory. According to him, “we can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits. In view of this, it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a ‘just war’.”²¹⁷ War, according to the 266th pope, cannot be “just”: even if carried out for a noble cause, it is illegitimate. Indeed, the Church prides itself on setting the moral standards of its time. Therefore, in order to preserve peace, it does not fail to denounce inhuman ideologies that could threaten it by their very existence.

2.1.2 Inhuman ideologies

After it had managed to buy the good graces of the Italian fascist State and signed the Lateran Treaty in 1929, some leaders of the Western powers believed that the papacy would remain silent in the face of Nazism or Communism. In fact, totalitarianisms did not fail to provoke it: in 1933, Hitler affirmed that “*either one is German or one is Christian: one cannot be both at the same time*”²¹⁸; and in 1935, Stalin said his famous dithyrambic satire “*the pope, how many divisions?*”²¹⁹

However, Pius XI did not fail to condemn the three totalitarianisms then prevailing in Europe. In the troubled period of the 1930s, he published three encyclicals addressed to the peoples of the countries subjected to the *Duce*, the *Führer* and the *Vojd*. In *Non abbiamo bisogno*²²⁰ (“We do not need”), published the 5th of July 1931, he denounced “*an ideology which clearly resolves itself into a true, a real pagan worship of the State*”²²¹. The 14th and the 19th of March 1937, he published *Mit brennender sorge* (“With burning concern”) and *Divini Redemptoris* (“[The promise of a] Divine Redeemer”), respectively against the National-Socialist and Communist regimes: he denounced “*the dangerous seduction exerted by an ‘intrinsically perverse’ Communism and [condemned] the theories of race and blood as well as the desire to cut Christianity off from its Jewish roots*”²²², and drew the wrath of the propaganda organs. The drafting of these last two encyclicals was largely supervised by Eugenio Pacelli, Apostolic Nuncio in Germany, who was to become the Pope Pius XII in 1939. Denouncing and condemning inhuman ideologies has gradually become commonplace in a troubled twentieth century.

²¹⁶ Paul VI, ‘Reconciliation, the Way to Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 1975’.

²¹⁷ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti - Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship*, 2020, 258.

²¹⁸ Emilio Gentile, *Pour ou contre César ? Les religions chrétiennes face aux totalitarismes* (Paris: Aubier, 2013), 273.

²¹⁹ Le Moal, *Les divisions du pape*, 9.

²²⁰ Traditionally, an encyclical letter written in the vernacular language is explicitly directed to one country, while Latin is preferred for an address to the whole world.

²²¹ Pius XI, *Non abbiamo bisogno - Encyclical letter on Catholic Action in Italy*, 1931, 44.

²²² Le Moal, *Les divisions du pape*, 112–13.

But as time went on, these ideologies changed: with the fall of the Soviet Union at Christmas 1991, totalitarianism felt like it was expiring and definitively disappearing. Ten years later, when the World Trade Centre towers went up in flames, terrorism took on a new light, becoming a global and permanent threat. After studying the condemnations of totalitarianism, mainly by John Paul II, we will see how Benedict XVI and Francis have taken up the issues of terrorism, fundamentalism and fanaticism.

2.1.2.1 Totalitarianism

While the notion of totalitarianism does not appear in any of Francis' speeches, Benedict XVI used it twice, only once directly. In 2006, he deplored the perversion of truth to the benefit of totalitarianisms: *"we need but think of the events of the past century, when aberrant ideological and political systems wilfully twisted the truth and brought about the exploitation and murder of an appalling number of men and women, wiping out entire families and communities."*²²³ In 2011, he expressed his fear that society would be exposed *"to the risk of forms of political and ideological totalitarianism which emphasize public power [...]"*²²⁴ But the pope who left the greatest criticism of totalitarian regimes as an impediment to peace was undoubtedly John Paul II, who was himself caught between the Nazi rock and the Communist hard place in his native Poland.

Historiographers have long crystallised the debate about what makes totalitarian regimes special, and – even though she excluded Italian fascism from this definition – Hannah Arendt gave precise characteristics in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*²²⁵. Among the common features of all these powers, she recalled that totalitarianisms are all under the rule of one man. For the Church, the deification of the political leader is one of the gravest moral faults: man believes he is equal to God, as the serpent promised Adam and Eve, and conceives himself capable to know absolutely good and evil (Gen 3). As John Paul II warned in 1985: *"if you have decided that your God will be yourself with no regard for others, you will become instruments of division and enmity, even instruments of warfare and violence."*²²⁶

To many extents, the Polish pope can be considered as "the pope of liberty". Indeed, his main criticism towards totalitarianisms was the fact that they restricted freedoms. In 1981, he declared that *"freedom is wounded when the relationships between peoples are based [...] upon the right of the most powerful, upon the attitude of dominant blocs and upon military or political imperialism."*²²⁷ In 1984, he insisted in attacking the communist regime without, however, explicitly naming it: he said that an *"unconditional attachment to these [political] systems becomes a form of power-worship, the worship of strength and wealth, a form of slavery*

²²³ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2006'.

²²⁴ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2011'.

²²⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1951.

²²⁶ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1985'.

²²⁷ John Paul II, 'To Serve Peace, Respect Freedom - Message for the World Day of Peace 1981'.

that takes away freedom from the leaders themselves.”²²⁸ Indeed, the Church is very attached to the notion of freedom: its *Catechism* defines it as *“the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one’s own responsibility. By free will one shapes one’s own life. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness [...].”*²²⁹ From the Holy See’s point of view, totalitarianisms hinder freedom, and it is therefore necessary to condemn what is not a negative externality, but a characteristic of their nature.

Another inclination of totalitarianism that the Church condemns is its atheistic materialism. John Paul II considered that

a society built on a purely materialistic basis denies people their freedom when it submits individual freedoms to economic domination, when it represses man’s spiritual creativity in the name of a false ideological harmony, when it denies people the exercise of their right of association, when in practice it reduces to nothing the power to participate in public affairs or acts in such a way that in this field individualism and civic and social non-participation become the general attitude.²³⁰

For him, materialism is inhuman because men are supposed to *“look for the things that are above [and to] let [their] thoughts be on things above, not on the things that are on the earth”* (Col 3:1-2) as Paul claimed. The Church considers that spiritual goods are more important than those on earth, which can never be considered an end in themselves. The *Catechism* states that atheism *“covers many very different phenomena. One common form is the practical materialism which restricts its needs and aspirations to space and time. Atheistic humanism falsely considers man to be ‘an end to himself, and the sole maker, with supreme control, of his own history.’”*²³¹ ²³²

Then, totalitarian regimes are inhuman because they deprive people of their ability to choose²³³. This lack of political liberty is deplored by the Church which promotes individual involvement as a factor contributing to peace. The “standardisation” of thought is dangerous, as is the control of expression by the ruler or the community. *“In no case may the civil organization set itself up as the substitute for the conscience of the citizens”*²³⁴ said John Paul II, because *“no human authority has the right to interfere with a person’s conscience.”*²³⁵ Totalitarianisms also carry within them *“a logic of supremacy fuelled by the desire to dominate and exploit others”*²³⁶ that is contrary to the Christian vision of fraternity.

²²⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1984’.

²²⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1731.

²³⁰ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1981’.

²³¹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 20.

²³² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2124.

²³³ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1985’.

²³⁴ John Paul II, ‘Religious Freedom: Condition for Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 1988’.

²³⁵ John Paul II, ‘If You Want Peace, Respect the Conscience of Every Person - Message for the World Day of Peace 1991’.

²³⁶ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2000’.

Finally, totalitarianism is considered as an obstacle to peace by John Paul II to the extent that its action creates suffering and tends to set people against each other: *“the history of our time has shown in a tragic way the danger which results from forgetting the truth about the human person. Before our eyes we have the results of ideologies such as Marxism, Nazism and Fascism, and also of myths like racial superiority, nationalism and ethnic exclusivism.”*²³⁷ He also expressed his personal experience of totalitarianism in Europe: *“the enormous suffering of peoples and individuals, even among my own friends and acquaintances, caused by Nazi and Communist totalitarianism, has never been far from my thoughts and prayers. I have often paused to reflect on the persistent question: how do we restore the moral and social order subjected to such horrific violence?”*²³⁸ Indeed, what totalitarianism challenged in the first place was indeed the moral order hitherto dictated by the Church and the Catholic faith.

At the turn of the new millennium, the totalitarianisms having disappeared, at least in Europe, John Paul II already perceived that part of their ideology and *“culture of death”*²³⁹ had been transferred elsewhere: *“this was amply demonstrated by the tragic events of the twentieth century and is now apparent in the nihilism present in some prominent circles in the Western world.”*²⁴⁰ For the Church, nihilism feeds, among other things, the phenomenon of terrorism, which was becoming more and more present when John Paul II pronounced his speech, nine months before the attack on the Twin Towers, the 11th of September.

2.1.2.2 Terrorism

Three months later, in his speech for World Day of Peace 2002, John Paul II devoted a long passage to evoke *“the reality of terrorism”*²⁴¹. He said:

It is precisely peace born of justice and forgiveness that is under assault today by international terrorism. In recent years, especially since the end of the Cold War, terrorism has developed into a sophisticated network of political, economic and technical collusion which goes beyond national borders to embrace the whole world. [...] When terrorist organizations use their own followers as weapons to be launched against defenceless and unsuspecting people, they show clearly the death-wish that feeds them. Terrorism springs from hatred, and it generates isolation, mistrust and closure. [...] Terrorism is built on contempt for human life. For this reason, not only does it commit intolerable crimes, but because it resorts to terror as a political and military means it is itself a true crime against humanity.²⁴²

²³⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1999’.

²³⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2002’.

²³⁹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2001’.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2002’.

²⁴² Ibid.

Alongside his other speeches, this one remains the most comprehensive and complete on his vision of terrorism. In 1984, he already denounced the fact that *“violence and fanatical terrorism do not spare other countries, and it is the innocent who too often pay the price, while passions increase and fear risks leading to all sorts of extremism.”*²⁴³ To the moral imperative *“you shall not kill”* (Exo 20:13), John Paul II added *“in God’s name”*²⁴⁴ and condemned the use of religion as a means to justify struggles: *“it would be a mistake if religions [...] were to fall into forms of fundamentalism and fanaticism, justifying struggles and conflicts with others by adducing religious motives.”*²⁴⁵ In his penultimate speech in 2004, he finally condemned *“the scourge of terrorism [which] has become more virulent in recent years and has produced brutal massacres which have in turn put even greater obstacles in the way of dialogue and negotiation, increasing tensions and aggravating problems, especially in the Middle East.”*²⁴⁶ John Paul II thus bequeathed a consistent analysis of the dangers of terrorism and their incompatibility with the establishment of a sincere peace. Benedict XVI from 2006, and Francis after him, took up his words, but added a new element.

Indeed, the German pope was very attached to the question of truth and integrated it into the reflection on the nature of terrorism. In 2006, he stated that *“the truth of peace continues to be dramatically compromised and rejected by terrorism, whose criminal threats and attacks leave the world in a state of fear and insecurity [with] senseless and deadly strategies.”*²⁴⁷ He therefore condemned the nihilistic trend arising: according to him, terrorist movements *“are often the fruit of a tragic and disturbing nihilism [...]. Not only nihilism, but also religious fanaticism, today often labelled fundamentalism, can inspire and encourage terrorist thinking and activity.”*²⁴⁸ He finally explained to what extent truth was threatened by these ideologies: *“nihilism and [fundamentalism] share an erroneous relationship to truth: the nihilist denies the very existence of truth, while the fundamentalist claims to be able to impose it by force.”*²⁴⁹ In 2011, he insisted on how terrorism, and especially Islamism, feeds on the negation of man: *“fanaticism, fundamentalism and practices contrary to human dignity can never be justified, even less so in the name of religion. The profession of a religion cannot be exploited or imposed by force.”*²⁵⁰ For his last message in 2013, he said that *“in addition to the varied forms of terrorism and international crime, peace is also endangered by those forms of fundamentalism and fanaticism which distort the true nature of religion, which is called to foster fellowship and reconciliation among people.”*²⁵¹ Religion, from Benedict XVI’s point of view, should improve the relationship between people, not set them against each other: in this way, it can be an element of peace.

²⁴³ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1984’.

²⁴⁴ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2002’.

²⁴⁵ John Paul II, ‘Believers United in Building Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 1992’.

²⁴⁶ John Paul II, ‘An Ever-Timely Commitment: Teaching Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2004’.

²⁴⁷ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2006’.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2011’.

²⁵¹ Benedict XVI, “Blessed Are the Peacemakers” - Message for the World Day of Peace 2013’.

Finally, Francis' approach to terrorism is not very different. Nevertheless, it can be noted that, unlike his predecessors, he never used the words "fanaticism" and "fundamentalism" to condemn or name terrorist acts. On the 14th of April 2014, 276 Nigerian female students – mostly Christian – from the town of Chibok were kidnapped after a raid led by the terrorist group Boko Haram. They were then abused and raped. In his 2015's message, Pope Francis explicitly mentioned *"all those kidnapped and held captive by terrorist groups, subjected to their purposes as combatants, or, above all in the case of young girls and women, to be used as sex slaves."*²⁵² This incision attests to the great closeness of the pope to international events. But he also tried to look at the various events with the hindsight proper to the Holy See: for instance, he also denounced the advent of a new worldwide conflict in parts, for which he blamed the terrorist movements in part: *"sadly, war and terrorism, accompanied by kidnapping, ethnic or religious persecution and the misuse of power [...]. [These events] have become so common as to constitute a real 'third world war fought piecemeal'."*²⁵³ However, the main fault that Francis attributed to terrorism is undoubtedly the destabilisation of the regions it occupies, and consequently the migratory movements it generated. He declared in 2019: *"we state once more that an escalation of intimidation, and the uncontrolled proliferation of arms, is contrary to morality and the search for true peace. Terror exerted over those who are most vulnerable contributes to the exile of entire populations who seek a place of peace."*²⁵⁴

Peace, to sum up, is threatened by terrorism because this latter creates a climate of fear, an atmosphere that does not offer people the serenity and tranquillity they need. Especially from Benedict XVI's point of view, it also endangers the social order, to the extent it implies relations that are not grounded on truth, and even less on human's truth. And for Francis, migration that results from this threat contributes to undermining the peace that people need to live and that the common good requires²⁵⁵.

2.1.3 Discrimination and exclusion

"In truth I tell you, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me" (Matt 25:45) concluded Jesus at the end of his "eschatological pronouncement" (chapters 24 and 25). The last part of this speech is often called "the Judgment of the Nations": Jesus, a few hours before his crucifixion, told the disciples that they – and the world after them – will be judged not only by faith but also by works, and that they should do good, especially to the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the sick and the prisoners (Matt 25:35-36). And the Apostle Paul to specify: *"glory and honour and peace will come to everyone who does good"* (Rom 2:10).

²⁵² Francis, 'No Longer Slaves, but Brothers and Sisters - Message for the World Day of Peace 2015'.

²⁵³ Francis, 'Overcome Indifference and Win Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2016'.

²⁵⁴ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2019'.

²⁵⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1909.

The Catholic Church has always dedicated a large part of its discourse to the poorest. The Pope Gregory the Great (590-604), Father of the Church, said in his *Regula Pastoralis*: “when we administer necessities of any kind to the indigent, we do not bestow our own, but render them what is theirs; we rather pay a debt of justice than accomplish works of mercy”²⁵⁶. This quote is one of the founding elements of the so-called “preferential option for the poor”²⁵⁷ taken by the Church. In reality, it claims to take the side of all those whom society seems to leave by the wayside.

To this end, it does not fail to advocate on behalf of people on the margins of society, and *a fortiori* to the international community. Moreover, it considers that their place is at the forefront in order to increase unity between peoples. On the first hand, we will see how popes have recalled that a bad treatment of migrants and refugees threatens international peace. On the other one, it will be interesting to understand why they insisted on the role of racial communities, women or people with disabilities as peacemakers.

2.1.3.1 Migrants and refugees

In the Gospel of Matthew appears the story of Jesus’ exile into Egypt:

After they had left, suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him.” So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod was dead. [...] After Herod’s death, suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother with you and go back to the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead.” So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, went back to the land of Israel. (Matt 2:13-15, 19-21)

This passage, alongside with the massacre of the innocents (Matt 2:16-18), is considered in the *Catechism* as manifesting “the opposition of darkness to the light”²⁵⁸, the opposition between death and life. Pius XII, considering the importance of this passage in Jesus’ life, dedicated the Apostolic Constitution *Exsul familia Nazarethana* to it in 1952:

The *émigré* Holy Family of Nazareth, fleeing into Egypt, is the archetype of every refugee family. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, living in exile in Egypt to escape the fury of an evil king, are, for all times and all places, the models and protectors of every migrant, alien and refugee of whatever kind who, whether

²⁵⁶ Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis* (Rome, 590), III, 21.

²⁵⁷ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 182.

²⁵⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 530.

compelled by fear of persecution or by want, is forced to leave his native land, his beloved parents and relatives, his close friends, and to seek a foreign soil.²⁵⁹

The *Catechism* also expresses its concern regarding this question in a single article, stating both that “*the more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him*” (§1); and that “*political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions [...]. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens*”²⁶⁰ (§2). It introduces a double restriction making reception compulsory in cases of vital necessity, in addition to being subject to the rules of the country while reminding the migrant of his duty to observe them. The last three popes have been confronted with this question in an increasingly burning manner, and their opinions on this issue are sometimes divergent. They agree, however, that migration needed to be addressed in the context of peace-building between countries. It is not the intention here to elaborate on the position of the Church on immigration, a task that many thinkers, theologians and essayists have already devoted time – as has the author of this final thesis in his humble capacity²⁶¹. Rather, it is necessary to see how disrespect for migrant or refugee undermines peace.

First of all, it is important to recognise a notable inequality in their evocation between the popes: apart from the message he dedicated to dialogue between people of different cultural backgrounds in 2001, John Paul II only used the words “migrant” or “immigrant” four times, compared to thirty for Francis, and zero in the case of Benedict XVI – who used the word “refugee” only once, in 2010, but to evoke the “*environmental refugees*”²⁶². However, since 1914, a “World Day of Migrants and Refugees” has been organised every year by the Church, in which the subject was discussed in greater depth, but not only from the perspective of peace. Nevertheless, this difference in messages for the World Day of Peace speaks for itself and attests to the great difference in sensitivity of the popes on this subject.

John Paul II deplored that “*men and women today suffer insupportable insults to their human dignity through racial discrimination, forced exile and torture.*”²⁶³ Forced exile is first considered as an infringement to human dignity: therefore, rootedness is seen as crucial for human beings, what the philosopher Simone Weil considered to be “*the most important and most ignored need of the human soul.*”²⁶⁴ John Paul II, however, declared in his last message that “*the provision of aid to displaced persons and refugees [is] nothing other*

²⁵⁹ Pius XII, *Exsul Familia Nazarethana - Apostolic Constitution on the Spiritual Guidance of Migrations*, 1952.

²⁶⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2241.

²⁶¹ Grégoire Deren, ‘Malaise(s) dans la civilisation libérale ? Église et immigration’ (Angers, IRCOM, 2019).

²⁶² Benedict XVI, ‘If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation - Message for the World Day of Peace 2010’.

²⁶³ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1985’.

²⁶⁴ Simone Weil, *L'enracinement - Prélude à une déclaration des devoirs envers l'être humain*, Gallimard, Folio Essais (Paris, 1949), 61.

than [one of the] consistent applications of the principle of world citizenship.”²⁶⁵ It is a duty that the international community must endorse, according to him. We must not forget to acknowledge that his personal experience of fleeing the communist regime may have played a role in his approach to the issue, as did Francis, himself a descendant of Italian immigrants. In explaining how the mistreatment of migrant populations could pose a threat to peace, he warned against the sense of revenge that can rise: *“people who have been left with nothing because they have been deprived of their land and home, refugees and those who have endured the humiliation of violence, cannot fail to feel the temptation to hatred and revenge.”*²⁶⁶ Also, he stated that

it is important to remember the principle that immigrants must always be treated with the respect due to the dignity of every human person. In the matter of controlling the influx of immigrants, the consideration which should rightly be given to the common good should not ignore this principle. The challenge is to combine the welcome due to every human being, especially when in need, with a reckoning of what is necessary for both the local inhabitants and the new arrivals to live a dignified and peaceful life.²⁶⁷

Finally, it should not be forgotten that the Holy See, when it speaks of immigration, is thinking in particular of the Christian communities of the East, in Syria and Iraq in particular, that Pope Francis visited in March 2021. Indeed, the popes encouraged the natives to remain on their land and thus to perpetuate the Christian presence in the region, while at the same time wanting to protect them from the endogenous threat posed by Islamism. Francis, who is certainly the most voluble on immigration, evoked it in his first message: *“I assure you of my personal closeness and that of the whole Church, whose mission is to bring Christ’s love to the defenceless victims of forgotten wars through her prayers for peace, her service to the wounded, the starving, refugees, the displaced and all those who live in fear.”*²⁶⁸ The following year, he claimed his concern regarding

the living conditions of many migrants who, in their dramatic odyssey, experience hunger, are deprived of freedom, robbed of their possessions, or undergo physical and sexual abuse. In a particular way, I think of those among them who, upon arriving at their destination after a gruelling journey marked by fear and insecurity, are detained in at times inhumane conditions. I think of those among them, who for different social, political and economic reasons, are forced to live clandestinely.²⁶⁹

After the years 2015 and 2016 which were particularly marked by migratory phenomena in Europe, he devoted his 2018 Message to “Migrants and Refugees: Men and Women in Search of Peace”. He advocated in the favour of a better integration of them within national communities, recalling that *“‘integrating’ [...] means allowing refugees and migrants to participate fully in the life of the society that welcomes them, as part of a*

²⁶⁵ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2005’.

²⁶⁶ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1997’.

²⁶⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2001’.

²⁶⁸ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2014’.

²⁶⁹ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2015’.

process of mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation in service of the integral human development of the local community.”²⁷⁰ To reinforce peace, political life, namely the “life of the πόλις (polis: city)”, should be, according to the pontiff, the work of all, regardless of their origin and their nationality. Aimed at Donald Trump who planned to build a wall between the United States of America and Mexico without naming him, he also stated that *“a person who thinks only of building walls, wherever it may be, and not of building bridges, is not Christian.”*²⁷¹ Finally, in 2019, the year of the European elections, where immigration was one of the main issues in the campaign, he denounced the *“political addresses that tend to blame every evil on migrants and to deprive the poor of hope are unacceptable. Rather, there is a need to reaffirm that peace is based on respect for each person [...], on respect for the law and the common good [...].”*²⁷² In general, the Church denounces policies that tend to stigmatise or exclude people and considers that peace can only be won through the just inclusion of people who are vulnerable because of their exile or migration, or because of their skin colour, disability or sex.

2.1.3.2 Minorities

Among the numerous “minorities” that make up societies, the Church is particularly concerned about three: ethnic and racial communities, people with disabilities and women. In this way, it intends to respond to Paul’s call to charity: *“there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Gal 3:28). This statement does not claim that differences does not exist anymore, but that, because *“[God] wants everyone to be saved”* (1 Tim 2:4), all human beings deserve to be treated equally, precisely because the Church defends *“the inalienable dignity of every human person, irrespective of racial, ethnic, cultural or national origin [...].”*²⁷³ Indeed, minorities are a high priority of the Holy See, so much so that John Paul II dedicated a specific message to them in 1989. To speak about ethnic and racial communities, the Polish pope acknowledged the existence of different levels of integration, reaffirming the maxim “when in Rome, do as the Romans do”, adding the idea that minorities are not necessarily barbarians threatening the empire, but that they can contribute to the construction of social peace:

On the one hand there are groups, even very small ones, which are able to preserve and affirm their own identity and are well integrated within the societies to which they belong. In some cases, such minority groups even succeed in imposing their control on the majority in public life. On the other hand one sees minorities which exert no influence and do not fully enjoy their rights, but rather find themselves in situations of suffering and distress. This can lead them either to passive resignation or to unrest and even

²⁷⁰ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2018’.

²⁷¹ Francis, ‘Interview during the Flight from Mexico to Rome - 17 February 2016’.

²⁷² Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2019’.

²⁷³ John Paul II, ‘To Build Peace, Respect Minorities - Message for the World Day of Peace 1989’.

rebellion. Yet, neither passivity nor violence represents the proper path for creating conditions of true peace.²⁷⁴

About the exclusion of minorities, he considered that the fault is often with the majority: *“while it is true that at times a group may deliberately choose to remain apart in order to protect its own way of life, it is more often true that minorities are confronted by barriers that keep them apart from the rest of society.”*²⁷⁵ He then condemned the fostering of *“a feeling of rejection towards [the minority] group [...]. When this happens, the [minority is] no longer in a position actively and creatively to contribute to building a peace based on the acceptance of legitimate differences.”*²⁷⁶ Between the lines, and at the dawn of 1989, one can only read John Paul II’s asserted support for Polish militants opposed to the Soviet regime: Solidarność constituted, in the eyes of the Pope, what Benedict XVI would later describe as a “creative minority”, to the extent that *“it is creative minorities who determine the future”*²⁷⁷, his successor said. Therefore, to defend minorities, *“the State itself has an obligation to promote and foster [their] rights [...], since peace and internal security can only be guaranteed through respect for the rights of all those for whom the State has responsibility.”*²⁷⁸ This respect is a condition for peace, as is *“the right of minorities to preserve and develop their own culture.”*²⁷⁹ Indeed, the importance of different cultures and preservation of patrimonies are of primary importance in the eyes of the Church. It explains why John Paul II stated that *“there is no doubt that the development of a culture based on respect for others is essential to the building of a peaceful society.”*²⁸⁰ But forms of discrimination are not the only obstacle to peace and he considered that *“building this [peaceful] society requires a wholehearted commitment to eliminate not only evident discrimination but also all barriers that divide groups.”*²⁸¹ In the middle of the *“civil and political rights of minorities”*²⁸², there is finally the duty to condemn the *“various forms of nationalism, racism and xenophobia”*²⁸³: theses discriminations towards minorities with respect of their skin colour or origin is strongly reprimanded by the Church, which provides support to *“all those devoted to the defence of human rights, especially the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples, women and children, and the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters.”*²⁸⁴

Finally, the Church values women and especially their role in promoting peace. In 1995, John Paul II delivered a special address to them. He said that *“the work of building peace can hardly overlook the need to acknowledge and promote the dignity of women as persons, called to play a unique role in educating for peace. I urge everyone [...] to heed the yearning for peace which they express in words and deeds and, at times of*

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Benedict XVI, ‘Angelus during the Apostolic Journey to Lebanon - 16 September 2012’.

²⁷⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1989’.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1991’.

²⁸³ Francis, ‘A Culture of Care as a Path to Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2021’.

²⁸⁴ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2016’.

greatest tragedy, by the silent eloquence of their grief.”²⁸⁵ This vision, far from being “feminist” in the modern sense of the word, is no less powerful for its time. He also acknowledged that *“the growing presence of women in social, economic and political life at the local, national and international levels is thus a very positive development. Women have a full right to become actively involved in all areas of public life [...].”*²⁸⁶ His successor Benedict XVI also expressed his personal commitment to the defence of women in the public sphere:

Inadequate consideration for the condition of women helps to create instability in the fabric of society. I think of the exploitation of women who are treated as objects, and of the many ways that a lack of respect is shown for their dignity; I also think – in a different context – of the mindset persisting in some cultures, where women are still firmly subordinated to the arbitrary decisions of men, with grave consequences for their personal dignity and for the exercise of their fundamental freedoms. There can be no illusion of a secure peace until these forms of discrimination are also overcome [...].²⁸⁷

Finally, Francis denounced pressures exerted upon women, as well as the lack of freedom they are subjected to: *“I think of women forced into marriage, those sold for arranged marriages and those bequeathed to relatives of their deceased husbands, without any right to give or withhold their consent.”*²⁸⁸ He finally highlighted their contribution to building a more peaceful society by stating that *“women in particular are often leaders of nonviolence [...].”*²⁸⁹ To sum up, the lack of involvement of women within the society is considered by the Church as a grave threat to peace, since everybody is supposed to bring his own contribution to peace. In order to foster peace, it must therefore be a matter of world concern to change minds and structures that do not always take minorities into account.

2.2 Structural factors

*“Peace is not the absence of war, but the absence of injustice”*²⁹⁰ sums up the French historian and geopolitician Jean-Baptiste Noé. At the end of the First World War, the Holy See, which had failed to make its voice heard under the sound of bullets for four years, intended to become a decision-making power once again by taking part in the signing of Versailles’ peace agreements. But it was not invited, despite the cordial relations that Benedict XV had established with the American President Woodrow Wilson. But this peace, of which the French academician and historian Jacques Bainville said that it was *“too soft for what it is hard, and too hard for what it is soft”*²⁹¹, did not suit the Vatican either: *“the Holy See condemned everything about*

²⁸⁵ John Paul II, ‘Women: Teachers of Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 1995’.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2007’.

²⁸⁸ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2015’.

²⁸⁹ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2017’.

²⁹⁰ Noé, *Géopolitique du Vatican*, 156.

²⁹¹ Jacques Bainville, *Les conséquences politiques de la paix* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1920).

this Carthaginian peace: its harshness, its desire to humiliate and belittle the defeated. [...] Nothing in the treaties of 1919 resembles a Christian peace”²⁹² according to Frédéric Le Moal; a Christian peace, indeed, is built on justice and fraternity, not humiliation. These agreements, from the Holy See’s point of view, “*carried new disorders*”²⁹³, what Benedict XV did not manage to say, since the Vatican was not among the defeated, but not among the victors either.

In spite of the immanent threats that come and go, the Vatican considers that peace is also undermined if it is built on flawed pillars: the edifice cannot be solid if the foundations are fragile. In the forefront of these pillars, the Church places Jesus Christ, the “*cornerstone*” (1 Pet 2:7), as he himself stated:

Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against that house, and it did not fall: it was founded on rock. But everyone who listens to these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell; and what a fall it had! (Matt 7:24-27)

But the Holy See, as a State and as an international player, does not fail to identify temporal factors beyond this spiritual pillar. Therefore, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis have been keen to denounce the structural obstacles to concord between peoples. They identified two feet of clay in the construction of peace: firstly, the existence of an unjust economy, based on inequalities and disrespectful of the ecology; secondly, the lack of fraternity. We will study each of these in turn, continuing to compare the popes with each other.

2.2.1 An unfair economy

In the economic field also, the Holy See is very prolific and its discourse is complex. It should therefore be made clear that the idea here is not to redefine the Church’s economic thinking with precision, but simply to give the main elements that could help to understand why the popes consider the economy to be a key point in peace-building. What the Holy See denounces is not so much the existence of economic exchanges between several entities, which can be good, but rather the injustice that can arise between them, when one tends to submit the other to its ends. The Vatican is therefore concerned about respect for the principle of justice, which John XXIII considered to be one of the four pillars of peace.

Although Jesus said that “*no one can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of*

²⁹² Le Moal, *Les divisions du pape*, 42–43.

²⁹³ Lecomte, *Tous les secrets du Vatican*, 58.

money” (Matt 6:24) and “how hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” (Mark 10:23), the Catholic Church has long obscured the economic issue, at the highest level at least²⁹⁴. It was not until 1891, in the midst of the industrial revolution, that Leo XIII crossed the Rubicon by publishing his famous encyclical *Rerum Novarum*²⁹⁵, in which he condemned “the enormous fortunes of some few individuals, and the utter poverty of the masses [...]”.²⁹⁶ In the path opened by the French economist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, he encouraged Christian trade unionism and developed the idea of social Catholicism. This text constitutes the first stone of the “social doctrine of the Church”. The Second Vatican Council would later set that: “in the economic and social realms [...], the dignity and complete vocation of the human person and the welfare of society as a whole are to be respected and promoted. For man is the source, the centre, and the purpose of all economic and social life.”²⁹⁷ In its *Catechism*, the Church also recalls that “a theory that makes profit the exclusive norm and ultimate end of economic activity is morally unacceptable. The disordered desire for money cannot but produce perverse effects. It is one of the causes of the many conflicts which disturb the social order.”²⁹⁸ Peace is then threatened when economic or financial aspirations prevail on human dignity. Therefore, the Holy See is difficult to situate in political and economic terms: it is often critical of capitalism and liberalism, as well as of communism, and proposes, in a sense, “a third way with a human face that is neither the complete collectivisation of the means of production [...], nor the complete privatisation of the social sphere [...] which turns labour into a commodity, hence the inhumane conditions made to the workers.”²⁹⁹

It is from this global vision that John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis’ thinking stems, although they were respectively confronted with the question of workers’ unionism in Poland, the industrial delta between the two Germanies, and underdevelopment in South America. For the Church, economy could sometimes be considered as unfair and contributing to create a “climate of conflict” rather than a “climate of mutual trust” between people. From the Vatican’s point of view, two major elements can create a situation of tension: firstly, underdevelopment, which can create inequalities; secondly, ecology, which has become an increasingly central issue in the pontifical discourse.

²⁹⁴ As early as the twelfth century, the Franciscans had developed a “vision” of the economy, based on poverty and the renunciation of one’s possessions for the benefit of the community.

²⁹⁵ Gaël Giraud and Jérôme Vignon, *La doctrine économique de l’Eglise catholique*, interview by Maylis Besserie, France Culture, 3 January 2018.

²⁹⁶ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum - Encyclical Letter on Capital and Labour*, 1891, 1.

²⁹⁷ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 63.

²⁹⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2424.

²⁹⁹ Giraud and Vignon, *La doctrine économique de l’Eglise catholique*.

In his encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio* (1967), Paul VI stated that “*development is the new name for peace*”³⁰⁰. He developed this idea by stating that:

Extreme disparity between nations in economic, social and educational levels provokes jealousy and discord, often putting peace in jeopardy. [...] When we fight poverty and oppose the unfair conditions of the present, we are not just promoting human well-being; we are also furthering man’s spiritual and moral development, and hence we are benefiting the whole human race. For peace is not simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among men.³⁰¹

Twenty years later, in 1986, John Paul II took up his idea by stating that “*in its many dimensions, underdevelopment remains an ever-growing threat to world peace.*”³⁰² The idea of development today covers several notions, and it is important not to think about it only through the prism of the Western model, which tends to impose democracy, human rights and economic liberalism³⁰³. If liberalism and globalisation have indeed lifted a large part of the world’s population out of poverty, has it also brought peace? They have at least allowed the emergence of new economic powers, such as China and India. In several countries, social conditions have significantly improved thanks to some improvement in public services and education. This has led to a reduction in social tensions. In addition, the recent adoption of the idea of sustainable development has made it possible to move towards a fairer and more environmentally friendly development. But this development model is not necessarily accepted by all. Indeed, “Western-style development” can create deep inequalities and can disadvantage certain countries that do not have the capacity to compete with the major economic powers. Worse still, this development model is rejected in some developed countries by the underprivileged classes of globalisation (for instance, the Indignados Movement in Spain in 2011 or the “*gilets jaunes*” in France in 2018). All this creates internal tensions that are not conducive to peace.

The Church, in its perpetual search for peace, seeks to promote a new model of development that would be accepted by all because it is more complete and just. It does not consider the notion of development to be solely individual, but rather collective development, which benefits the entire population. It developed the idea of “universal destination of goods” (namely mentioned by popes in their messages for World Days of Peace 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2014), as it is defined in *Gaudium et Spes*: “*God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the*

³⁰⁰ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* - Letter Encyclical on the Development of Peoples, 1967, 76.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1986’.

³⁰³ Private interview with Cardinal Robert Sarah, Cardinal-Priest and Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 17 May 2021.

company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner.”³⁰⁴ In the *Catechism*, this idea is developed as well: “*goods of production [...] oblige their possessors to employ them in ways that will benefit the greatest number. Those who hold goods for use and consumption should use them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, for the sick and the poor.*”³⁰⁵ And it also considers that the “*political authority has the right and duty to regulate the legitimate exercise of the right to ownership for the sake of the common good.*”³⁰⁶ Therefore, in 1984, global inequalities were addressed by John Paul II in the light of division between hemispheres:

Although the tension between East and West, with its ideological background, monopolizes the attention and fuels the apprehension of a great number of countries, especially in the northern hemisphere, it should not overshadow another more fundamental tension between North and South which affects the very life of a great part of humanity. Here it is the question of the growing contrast between the countries that have had an opportunity to accelerate their development and increase their wealth, and the countries locked in a condition of underdevelopment.³⁰⁷

Finally, the social doctrine enshrined in the *Compendium* reaffirms the importance of private property, while recalling that it can never be considered as an end: “*the principle of the universal destination of goods is an affirmation both of God’s full and perennial lordship over every reality and of the requirement that the goods of creation remain ever destined to the development of the whole person and of all humanity.*”³⁰⁸ As Francis finally pointed out in his 2020 message, “*there can be no true peace unless we show ourselves capable of developing a more just economic system.*”³⁰⁹

Indeed, the Catholic Church’s discourse has evolved as the threats have emerged: on the economic level, the Holy See and the popes have focused their criticism on the exploitation generated by a certain degenerative capitalism on the one hand, and on financialisation and the debt burden on the other.

2.2.1.1.1 Degenerative capitalism and exploitation

For the Church, “*in keeping with the social nature of man, the good of each individual is necessarily related to the common good [...].*”³¹⁰ It defines the “common good” as “*the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily*”³¹¹ and makes it subject to three conditions: the respect of the person and to its fundamental and inalienable

³⁰⁴ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.

³⁰⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2405.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2406.

³⁰⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1984’.

³⁰⁸ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 177.

³⁰⁹ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2020’.

³¹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1905.

³¹¹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 26.

rights³¹²; the search for the social well-being and development of the group itself³¹³; and peace, which is the stability and security of a just order³¹⁴. Finally, *“the common good is always oriented towards the progress of persons [and based on an order] founded on truth, built up in justice, and animated by love.”*³¹⁵ Common good, in a sense, is supposed to be the good of the person within the society or, to state it in another way, the society’s good for everybody. Therefore, the common good requires respect for people and does not accept their exploitation. As Francis said in 2020, *“divisions within a society, the increase of social inequalities and the refusal to employ the means of ensuring integral human development endanger the pursuit of the common good.”*³¹⁶ The economy must be at the service of the person, and not the reverse. Exploitation is therefore severely condemned by the Church insofar as it contributes to undermine the human nature. Nonetheless, as John Paul II pointed out, *“economic relationships often create a field of pitiless confrontation, merciless competition and even sometimes shameless exploitation.”*³¹⁷ The Church has therefore promoted an economy at the service of peace, condemning exploitation and “capitalism with an inhuman face”.

In 1993, the Polish pope, who personally experienced forced labour during autumn 1940 in Zabrze’s stone quarries, and who also met the worker priests with the French Henri de Lubac and the Belgian Joseph Cardijn, founder of the Young Christian Workers, declared that *“the exploitation of the weak and the existence of distressing pockets of poverty and social inequality constitute so many delays and obstacles to the establishment of stable conditions for an authentic peace.”*³¹⁸ Francis took up his idea in 2015 to say that justice requires the end of exploitation of man by man, which *“gravely damages the life of communion and our calling to forge interpersonal relations marked by respect, justice and love.”*³¹⁹ Peace is endangered by any relationship of subjection between people: in Church’s eyes, men’s equal dignity necessarily implies that their work should not be a denial of their duty of cooperation and brotherhood. In order to achieve peace, the economy must therefore be based on a vision of society in which human beings are not individuals, entities in an archipelago, but rather persons forming a single entity within society. In the same speech, the Argentinian pope also said that among the causes which help to explain contemporary forms of slavery, his first thoughts were for *“poverty, underdevelopment and exclusion, especially when combined with a lack of access to education or scarce, even non-existent, employment opportunities.”*³²⁰ For him, slavery strikes principally *“people who look for a way out of a situation of extreme poverty”*³²¹: as a negation of human and social dignity, slavery is a grave threat to peace, but also a breeding ground for tension.

³¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1907.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 1908.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1909.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1912.

³¹⁶ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2020’.

³¹⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1982’.

³¹⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1993’.

³¹⁹ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2015’.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ *Ibid.*

Against “individual development”, the Church developed the idea of an “integral human development”. In his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), Benedict XVI stated that “*in order to defeat underdevelopment, action is required not only on improving exchange-based transactions and implanting public welfare structures, but above all on gradually increasing openness, in a world context, to forms of economic activity marked by quotas of gratuitousness and communion.*”³²² The “economy of communion” is a concept developed by the Focolare Movement in 1991: it favours interpersonal relationships and aims to implement “gift” in economic relations. The relationships between economic actors takes precedence over mercantile interests and the search for profit is no longer central. It is both a philosophy that can be followed by the leaders of a company and a project for society. Benedict XVI considered that its application can help to build a more peaceful and just society. Inequalities should also be tackled in order to give everyone the means to live, as he stated in his message for 2007: “*at the origin of many tensions that threaten peace are surely the many unjust inequalities still tragically present in our world. Particularly insidious among these are, on the one hand, inequality in access to essential goods like food, water, shelter, health; on the other hand, there are persistent inequalities between men and women in the exercise of basic human rights.*”³²³ John Paul II had already explained that the gap in means necessarily generates an inequality of results: “*with reference to science and technology, new and powerful divisions are appearing between the technological haves and have-nots. Such inequalities do not promote peace and harmonious development, but rather compound already existing situations of inequality.*”³²⁴ Therefore, he proposed solidarity as a way to avoid this gap between countries: for him, the development’s goal should be “*a more open sharing of applicable technological advances with less technologically advanced countries [...].*”³²⁵

Francis, who came from a country “in the South”, and therefore considered as less developed, expressed his concern with the excesses of capitalism and liberalism: to the Estonian faithful, in a country previously under communist rule, he claimed: “*you did not gain your freedom in order to end up as slaves of consumerism, individualism or the thirst for power or domination.*”³²⁶ Development is not an end if it is only material: peace is not to be won on a material basis, but spiritual one, for popes. He stated that “*the many situations of inequality, poverty and injustice, are signs not only of a profound lack of fraternity, but also of the absence of a culture of solidarity.*”³²⁷ Finally, humanity needs to be healed from these “*new ideologies, characterized by rampant individualism, egocentrism and materialistic consumerism [that] weaken social bonds [...].*”³²⁸

³²² Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate - Encyclical Letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth*, 2009, 39.

³²³ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2007’.

³²⁴ John Paul II, ‘Development and Solidarity: Two Keys to Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 1987’.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Francis, ‘Homily in Tallinn during the Apostolic Journey to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia - 25 September 2018’.

³²⁷ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2014’.

³²⁸ Ibid.

To sum up, we can see that capitalism is not condemned as such, but due to the excesses that characterize it. The exploitation it produces is seen by the popes as a severe infringement of natural and moral laws, which call for putting person at the centre of the economy. Popes also urged governments and companies to respect the “principle of subsidiarity”: it is a principle which states that the smallest, lowest or least centralized competent authority is the one which must deal with a matter. Then, the central authority exists only to intervene when smallest entities are not powerful enough to decide and act. Therefore, “*a government should intervene in the affairs of citizens when help is necessary for the individual and common good*”³²⁹ stated Andrew Murray, philosophy professor at the Catholic Institute of Sydney, who also insisted that “*all functions that can be done by individuals or by lower-level organisations [should] be left to them.*”³³⁰ The Church is therefore willing to give primacy to people, not to efficiency nor to profit, which explains its warnings against financialisation and debt.

2.2.1.1.2 The financial economy and the burden of debt

Indeed, the Church condemns the accumulation of debts which are considered as a burden, especially for next generations. This practice is criticised by the popes who see it as an injustice since it consists in putting a yoke on someone else’s shoulders. In 1993, John Paul II stated that foreign debt is an “*intolerable burden*”³³¹ and urged financial institutions to review “*the conditions for total or partial repayment [...], with an effort to find definitive solutions capable of fully absorbing the burdensome social consequences of adjustment programmes*”³³² and “*to act on the causes of indebtedness, by making the granting of aid conditional upon concrete commitments on the part of governments to reduce excessive or unnecessary expenditures [...]*.”³³³ For him, debt creates tension and threatens peace indirectly. Moreover, he considered the disappearance of debts as the necessary ground for the growth of a fairer economy. In Matthew’s Gospel (18:22-35), Jesus portrayed a man in debt for sixty million silver coins who is forgiven his debt by the king (who is here an allegory of God). But the same man then goes after one of his debtors who owes him a hundred coins; when the king hears of this, he reprimands and condemns him. In this parable, Jesus testified to his audience of the need to forgive their debts, *i.e.* their faults, to his peers in order to establish a peaceful relationship with them. This idea is enshrined in the prayer of the “Our Father” given by Jesus: “*forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*” (Matt 6:12).

³²⁹ Andrew Murray, ‘The Principle of Subsidiarity and the Church’, *The Australasian Catholic Record* 72, no. 2 (April 1995): 164.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1993’.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

In the case of external debt, popes considered that it is related to *“the persistence of poverty, sometimes even extreme, and the emergence of new inequalities which are accompanying the globalization process.”*³³⁴ John Paul II also considered that debt is a pressure which enable a good and stable development of many countries³³⁵. In 2000, he affirmed that *“it is necessary to find definitive solutions to the long-standing problem of the international debt of poor countries, while at the same time making available the financial resources necessary for the fight against hunger, malnutrition, disease, illiteracy and the destruction of the environment.”*³³⁶ Debt, indeed, has a cost that is significant for poorest countries which are then in an impasse: not borrowing and increasing their “backwardness” on the one hand; borrowing and increasing their dependence on the other. In 1999, he made an appeal to people with responsibilities in finance to find a solution and urged both the banking institutions and the more affluent nations *“to provide the support necessary to ensure the full success of this initiative.”*³³⁷

This pressure on developing nations is finally another uncertainty factor to the extent that it puts them under the influence of financial fluctuations. The Polish pope denounced *“the unpredictable and fluctuating financial situation with its direct impact on countries with large debts struggling to achieve some positive development.”*³³⁸ His successor Benedict XVI also spoke of finance, without ever using the word “debt” in his speeches though. In 2013, he lamented seeing *“hotbeds of tension and conflict caused [...] by the prevalence of a selfish and individualistic mindset which also finds expression in an unregulated financial capitalism”*³³⁹ and advocated for *“the creation of ethical structures for currency, financial and commercial markets [that] must be stabilized and better coordinated and controlled”*³⁴⁰ so as not to impact negatively on the poor, before recalling that *“the concern of peacemakers must also focus upon the food crisis, which is graver than the financial crisis.”*³⁴¹ Indeed, in 2009, he already recalled that *“the most important function of finance is to sustain the possibility of long- term investment and hence of development.”*³⁴² In the aftermath of the 2008’s crisis, he said:

The recent crisis demonstrate[d] how financial activity can at times be completely turned in on itself, lacking any long-term consideration of the common good. This lowering of the objectives of global finance to the very short term reduces its capacity to function as a bridge between the present and the future, and as a stimulus to the creation of new opportunities for production and for work in the long

³³⁴ John Paul II, ‘From the Justice of Each Comes Peace for All - Message for the World Day of Peace 1998’.

³³⁵ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1987’.

³³⁶ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2000’.

³³⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1999’.

³³⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1986’.

³³⁹ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2013’.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2009’.

term. Finance limited in this way to the short and very short term becomes dangerous for everyone, even for those who benefit when the markets perform well.³⁴³

Finally, Francis urged leaders of nations “*to forgive or manage in a sustainable way the international debt of the poorer nations*”³⁴⁴, since he considered that “*illicit money trafficking and financial speculation, which often prove both predatory and harmful for entire economic and social systems, expos[e] millions of men and women to poverty.*”³⁴⁵

As we can see, popes do not condemn financial activities as such, but regret that they are not oriented towards integral development. On the contrary, they argue that this liberal financialisation creates more poverty. These negative consequences are strongly criticised: this also applies to the damage that a certain economy can do to “*our common home*”³⁴⁶.

2.2.1.2 Ecology

Francis’ encyclical letter *Laudato Si’* (2015) is certainly one of the most resounding papal documents of the last fifty years on a worldwide scale. The French environmentalist Nicolas Hulot even considers that “*this text has certainly contributed to the success of COP21*”³⁴⁷, the world climate conference that took place in Paris in December 2015. A few months earlier, on the 24th of May, the pontiff gave this encyclical, which took its place within the social doctrine of the Church. It was devoted to environmental and social issues, “*integral ecology*”³⁴⁸, and in general to the safeguarding of “*God’s creation*”³⁴⁹. He also criticised consumerism and irresponsible development, while denouncing environmental degradation and global warming. In this text, he drew on a systemic vision of the world and calls for a new reflection on the interactions between human beings, society and the environment. However, it would be a mistake to consider this text as “revolutionary”: in fact, ecological awareness has long been an important part of popes’ speeches in favour of the environment. It should therefore be seen more as a concrete expression of a long-term reflection on the issue, although it also constitutes a starting point for putting ecology into practice, particularly in Christian communities.

Since 1978, all three pontiffs have argued that peace is threatened by a disregard for environmental issues. In his 1990 message entitled “Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation”, John Paul II

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2016’.

³⁴⁵ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2014’.

³⁴⁶ Francis, *Laudato Si’ - Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home*, 2015.

³⁴⁷ Aude Carasco, ‘Écrivains, religieux, musiciens témoignent : “Pour moi, ce que le pape a changé...”’, *La Croix*, 13 March 2017, <https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Catholicisme/Pape/Ecrivains-religieux-musiciens-temoignent-Pour-pape-change-2017-03-13-1200831415>.

³⁴⁸ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 10.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 8.

exhorted the whole population to become aware of it. He acknowledged that *“a new ecological awareness [was] beginning to emerge [and] ought to be encouraged to develop into concrete programmes and initiatives. Many ethical values, fundamental to the development of a peaceful society, are particularly relevant to the ecological question.”*³⁵⁰ Therefore, he highlighted the existence of a *“relationship between human activity and the whole of creation.”*³⁵¹ Also, he witnessed the growing importance of this theme in the public arena, to the point of rejoicing in 1997: *“respect for the environment is growing and becoming a way of life.”*³⁵² In 1999, in recalling human responsibility for the environment, he outlined what Francis would later call “integral ecology”:

The danger of serious damage to land and sea, and to the climate, flora and fauna, calls for a profound change in modern civilization’s typical consumer life-style, particularly in the richer countries. [...] The world’s present and future depend on the safeguarding of creation, because of the endless interdependence between human beings and their environment. Placing human well-being at the centre of concern for the environment is actually the surest way of safeguarding creation; this in fact stimulates the responsibility of the individual with regard to natural resources and their judicious use.³⁵³

For his 2000 message, he finally said that peace can depend on the state of the economy, provided that it considers ecology, poverty and future generations³⁵⁴. Ecological concern is thus seen as an additional condition for the establishment of a more just economy because it respects the people who will inherit the world. In short, he laid the foundations for a more environmentally-conscious papal discourse on peace, at the same time as it was brought to the forefront by many groups such as the Greenpeace association, founded in 1971.

Benedict XVI followed his path in 2005 and gave equal importance to this subject, mentioning it three times in his eight speeches. In 2007 first, he considered that taking care of the environment was a duty entrusted to everybody and that, doing so, one *“can join in bringing about a world of peace.”*³⁵⁵ He also introduced the concept of *“‘human ecology’, which in turn demands a ‘social’ ecology.”*³⁵⁶ Therefore, he said, *“humanity, if it truly desires peace, must be increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology [...] and human ecology. Experience shows that disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence, and vice versa.”*³⁵⁷ Finally, he stated that it has become *“more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men.”*³⁵⁸ Francis, in *Laudato Si’*, summarised this idea over and over again by hammering home the point that *“everything is interconnected”*³⁵⁹. In 2008, Benedict XVI

³⁵⁰ John Paul II, ‘Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All the Creation - Message for the World Day of Peace 1990’.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1997’.

³⁵³ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1999’.

³⁵⁴ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2000’.

³⁵⁵ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2007’.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 70.

insisted: environment *“has been entrusted to men and women to be protected and cultivated with responsible freedom, with the good of all as a constant guiding criterion.”*³⁶⁰ In addition, in 2010 he mentioned the negative consequences of global warming on peace and international equilibrium, referring to climate migration, thus asking:

Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of “environmental refugees”, people who are forced by the degradation of their natural habitat to forsake it [...] in order to face the dangers and uncertainties of forced displacement? Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources?³⁶¹

Indeed, climate change creates “environmental migrations” of people who cannot live in their infertile lands anymore. Respect for environment then appears as a key-element to allow people to live well wherever they are, and thus contribute to the building of a deep-rooted peace.

Moreover, as John Paul II pointed out in 1990, the ecological crisis can be attributed to a moral or philosophical cause:

When the ecological crisis is set within the broader context of the search for peace within society, we can understand better the importance of giving attention to what the earth and its atmosphere are telling us: namely, that there is an order in the universe which must be respected, and that the human person, endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order for the well-being of future generations. I wish to repeat that the ecological crisis is a moral issue.³⁶²

Benedict XVI also called for the development of intergenerational solidarity in the field of ecology: *“respecting the environment [...] means not selfishly considering nature to be at the complete disposal of our own interests, for future generations also have the right to reap its benefits [...]”*³⁶³ In this respect, consumerism can be seen as a threat to peace insofar as certain populations arrogate to themselves the right to consume a good without concern for its availability for subsequent generations. He finally advocated for a change of economic and production model: *“there is a need, in effect, to move beyond a purely consumerist mentality in order to promote forms of agricultural and industrial production capable of respecting creation and satisfying the primary needs of all.”*³⁶⁴

³⁶⁰ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2008’.

³⁶¹ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2010’.

³⁶² John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1990’.

³⁶³ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2008’.

³⁶⁴ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2010’.

Francis, whose name is a direct reference to Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology³⁶⁵, can in many ways be seen as the one who brought the environmentalist discourse of the Church to its conclusion. At least he gave it greater importance by consecrating an encyclical, the highest form of magisterial authority. In six of his annual speeches for the World Day of Peace, he recalled how respect for the environment was an essential element of integral development and therefore of peace. He did not deny to people the right to “dominate” the creation but he recalled it is a “gift”³⁶⁶ and that people are “called to exercise a responsible stewardship over [nature].”³⁶⁷ In the context of tensions around Amazonia’s deforestation, he condemned the “indifference to the natural environment, by countenancing deforestation, pollution and natural catastrophes which uproot entire communities from their ecosystem and create profound insecurity, ends up creating new forms of poverty and new situations of injustice, often with dire consequences for security and peace.”³⁶⁸ In the case of Brazil for instance, the destruction of woodlands has led to a mass exodus of indigenous peoples threatened by the loss of their natural resources, thus pitting the indigenous community against the urban population and endangering national peace. He then stated that “because we dwell in a common home, we cannot help but ask ourselves about the state of its health [...]. Water and air pollution, the indiscriminate exploitation of forests and the destruction of the natural environment are often the result of man’s indifference to man, since everything is interrelated.”³⁶⁹ Once again, Francis advocated that peace is threatened by climate change insofar as it shows how little consideration human beings are supposed to have for each other. Moreover, according to him, the lack of respect that is “due” to God’s creation tends to become a lack of respect for other people.

By 2020, he had finally moved up a notch by claiming an “ecological conversion [that] must be understood in an integral way, as a transformation of how we relate to our sisters and brothers, to other living beings, to creation in all its rich variety and to the Creator who is the origin and source of all life.”³⁷⁰ This call for an “ecological conversion” was based on the observation of “the consequences of our hostility towards others, our lack of respect for our common home or our abusive exploitation of natural resources [...]”³⁷¹ This conversion is based on four rules of discernment mentioned in *Laudato Si’* but already present and particularly developed in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013). First, “time is greater than space”³⁷², what invites people to rediscover the value of the long-term, overcoming the desire to control space, while encouraging initiatives and processes from which we can expect something new. It should help to see the future as a promise rather than a threat. Secondly, “unity prevails over conflict”³⁷³ and needs to be based

³⁶⁵ On 29 November 1979, Pope John Paul II proclaimed him the patron saint of those concerned with ecology in the Apostolic Letter *Inter sanctos praeclarosque viros*.

³⁶⁶ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2014’.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2016’.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2020’.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium - Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World*, 2013, 222–25.

³⁷³ Ibid., 226–30.

on the communion of differences, not their suppression. It invites to the sharing of goods rather than their appropriation. Similarly, the circular economy can lead to collaboration between companies, instead of ignorance and rivalry. Thirdly, *“realities are more important than ideas”*³⁷⁴: here, he expressed the fact that he is wary of ideas that end up being separated from reality and reiterated the need for a constant dialogue between the two. Fourthly, *“the whole is greater than the part”*³⁷⁵: in ecological terms, this idea implies to acknowledge that the common home is not only the home of each individual, but rather a place of relationship that calls people to live in communion. Therefore, doing consumption and savings choices, people are supposed to consider their impact on others and on the environment. This approach is, according to Francis, indispensable for regaining harmony with the environment and thus world peace.

In his 2019 and 2021 messages, he first reaffirmed that a good politics requires a peace based *“on respect for the environment entrusted to our care and for the richness of the moral tradition inherited from past generations”*³⁷⁶; and then that, facing a worldwide pandemic, *“our need to listen to the cry of the poor and, at the same time, to the cry of creation. Constant and attentive listening leads in turn to effective care for the earth, our common home, and for our brothers and sisters in need.”*³⁷⁷ Here again, we can notice his conviction that our society needs a model which, in order to be respectful of the poorest, must be concerned with creation and nature. However, solidarity with those most in need is one of the conditions for peace in Catholic doctrine. This complete reflection lays the groundwork for the Argentinian pontiff’s statement that everything is interrelated.

In conclusion, we can see that the main concern of the popes has been to defend an equitable distribution of natural goods. Also, they tried to highlight how climate change was endangering some people and making it impossible for them to access basic necessities. Indeed, as Francis warned in 2016, inequalities created by an unfair economy are the roots of long-term threats: *“when people witness the denial of their elementary rights, such as the right to food, water, health care or employment, they are tempted to obtain them by force.”*³⁷⁸

2.2.2 Lack of fraternity

At the end of his public life, Jesus delivered his final message, a message of fraternity: *“I give you a new commandment: love one another”* (John 13:34a). The Church has developed a vast reflection around this question of universal brotherhood. Successive popes have taken it upon themselves to teach the importance of

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 231–33.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 234–37.

³⁷⁶ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2019’.

³⁷⁷ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2021’.

³⁷⁸ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2016’.

brotherly love in Christ, seeking to extend this message to the whole human family. As Benedict XVI did in *Caritas in Veritate*, Francis, in his last encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*, recalled the importance of universal fraternity as a key-element for peace, after having already mentioned “*the human family’s innate vocation to brotherhood.*”³⁷⁹ Acknowledging that “*in today’s world, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia*”³⁸⁰, he attempted to bring to light the Church’s teaching on the importance of fraternity.

Indeed, the lack of fraternity is seen as a threat to peace. According to the doctrine, peace is even a means to achieve a deeper fraternity. And it is also a cumulative process since peace is not only a condition of human fraternity, but also its cause. For popes, peace is not only threatened by the absence of fraternal gestures but may even be permanently lost. Therefore, to cultivate fraternity is a human duty that allows the emergence of a peace based on unambiguous social relations. In a Christian sense, fraternity must finally be based on Jesus himself, of whom every human being is made a brother or sister: this is why the Church often claims to be the only institution in which a full and true fraternity is possible, and thus why it pretends to hold the truth of peace, as Francis said: “*a fraternity devoid of reference to a common Father as its ultimate foundation is unable to endure.*”³⁸¹

To consider lack of fraternity as a threat to peace, it is necessary to understand how it constitutes a violation of human nature and the individual’s propensity for altruism. On the one hand, popes have denounced the individualism that characterises society. On the other hand, they condemned the various forms of social injustice, foremost among them unemployment.

2.2.2.1 Individualism

Individualism, namely the doctrine that makes the individual the foundation of society and moral values, while at the same time urging the individual to assert himself independently of others and not to become part of a group, is denounced by the Church. For it, which prefers to speak of “person” rather than “individual”³⁸², “*the very concept of the person, which originated and developed in Christianity, fosters the pursuit of a fully human development. Person always signifies relationship, not individualism; it affirms inclusion, not exclusion, unique and inviolable dignity, not exploitation.*”³⁸³ Individualism cannot be reconciled with a Christian vision of the world and of the human being. Therefore, popes have condemned

³⁷⁹ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2020’.

³⁸⁰ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 30.

³⁸¹ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2014’.

³⁸² Emmanuel Mounier, *Le Personnalisme*, Que sais-je ? 395 (Presses Universitaires de France, 1950).

³⁸³ Francis, ‘Address to Participants in the Conference Organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development to Mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* - 4 April 2017’.

initiatives, behaviours and policies that consecrate the individual as the summit of society, preferring human fraternity among persons.

The vision that the popes defended is the one that considers that an integral human development requires a culture of solidarity that lacks and furthermore tends to vanish in the modern world. For them, peace requires cooperation, as Benedict XVI said, applying it to the question of resources: *“the destruction of the environment, its improper or selfish use, and the violent hoarding of the earth’s resources cause grievances, conflicts and wars, precisely because they are the consequences of an inhumane concept of development.”*³⁸⁴ A true and humanist development should indeed be based on mutual trust and collaboration. This also implies a strong fight against poverty and against all its causes: from Benedict XVI’s point of view, *“what the fight against poverty really needs are men and women who live in a profoundly fraternal way and are able to accompany individuals, families and communities on journeys of authentic human development.”*³⁸⁵ This “fraternal spirit” cannot emerge of its own accord: on the contrary, its existence is conditional on the promotion of social justice and solidarity, as well as on the reduction of materialism, selfishness and indifference.

First, the establishment of a solid peace requires more justice for popes, who saw in the modern world a progressive abandonment of justice and, worse, of the desire for justice between people. For them, however, greater brotherhood can only be expressed within a framework that ensures social justice. According to Benedict XVI, one must inspire of family as an example of solidarity among people since, he said, *“a family lives in peace if all its members submit to a common standard: this is what prevents selfish individualism and brings individuals together, fostering their harmonious coexistence and giving direction to their work. This principle [...] also holds true for wider communities: from local and national communities to the international community itself.”*³⁸⁶ In the name of international fraternity then, *“efforts must also be made to ensure a prudent use of resources and an equitable distribution of wealth.”*³⁸⁷ A good sharing of resources is indeed an essential element in fostering peace. According to the Church, development, which is made possible by access to certain resources, must always be promoted in accordance with charity:

Justice [...] is not simply a human convention, since what is just is ultimately determined not by positive law, but by the profound identity of the human being. It is the integral vision of man that saves us from falling into a contractual conception of justice and enables us to locate justice within the horizon of solidarity and love. We cannot ignore the fact that some currents of modern culture, built upon rationalist and individualist economic principles, have cut off the concept of justice from its transcendent roots, detaching it from charity and solidarity [...].³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2007’.

³⁸⁵ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2009’.

³⁸⁶ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2008’.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Benedict XVI, ‘Educating Young People in Justice and Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 2012’.

For John Paul II, a good understanding of justice does not exclude an acknowledgement of faults and shortcomings. Therefore, to be perfect, it calls for a mutual understanding based on by forgiveness: *“true peace therefore is the fruit of justice [...] But because human justice is always fragile and imperfect, subject as it is to the limitations and egoism of individuals and groups, it must include and, as it were, be completed by the forgiveness which heals and rebuilds troubled human relations from their foundations.”*³⁸⁹ Justice is a work which can be long; to endure, peace must also be the result of a free and selfless process.

Solidarity is indeed the right response to individualism in Church’s eyes. As John Paul II pointed out in 2002, *“faced with growing inequalities in the world, the prime value which must be ever more widely inculcated is certainly that of solidarity. A society depends on the basic relations that people cultivate with one another in ever widening circles [...]”*³⁹⁰ Solidarity is indeed a way to strengthen the ties that bind people together, and thus to make society more resilient. In his 2014 message entitled “Fraternity, the foundation and pathway to peace”, Francis heralded solidarity in a world plagued by the spirit of independence. Indeed, he ensured that *“if [...] we consider peace as opus solidaritatis*³⁹¹*, we cannot fail to acknowledge that fraternity is its principal foundation.”*³⁹² To consider peace as the fruit of solidarity implies to do everything possible to make this solidarity real, sometimes against the prevailing spirit. Nevertheless, the Argentinian pope managed to see *“in the dynamics of history [...] the seeds of a vocation to form a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another. But this vocation is still frequently denied and ignored in a world marked by a ‘globalization of indifference’ which makes us slowly inured to the suffering of others and closed in on ourselves.”*³⁹³ Indifference is, according to him, the worst evil of our time with regard to solidarity: on the contrary, he stated that *“an authentic spirit of fraternity overcomes the individual selfishness which conflicts with people’s ability to live in freedom and in harmony among themselves.”*³⁹⁴ But while recognising the need for solidarity between people, Benedict XVI warned against turning charity into an atheistic humanism: *“relationships between individuals, social groups and states [...] must be marked by respect and ‘charity in truth’.”*³⁹⁵ This “charity in truth” is the purpose of his eponymous encyclical, where he pledged for a cooperation between people, regardless of their cultural backgrounds to win harmony³⁹⁶.

To combat individualistic tendencies, it is also necessary to break away from a materialistic view of society. Materialism, both as a belief that everything originates in matter and as a cult of matter, poses a moral problem for the Church insofar as it tends to refute the importance of the spiritual life, and thus to undermine

³⁸⁹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2002’.

³⁹⁰ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2001’.

³⁹¹ In his encyclical letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II explained: *“The motto of the pontificate of my esteemed predecessor Pius XII was ‘opus iustitiae pax’, peace as the fruit of justice. Today one could say, with the same exactness and the same power of biblical inspiration (cf. Isa 32:17; Jas 3:18): ‘opus solidaritatis pax’, peace as the fruit of solidarity.”* (§39)

³⁹² Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2014’.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2010’.

³⁹⁶ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 26.

the very principle of “moral order” on which this institution is based. The *Catechism* denounces “*the practical materialism which restricts its needs and aspirations to space and time.*”³⁹⁷ John Paul II referred to the danger of materialism in perpetuating an individualistic way of life in 1998, recalling that, in order to strengthen social justice, it was not necessary to provide people with material goods, but rather to involve them in a process of fraternity: “*offering material things is not enough: what is needed is a spirit of sharing, so that we consider it an honour to be able to devote our care and attention to the needs of our brothers and sisters in difficulty.*”³⁹⁸ For him, it is not so much what you can give that is of value, but the way it is given. Only a sincere approach allows peace, which is why we must also fight vehemently against egoism, since “*selfishness, materialism and pride make man ever less free and society ever less open to the demands of brotherhood.*”³⁹⁹

The 1st of January 1992, few days after the fall of the Soviet Union, John Paul II affirmed: “*if there exists a struggle worthy of man, it is the struggle against his own disordered passions, against every kind of selfishness, against attempts to oppress others, against every type of hatred and violence: in short, against everything that is the exact opposite of peace and reconciliation.*”⁴⁰⁰ Such a position is also the one which is defended by the *Catechism* published the same year, which recalls that no civil law can be sufficient to eliminate the selfish inclination inherent to humans: the establishment of a fraternal society can only be achieved through the personal and voluntary exercise of charity⁴⁰¹. But the close succession of dates is purely coincidental (the speech was signed on the 8th of December before) and should be seen not as a condemnation of communism, but of capitalism. In 1999, the Polish pope clarified his idea, condemning “*the predominant model of recent decades called for seeking maximum profit and consumption, on the basis of an individualistic and selfish mindset, aimed at considering individuals solely in terms of their ability to meet the demands of competitiveness.*”⁴⁰² Individualism manifests itself in the search for personal profit and not for others. However, this attitude is dangerous and is a breeding ground for interpersonal tensions: “*when the pursuit of individual interests unjustly prevails over the common good, then the seeds of instability, rebellion and violence are inevitably sown.*”⁴⁰³ In short, egoism is a moral dysfunction that closes the person to a disinterested relationship: in this sense, it is a moral vice that contributes to indifference, since the search for one’s own good does not allow to see the other as a person equally worthy of respect.

Therefore, Francis dedicated his 2016 message to indifference as a threat to peace. For him, “*as creatures endowed with inalienable dignity, we are related to all our brothers and sisters, for whom we are responsible and with whom we act in solidarity. Lacking this relationship, we would be less human. We see,*

³⁹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2124.

³⁹⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1998’.

³⁹⁹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1988’.

⁴⁰⁰ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1992’.

⁴⁰¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1931.

⁴⁰² Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2013’.

⁴⁰³ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1999’.

then, how indifference represents a menace to the human family.”⁴⁰⁴ With the term “human family”, the Argentinian pontiff tried to emphasise the dimension of fraternity: for the Church, fraternity can only be understood as a duty once the principle that all people are children of the same father is accepted (Matt 23:6). As his predecessor said, it is indeed an indispensable part of the Christian vision of peace. Indifference is proof that people no longer perceive themselves as participants in the same destiny, or even the same human nature: *“as society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers. Reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity.*”⁴⁰⁵ Moreover, the common good requires an awareness of this common humanity, as Francis explains in the above-mentioned speech:

On both the individual and communitarian levels, indifference to one’s neighbour [...] finds expression in disinterest and a lack of engagement, which only help to prolong situations of injustice and grave social imbalance. [...] Indifference and lack of commitment constitute a grave dereliction of the duty whereby each of us must work in accordance with our abilities and our role in society for the promotion of the common good, and in particular for peace, which is one of mankind’s most precious goods.⁴⁰⁶

In conclusion, for the Church, individualism is a blemish on peace insofar as it prevents people from having a common goal. The lack of compassion and concern for the weakest, which is a serious breach of the charity that fraternity demands, is also problematic. Indeed, social injustice is the other major form of lack of fraternity that the Church identifies as a structural threat to peace.

2.2.2.2 Social injustice and unemployment

The call to fraternity in the papal discourse is accompanied by a constant desire to promote social justice as the means to achieve peace. John Paul II, Benedict and Francis’ idea has not been to “buy” the social peace with a model that could present disrespectful aspects nor built on foundations contrary to Christian humanism. The Holy See has conversely explained that to be just with each citizen is a way to allow all of them to grow in a climate of mutual confidence. Among the several social injustices, the Church considers unemployment as an attack on man’s spiritual vocation to shape the world that God entrusted to him. Worse still, in its eyes, work is the necessary condition for human fulfilment, both in its personal dimension – man grows through work – and in its social dimension – the community grows through the work of its members. To deprive a person of work is therefore to deprive him of the conditions for his participation in social life: if he feels excluded, he will no longer wish peace, since others are perceived as an obstacle to the exercise of his own dignity. The *Catechism* devotes two short sentences to this: *“unemployment almost always wounds its*

⁴⁰⁴ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2016’.

⁴⁰⁵ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 19.

⁴⁰⁶ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2016’.

victim's dignity and threatens the equilibrium of his life. Besides the harm done to him personally, it entails many risks for his family."⁴⁰⁷ The popes, for their part, have spoken a great deal about the subject.

Addressing the youth, especially the Western one after the "Trente Glorieuses" period (1945-1975), John Paul II joined in their anguish: "*you are threatened by unemployment, and many of you are already without work and without the prospect of meaningful employment.*"⁴⁰⁸ Here, he implied that young people, "*the 'now' of God*"⁴⁰⁹ as Francis said, cannot be fully involved in peace-building if they are not themselves integrated into the political, economic and social decision-making processes. For John Paul II, unemployment was also one of the causes of fragility in future's preparation⁴¹⁰: without financial resources nor the feeling to be part of a common work that allows them to fulfil their own aspirations, young people cannot feel more involved in the work of fraternity.

For the Church, to work should be seen as a right insofar as it enables the person to realise his full potential. As John Paul II expressed in 1992, the strengthening of peace requires a complete respect of human values, among which is "*the right to work and to a fair distribution of its fruits for a well-ordered and harmonious coexistence.*"⁴¹¹ He developed this idea seven years later when he described employment as a "*fundamental right, upon which depends the attainment of a decent level of living [...].*"⁴¹² Finally, to state that it is everyone's role to enable people to work is the core of the Catholic doctrine on employment. For popes, fraternity is achieved precisely when one person enables another to fulfil his human vocation. This must therefore be true at the individual level as well as at the political level⁴¹³: the community and the civil authority in charge of it should participate in the creation of a situation of full employment, in order to then ensure the full use of all human potentialities.

In the process of peace concretised by a fraternity embodied in work, one cannot forget the weight of economic doctrines either. Benedict XVI, who stated the same idea in *Caritas in Veritate*⁴¹⁴, considered that liberalism tends to endanger the social acquis that are a form of fraternity since they contribute to social justice:

Peacemakers must also bear in mind that, in growing sectors of public opinion, the ideologies of radical liberalism and technocracy are spreading the conviction that economic growth should be pursued even to the detriment of the State's social responsibilities and civil society's networks of solidarity, together with social rights and duties. It should be remembered that these rights and duties are fundamental for

⁴⁰⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2436.

⁴⁰⁸ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1985'.

⁴⁰⁹ Francis, *Christus Vivit - Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God*, 2019.

⁴¹⁰ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1993'.

⁴¹¹ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1992'.

⁴¹² John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1999'.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 63.

the full realization of other rights and duties, starting with those which are civil and political. One of the social rights and duties most under threat today is the right to work.⁴¹⁵

The belief that certain economic doctrines indirectly threaten the right to work is shared by Francis, especially in *Laudato Si'*, who considered that overproduction is not a sustainable way to strengthen fraternity⁴¹⁶. Finally, in his 2016 message, he made an appeal “*to national leaders for concrete gestures in favour of our brothers and sisters who suffer from the lack of labour, land and lodging.*”⁴¹⁷ These three elements are essential for man to lead a dignified life. He also said that “*unemployment takes a heavy toll on people’s sense of dignity and hope, and can only be partially compensated for by welfare benefits, however necessary these may be, provided to the unemployed and their families.*”⁴¹⁸ Thus, the South American pontiff did not only promote work as a means of providing for one’s material needs or those of one’s relatives, which is already a form of fraternity, but as a means of fulfilling the human duty to contribute to development, not for its own sake or for the purpose of performance, but as a means of enabling an integral human development⁴¹⁹.

In short, social justice requires the inclusion of every person in a common project: injustice must not be fought solely by providing for the needs of others, but rather by accompanying them in a process of developing their willingness to put their own skills at the service of the community. In this sense, fraternity is a cumulative process: in fact, helping somebody, in whom the Christian sees first of all a brother or a sister, allows this person to contribute to the edifice in which the person initiating the process is himself a participant. From the point of view of international relations, this fraternity can be lived out in development aid: the State’s aim should not be to “do things for” another country, but to give it the keys so that it can find the resources necessary for this development within itself.

⁴¹⁵ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2013’.

⁴¹⁶ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 51.

⁴¹⁷ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2016’.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 11.

3. The pre-conditions of peace

Now we have seen what threatens peace according to the popes, it would be interesting to see what the particularities of the Vatican's discourse are on the way to promote peace. Indeed, the several obstacles we mentioned could be seen as such by many other States: less militarized ones all fear wars, while poorest countries are directly affected by the consequences of an economy based on individualism and competition. But the Vatican's advocacy for peace, which always derives from its particular vision of man, is more unique.

As Frédéric Le Moal explains, “*theorists usually divide international relations into three main schools: realist, liberal and Marxist. Christianity, on the other hand, proposes another, based on the belief that international law must be modelled on divine law and that the source of all conflicts lies in the negation of God.*”⁴²⁰ Therefore, “*the Holy See sets itself above all the task of promoting a harmonious society and a Christian peace, considering itself the only one able to do so.*”⁴²¹ Indeed, as a full-fledged actor in international relations, the pope has the possibility of proposing ways to solve these crises: if it can already be original in identifying the threats to peace, the Vatican's discourse is even more so in listing the conditions. In reality, certain topics and levers are deliberately left out by certain countries – who can imagine Pakistan or China standing up for religious freedom? –, or even considered as good tools for peace while the Holy See condemn them – we are thinking in particular of the question of birth control and especially abortion. This vision led popes to deliver messages that may be considered by other countries as disconnected or idealistic.

In this third and last chapter, the aim will be to show on which elements the popes thought they could base peace. First, there is the respect of human rights, which, in the eyes of the Church, are the legal transcription of “human dignity”. Then, the safeguarding and the respect of the international order is essential for the construction of a peaceful international order. Finally, it is through “integral human development” that peace between human beings can be envisaged: according to the papacy, it is first and foremost through peaceful human relations that people can envisage a better future for the world.

3.1 Human dignity and human rights

For the Church, the respect of human dignity is the first step to peace. Initially resistant to a discourse associated with the Enlightenment and secular humanism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it embraced the thought and concept of human rights following the Second World War⁴²². In *Pacem in terris*, John XXIII took up the rights set out in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adding a whole

⁴²⁰ Le Moal, *Les divisions du pape*, 32.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Elizabeth Castelli, ‘Théologiser les droits de l’homme’, *Vacarme* 34, no. 1 (2006): 196–200.

series of “human duties”. His successor John Paul II, in the context of his many teachings on the place of man in God’s plan, has rehabilitated the use of the term in ecclesial circles. He listed the human rights considered as such by the Church in his encyclical *Centessimus annus* (1991):

Among the most important of these rights, mention must be made of the right to life, an integral part of which is the right of the child to develop in the mother’s womb from the moment of conception; the right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child’s personality; the right to develop one’s intelligence and freedom in seeking and knowing the truth; the right to share in the work which makes wise use of the earth’s material resources, and to derive from that work the means to support oneself and one’s dependents; and the right freely to establish a family, to have and to rear children through the responsible exercise of one’s sexuality. In a certain sense, the source and synthesis of these rights is religious freedom, understood as the right to live in the truth of one’s faith and in conformity with one’s transcendent dignity as a person.⁴²³

Indeed, the Church does not agree with everything that some societies tend to consider as rights – for example, abortion in Western societies; or the right to repudiate one’s wife in some Muslim countries – and it will therefore be necessary to show which rights the Vatican and the popes have been particularly keen to defend. In the *Catechism*, there is a list of rights granted to person, from the right to choose one’s children’s school⁴²⁴ to the right to vote⁴²⁵. Moreover, it is stated that all “*political authorities are obliged to respect the fundamental rights of the human person*”⁴²⁶, which attests to the Church’s commitment to the equality of all people, regardless of their nationality.

In the first part, the concept of human rights in the sense of the Catholic Church will be defined. Secondly, the question of freedom of religion or belief, to which the Church is very attached, will be examined in greater depth. Finally, it will show how the popes have argued for a right to family and life.

3.1.1 Human rights from a Catholic point of view

Historically, the concept of human rights first made the Church jump. The Jesuit professor Alain Thomasset explains that it was first “*fiercely opposed to what Gregory XVI (1832) called a ‘pernicious error’*”⁴²⁷: the papacy saw the ideology of the Enlightenment as a serious threat to the development and maintenance of the faith. Therefore, Pius IX, in the encyclical *Quanta Cura* (1864) and its famous annex, the *Syllabus*, listed the principles that were considered as errors: among them, the separation of Church and State

⁴²³ John Paul II, *Centessimus Annus - Letter Encyclical on the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, 1991, 47.

⁴²⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2229.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2240.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2237.

⁴²⁷ Alain Thomasset s.j., ‘Analyse du thème des droits de l’homme’, *Doctrine sociale de l’Eglise*, 10 March 2014, <https://www.doctrine-sociale-catholique.fr/quelques-themes/113-droits-de-l-homme>.

was first seen as the weakening element of the faith in Europe. The Church's ideological opposition also focused on two important points: firstly, the "liberal" philosophers conceived freedom as "*absolute, autonomous, detached from the relationship with God. The rights of man are opposed to the 'rights of God'*"⁴²⁸; secondly, "*the conception of the individual is that of an individual separated from his social, cultural and religious roots*"⁴²⁹, which in the Church's eyes can deprive him of what can guide him to the good. These various facts therefore led it first to condemn human rights – without, however, believing that there is no possible freedom or rights for human beings – and to prohibit the distribution of certain works that promote them.

With the accession of Leo XIII to the see of Peter in 1878 (and the Papal States' loss eight years earlier), the line shifted. In his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, he declared:

In the name of human dignity, people have the right to be protected by the State against those who wish to reduce them to mere tools of production. The transcendent value of the person must prevent them from being the instrument of those who use people for the sole purpose of making money. The reminder of this fundamental dignity results in the determination of a number of specific rights and duties in the economic sphere: the right to a fair wage, the right to retain the benefits of one's work in the right of private property, the right to rest, the right to a dignified existence which presupposes adequate food, clothing and housing, and the right to trade union organisation.⁴³⁰

After him, Pius XI, Pius XII and John XXIII, marked by the two world wars, gave new emphasis to the concept of "law": with them, the one of democracy also gained strength and the Vatican became more concerned with respect for people in political life. At the same time, the idea that the Church must ensure that these rights are respected in order to guarantee peace developed. The Second Vatican Council completed this work: according to Thomasset, it "*place[d] the social ministry of the Church and the promotion and protection of human rights firmly within the framework of the Church's religious mission.*"⁴³¹ Nonetheless, as other authors, Paolo Carozza and Daniel Philpott, respectively professors of law and political science at the University of Notre-Dame, explained, "*Vatican II did not dispel differences between Catholic and secular articulations of human rights and democracy, either in theory or in practice.*"⁴³² Therefore, it is necessary to wait for their slow application to measure the work of the papacy on this subject.

Finally, it is with Paul VI and John Paul II that a Christian application of human rights took place: the speeches for the World Day of Peace are a good example. For more than half a century, the Church has constantly endeavoured to define this concept, to show its continuing commitment but also its particularities

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Paolo Carozza and Daniel Philpott, 'The Catholic Church, Human Rights, and Democracy: Convergence and Conflict with the Modern State', *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought & Culture* 15, no. 3 (2012): 38.

compared to other international organisations and actors. In sum, and “*contrary to the movement of the human rights tradition, the Church was first concerned with economic and social rights [...] and only belatedly began to accept civil and political rights [...]*.”⁴³³ In other words, it considers that human rights should not be the rights of the isolated individual but his rights within the community: therefore, this latter must respect and protect them, and enable everyone to participate to social life, what is respectful both of the society and of the individual’s dignity.

Dignity, indeed, is the core of the Church’s discourse on human rights. Indeed, we have already seen that the Vatican’s condemnation of totalitarianism was based, among other things, on the negation of the person in favour of the group: for the Church, “*these ideologies are marked by a totalitarian attitude that disregards and oppresses the dignity and transcendent values of the human person [...]*.”⁴³⁴ The Catechism devotes several paragraphs to the question of human dignity: according to the Church, it is because he is “*in the image of God [that] the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone.*”⁴³⁵ Moreover, John Paul II declared in 1998 that “*respect for human rights not only involves their protection in law. It must include all the other aspects which stem from the notion of human dignity, the very basis of rights.*”⁴³⁶ To state that human rights are based on human dignity’s respect attests to the Vatican’s clarity on the issue: in contrast to positivism, which takes civil law as the basis of morality – and thus of individual’s dignity –, Catholicism seeks to draw on the natural and divine laws as the sources of an application of human rights. For John Paul II, one of the “*two general principles which can never be abrogated and which constitute the basis of all social organization [...] is the inalienable dignity of every human person [...]*.”⁴³⁷

In 1999, the Polish pope entitled his message “Respect for human rights: the secret of true peace”. On the eve of the new millennium, it is easy to see how the papacy has changed its position since the eighteenth century and the French Revolution. The concept of human rights is no longer considered contrary to Christian morality but is added to the indispensable elements for peace. In his speech, he achieved the union of the two categories of rights, civil and political on the one hand, and social and economic on the other, by stating that “*all human rights are [...] the expression of different dimensions of a single subject, the human person.*”⁴³⁸ He went even further by “enshrining” human rights: “*defence of the universality and indivisibility of human rights is essential for the construction of a peaceful society and for the overall development of individuals, peoples and nations.*”⁴³⁹ Finally, he stated that the “*complete observance of human rights is the surest road to establishing solid relations between States. The culture of human rights cannot fail to be a culture of*

⁴³³ Thomasset s.j., ‘Analyse du thème des droits de l’homme’.

⁴³⁴ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1985’.

⁴³⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 357.

⁴³⁶ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1998’.

⁴³⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1989’.

⁴³⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1999’.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

peace.”⁴⁴⁰ Thus, it can be seen that John Paul II often uses the term “human rights” as a rhetorical device in order to conjure up the concept of “human dignity”, which was first used by the Church. Indeed, in its work of influence, this latter seeks to bring its ideas to the heart of the public debate, or to temper mainstream ideas with its particular vision.

After his predecessor’s death, Benedict XVI inherited and enriched his teaching. In 2007, he acknowledged that *“a true and stable peace presupposes respect for human rights”*⁴⁴¹ and then asked the following question: *“if these rights are grounded on a weak conception of the person, how can they fail to be themselves weakened? Here we can see how profoundly insufficient is a relativistic conception of the person when it comes to justifying and defending his rights.”*⁴⁴² For him, only a correct philosophical understanding of human dignity can lead to the strengthening of human rights on a legal level. Dignity, moreover, should not only be defined in terms of the rights it confers, but also in terms of duties. Francis agreed, saying that *“human rights derive from this dignity, as do human duties [...]”*⁴⁴³ In short, to the incantation of human rights, the Church tries to propose a similar series of duties, including those listed by John XXIII in *Pacem in terris*: for it, the human dignity is precisely built on both of them, and they must be respected equally. The modern papacy has therefore long sought to add its voice to that of other States, on respect for labour⁴⁴⁴ and the fight against slavery⁴⁴⁵ for instance, but also on questions of freedom of association⁴⁴⁶ or education⁴⁴⁷.

But the two great struggles of the Catholic Church on the question of human rights are undeniably the right to freedom of religion or belief⁴⁴⁸ and the right to life⁴⁴⁹, with all the particular ethical implications that this may imply. As Benedict XVI recognised, *“the duty to respect the dignity of each human being [means] that the person cannot be disposed of at will. [...] Conscious of this, the Church champions the fundamental rights of each person. In particular [it] promotes and defends respect for the life and the religious freedom of everyone.”*⁴⁵⁰ Francis also insisted on this point in 2014 by stating that *“in many parts of the world, there seems to be no end to grave offences against fundamental human rights, especially the right to life and the right to religious freedom.”*⁴⁵¹ First of all, we should mention the second one, which, despite a theoretical consensus in international organizations, is very often endangered in practice, which is why the Holy See and the popes spearhead it, for their flock in particular, but not only.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2007’.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2021’.

⁴⁴⁴ United Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ (1948), art. 23–24.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., art. 4.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., art. 20.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., art. 26.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., art. 18.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., art. 3.

⁴⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2007’.

⁴⁵¹ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2014’.

3.1.2 Freedom of religion or belief

The 7th of December 1965, on the eve of the end of the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI and the Council Fathers adopted the declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* on religious freedom. This text states that “*the human person has a right to religious freedom*”⁴⁵² and that this right “*has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person [...]. This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right.*”⁴⁵³ Thus, this position has a political turn since it enjoins States to adopt legislation favourable to religious freedom, precisely in the name of human rights. In this sense, the Church recalls that belief can only come from a free and autonomous choice: “*man’s response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will. [...] The act of faith is of its very nature a free act.*”⁴⁵⁴ No one can therefore be forced by a civil authority to believe in a religion, any more than they can be forbidden to believe: it is “*an ethical and political requirement for all States.*”⁴⁵⁵ Twenty-seven years later, the writers of the *Catechism* echoed this idea, stating that “*this natural right ought to be acknowledged in the juridical order of society in such a way that it constitutes a civil right.*”⁴⁵⁶ In sum, the Church endorses Article 18 of the Universal Declaration that states that “*everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion [...].*”⁴⁵⁷ For the past forty-three years, respect for religious freedom has been one of the most popular topics for popes, as various threats to religious minorities, both Catholic and non-Catholic, have arisen around the world.

For John Paul II, “*religious freedom [is] the basis of the other freedoms.*”⁴⁵⁸ Indeed, this right appears to be the one that has the most resonance in the intimacy of the person: this right is therefore attached to the most unattainable part of the human being. Indeed, attacking freedom of movement is more “within reach” than reaching the person’s deepest part. Thus, the freedom to believe or not to believe can be considered as the basis of the other freedoms, since it nourishes the exercise of the person’s own freedom. In a letter sent in November 1980 to the heads of State of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act’s signatory nations, John Paul II advocated for religious freedom considering that “*each individual has the right and duty to seek the truth [and that] other persons as well as civil society have the corresponding duty to respect the free spiritual development of each person.*”⁴⁵⁹ He also explained that the respect of this freedom “*will also contribute to strengthening international peace which, on the contrary, is threatened by any violation of human rights [...] and especially*

⁴⁵² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Dignitatis Humanae - Declaration on Religious Freedom*, 1965, 2.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁵⁵ Chélini-Pont, Dubertrand, and Zuber, *Géopolitique des religions*, 42.

⁴⁵⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2108.

⁴⁵⁷ United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 18.

⁴⁵⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1981’.

⁴⁵⁹ John Paul II, ‘Message on the Value and Content of Freedom of Conscience and of Religion - 14 November 1980’, 2.

by [...] violation of the objective rights of the spirit, of human conscience and creativity, including man's relation to God."⁴⁶⁰

For Christophe Dickès, *"the primary role of papal diplomacy is to preserve the freedoms of Catholics and thus of the Church wherever it is found. [Religious freedom's] intellectual foundations go back to the persecution of Christians under the Roman Empire."*⁴⁶¹ In the bosom of the popes, the situation of Christians in China, in some Arab and African countries, or, more perniciously but really, in Western democracies, is considered worrying. Despite a controversial provisional agreement signed between the People's Republic of China and the Holy See in 2018, Xi Jinping has continued to increase the repression of Chinese Catholics and attempts to undertake a policy known as "Sinicization", i.e. *"the inclusion of faith in Christ into communist thinking"*⁴⁶²: in other words, China wants to create a "patriotic Church" that would gradually undermine the evangelisation of the country by the "underground Church", which is seen as foreign interference. Nonetheless, the Vatican is not content with defending its faithful: indeed, Francis also took up the cause of other minorities, notably Muslims, such as the Uighurs in China⁴⁶³ or the Rohingyas in Bangladesh⁴⁶⁴.

In their speeches, popes have not failed to defend freedom of religion or belief from a global point of view: it is religion as part of the interior life and as the driving force of social life that is defended above all. In 1992, John Paul II invited

the Leaders of the Nations and of the international community always to show the greatest respect for the religious conscience of every man and woman and for the special contribution of religion to the progress of civilization and to the development of peoples. [...] Civil and political authorities ought to accord the various religions respect and juridical guarantees – at the national and international levels – ensuring that their contribution to peace is not rejected, or relegated to the private sphere, or ignored altogether.⁴⁶⁵

In 1988, his message entitled "Religious freedom: condition for peace" was devoted to this topic. According to him, *"every violation of religious freedom, whether open or hidden, does fundamental damage to the cause of peace, like violations of the other fundamental rights of the human person."*⁴⁶⁶ From his point of view also, religion is the *"cornerstone of the structure of human rights"*⁴⁶⁷: once again, it can be seen that the Polish pope is not talking exclusively about the Christian religion, but about religion in a broad sense. In 1991, after

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁶¹ Dickès, *Le Vatican. Vérités et légendes*, 67.

⁴⁶² Jean-Baptiste Noé, *François le diplomate. La diplomatie de la miséricorde* (Paris: Salvator, 2019), 179.

⁴⁶³ 'Pope Says for First Time That China's Uighurs Are "Persecuted"', *The Guardian*, 24 November 2020, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/24/pope-says-for-first-time-that-chinas-uighurs-are-persecuted>.

⁴⁶⁴ Jason Horowitz, "I Ask Forgiveness" Pope Francis Tells Rohingya Muslims in Bangladesh', *The New York Times*, 1 December 2017.

⁴⁶⁵ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1992'.

⁴⁶⁶ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1988'.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain, he implicitly referred to the role of Catholics in certain countries, including his native land:

One of the most significant aspects of today's world is the role that religion has played in the awakening of peoples and in the search for freedom. In many cases it was religious faith that preserved intact and even strengthened the identity of entire peoples. In nations where religion was hindered or even persecuted in an attempt to treat it as a relic of the past, it has once more proved to be a powerful force for liberation.⁴⁶⁸

Later, in his 1999 message, he re-emphasised the primacy of this freedom in the framework of human rights: *"religion expresses the deepest aspirations of the human person, shapes people's vision of the world and affects their relationships with others [...]. Religious freedom therefore constitutes the very heart of human rights."*⁴⁶⁹ It is also the last time that the Eastern pontiff spoke about religious freedom, which was one of his main battle horses against communism as a seminarian and as a priest.

His German successor, in 2007, declared that *"another disturbing symptom of lack of peace in the world is represented by the difficulties that both Christians and the followers of other religions frequently encounter in publicly and freely professing their religious convictions."*⁴⁷⁰ With the Universal Declaration of 1948, religious freedom is indeed no longer mentioned as a mere right to opine but as belonging to the very core of fundamental human rights⁴⁷¹. In 2011, he devoted his speech to this subject and entitled it "Religious freedom, the path to peace": in this message, he affirmed that religious freedom *"cannot be denied without at the same time encroaching on all fundamental rights and freedoms, since it is their synthesis and keystone."*⁴⁷² Even more, he considered that *"to deny or arbitrarily restrict this freedom is to foster a reductive vision of the human person; to eclipse the public role of religion is to create a society which is unjust, inasmuch as it fails to take account of the true nature of the human person; it is to stifle the growth of the authentic and lasting peace of the whole human family."*⁴⁷³ It is therefore understandable that the Church does not only defend freedom of belief for its own people, but because it sees it as a negation of human nature. He pursued saying that *"religious freedom is [...] an achievement of a sound political and juridical culture"*⁴⁷⁴: according to him, this is an irrefutable heritage. This right is first in the order of human rights because it opens up a dimension that is not anthropocentric: *"it is not simply a guarantee of a right understood as power, but in essence, it invites duty."*⁴⁷⁵ One of the most scathing statements of the Bavarian pontiff is undoubtedly his equating of fundamentalism and secularism: according to him, they *"are alike in that both represent extreme forms of a*

⁴⁶⁸ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1991'.

⁴⁶⁹ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1999'.

⁴⁷⁰ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2007'.

⁴⁷¹ Cyril Brunet, 'La notion de paix universelle développée dans l'Eglise catholique romaine : étude des messages pour la paix des papes de Paul VI à Benoît XVI (1968-2012)' (Coëtquidan, Ecole spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr, 2012), 107.

⁴⁷² Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2011'.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Brunet, 'La notion de paix universelle développée dans l'Eglise catholique romaine', 107.

rejection of legitimate pluralism and the principle of secularity. [...] A society that would violently impose or, on the contrary, reject religion is not only unjust to individuals and to God, but also to itself.”⁴⁷⁶ Finally, he called on States’ leaders to respect religious freedom, and in particular religious minorities, as long as they “do not represent a threat to the identity of the majority but rather an opportunity for dialogue and mutual cultural enrichment.”⁴⁷⁷ Moreover, it is worth mentioning that Francis has never dwelt on this issue at length, at least not in his speeches for the World Day of Peace. He just mentioned in 2016 “the rights of ethnic and religious minorities”⁴⁷⁸ and said in 2020 that “even today, dignity, physical integrity, freedom, including religious freedom, communal solidarity and hope in the future are denied to great numbers of men and women, young and old.”⁴⁷⁹ However, in his speech to the diplomatic representation in February 2021, recalling his own words in *Fratelli Tutti*⁴⁸⁰, he recalled, in view of the various restrictions on worship due to the health situation, that “freedom of worship [...] is not a corollary of the freedom of assembly. It is in essence derived from the right to freedom of religion, which is the primary and fundamental human right.”⁴⁸¹

But behind this work of defending human dignity, the Church’s idea is to provide all people with the means necessary for their own fulfilment: “it belongs to the dignity of the person to be able to respond to the moral imperative of one’s own conscience in the search for truth.”⁴⁸² For them, “religious freedom is the condition for the pursuit of truth, and truth does not impose itself by violence but ‘by the force of its own truth’.”⁴⁸³ ⁴⁸⁴ If this truth, for popes, is solely and obviously contained in the Church, it cannot be imposed on people who have to search for it themselves. As John Paul II said, it is a duty to look for it since “truth serves the cause of peace”⁴⁸⁵, since Jesus said that “the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). Furthermore, the Holy See considers that “to deny an individual complete freedom of conscience – and in particular the freedom to seek the truth – or to attempt to impose a particular way of seeing the truth, constitutes a violation of that individual’s most personal rights.”⁴⁸⁶ Regarding this statement, we find once again the affirmation of the primacy of the right of conscience over other human rights: here, at the beginning of 1991, when the communist regime was in the grip of serious upheavals, John Paul II seems to be implicitly targeting the powers that would like to see in this decay the victory of their ideology. Although viscerally opposed to the communist system, he did not fail to declare that its end should not be seen “as the triumph or failure of one system over another; in other words, as the triumph of the liberal capitalist system.”⁴⁸⁷ This approach also includes the condemnation of terrorism, which uses religion as a pretext to proclaim its truth: “to try to impose

⁴⁷⁶ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2011’.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2016’.

⁴⁷⁹ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2020’.

⁴⁸⁰ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 130.

⁴⁸¹ Francis, ‘Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See - 8 February 2021’.

⁴⁸² John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1988’.

⁴⁸³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1.

⁴⁸⁴ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2011’.

⁴⁸⁵ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1980’.

⁴⁸⁶ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1991’.

⁴⁸⁷ John Paul II, ‘Address to the Entrepreneurs in Durango during the Apostolic Journey to Mexico and Curaçao - 9 May 1990’.

on others by violent means what we consider to be the truth is an offence against human dignity, and ultimately an offence against God whose image that person bears."⁴⁸⁸

Both in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* and in his 2006 message "In truth, peace", Benedict XVI advocated for truth as an indisputable tool for building a peaceful world. He invited on the one hand to discern ideas contrary to the truth: according to him, *"any authentic search for peace must begin with the realization that the problem of truth and untruth is the concern of every man and woman; it is decisive for the peaceful future of our planet."*⁴⁸⁹ On the other hand, he rejected attitudes that ignore the truth: *"nihilism and the fundamentalism [...] share an erroneous relationship to truth: the nihilist denies the very existence of truth, while the fundamentalist claims to be able to impose it by force."*⁴⁹⁰ Finally, he reminded that the Church's peaceful message is not based on an appreciation of the world or a philosophical pacifism, but *"on the bedrock of the truth about God and the truth about man."*⁴⁹¹ In 2011, he also linked this search of truth to the respect of freedom of religion or belief, saying that *"religious freedom should be understood, then, not merely as immunity from coercion, but even more fundamentally as an ability to order one's own choices in accordance with truth."*⁴⁹²

Finally, both religious freedom and liberty to seek truth are considered by the Holy See as indisputable principles. These two freedoms are considered to flow directly from the freedom to believe or not to believe. In the eyes of the Church, human beings have an imprescriptible right to interior life which must be guaranteed by the public authorities: its protection is essential to strengthen peace according to them.

3.1.3 Family and right to life

*"The family plays a primary role in the important task of forming consciences. Parents have a grave duty to help their children to seek the truth from their earliest years and to live in conformity with the truth, to seek the good and to promote it"*⁴⁹³ claimed John Paul II in 1991. For him, the family is necessary to find truth. In the pontifical lexical field, the word "family" appeared 321 times in the forty-two World Day of Peace's speeches: however, two uses must be distinguished. First, this word is often used to speak of the "human family": it aims to assert that the world community is called to overcome specificities in order to enter into a communion between all persons. The other usage is more common: it refers to the family in the classical sense of the word, *i.e.* the family structure composed of parents – necessarily a man and a woman for the Church – and children. But these two uses are paradoxically not so antagonistic in the mouth of the popes:

⁴⁸⁸ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2002'.

⁴⁸⁹ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2006'.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2011'.

⁴⁹³ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1991'.

according to the Gospel, the coming of Jesus united human beings under the fatherhood of God. This was the subject of John Paul II's message for the year 1994, which he declared the "Year of the Family", entitled "The family creates the peace of the human family". Benedict XVI also mentioned this subject in 2008: his message "The human family, a community of peace" insisted on the place of the human family in building peace. Francis' message "No longer slaves, but brothers and sisters" in 2015 also mentioned the topic of brotherhood. Moreover, two apostolic exhortations dealt with this issue, one by the Polish pope, the other by the Argentinian one: in *Familiaris Consortio*⁴⁹⁴ (1981) and in *Amoris Laetitia*⁴⁹⁵ (2016), they both insist on the importance of the family for the faith's development and its contribution to the world. Finally, it is important to recall that Paul VI, in the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, explained that the family was the *Ecclesia domestica*⁴⁹⁶ ["Domestic Church"] where children receive their Christian initiation. In sum, the family is a central issue in the Church's discourse, and an indispensable element in the strengthening of peace. According to the Catholic doctrine, "*the family is the basic cell of society*"⁴⁹⁷, a place where peace is taught since people living together must conform to each other's way of life and respect their rights, which is, to a certain extent, a "*school of peace*"⁴⁹⁸. It is precisely this dimension that popes have spoken extensively about in their speeches.

First of all, they saw the nuclear family as the source of mutual love, which is indispensable for the establishment of a peaceful society based on justice and brotherhood. The family is, for the Church, a first society where people learn the community life's principles. John Paul II, in his 1996 message, said: "*founded on love and open to the gift of life, the family contains in itself the very future of society; its most special task is to contribute effectively to a future of peace.*"⁴⁹⁹ Therefore, his successor Benedict XVI gave the family the rank of "*first natural society*"⁵⁰⁰: the family is, according to the *Catechism*, "*the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. [...] Family life is an initiation into life in society.*"⁵⁰¹ The family, John Paul II continued, using the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "*remains the true foundation of society, constituting [...] its 'natural and fundamental nucleus'.*"⁵⁰² As the Polish pontiff considered, "*in the formative process, the family is indispensable. [...] The family is the first school of living, and the influence received inside the family is decisive for the future development of the individual.*"⁵⁰³ His German successor saw in the family a decisive "*training ground for harmonious relations at every level of coexistence, human, national and international. [...] This is the road to building a strong and fraternal social fabric [...].*"⁵⁰⁴ Finally, Francis said that "*the*

⁴⁹⁴ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio - Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, 1981.

⁴⁹⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia - Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family*, 2016.

⁴⁹⁶ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Lumen Gentium - Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 1964, 11.

⁴⁹⁷ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1987'.

⁴⁹⁸ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1996'.

⁴⁹⁹ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1994'.

⁵⁰⁰ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2008'.

⁵⁰¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2207.

⁵⁰² John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1994'.

⁵⁰³ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1998'.

⁵⁰⁴ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2011'.

family is the indispensable crucible in which spouses, parents and children, brothers and sisters, learn to communicate and to show generous concern for one another, and in which frictions and even conflicts have to be resolved not by force but by dialogue, respect, concern for the good of the other, mercy and forgiveness."⁵⁰⁵ According to him, the family is the place of openness to life, and therefore a place of gratuity, which is a beneficial attitude for the society. At last, he estimated in the same message for the year 2017 that families *"are the first place where the values of love and fraternity, togetherness and sharing, concern and care for others are lived out and handed on."*⁵⁰⁶ To sum up, popes saw the family as the privileged place for learning the way to live in society.

Therefore, for them, the family has also a primary role in the promotion of peace. It is seen as the cement of society between the particular bricks that are people: from John Paul II's point of view, *"the domestic virtues, based upon a profound respect for human life and dignity, and practiced in understanding, patience, mutual encouragement and forgiveness, enable the community of the family to live out the first and fundamental experience of peace."*⁵⁰⁷ The experience of love within the family determines the relationship of the members of this family to the rest of society, and the contribution they are capable of making to it: *"the family which lives this love, even though perfectly, and opens itself generously to the rest of society, is the primary agent of a future of peace."*⁵⁰⁸ Therefore, it has an essential role to play in peace-building as it demonstrates that people with divergent interests can live together and share the same resources. John Paul II, given by Francis as patron saint to couples, also claimed that, *"faced with the challenge of education, the family becomes 'the first and fundamental school of social living', the first and fundamental school of peace"*⁵⁰⁹ in his message for the year 1995, at the end of the year dedicated to the family. The following year, he recalled that *"family experiences strongly condition the attitudes which children will assume as adults"*⁵¹⁰: as the first place of socialisation, the family, like the school, plays a decisive role in peace education. Benedict XVI took up this idea in 2008, stating that *"the family is the first and indispensable teacher of peace. [...] The family is the foundation of society for this reason too: because it enables its members in decisive ways to experience peace. It follows that the human community cannot do without the service provided by the family."*⁵¹¹ In 2013, for one of his last messages, he said that *"no one should ignore or underestimate the decisive role of the family, which is the basic cell of society from the demographic, ethical, pedagogical, economic and political standpoints. [...] The family is one of the indispensable social subjects for the achievement of a culture of peace."*⁵¹² A "culture of peace" is one of the characteristics of a stable family life: here we find the idea that peace does not only mean the absence of conflict. In a family, even in the absence of violence or

⁵⁰⁵ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2017'.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1994'.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1995'.

⁵¹⁰ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1996'.

⁵¹¹ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2008'.

⁵¹² Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2013'.

direct confrontation, one can only speak of “peace” if the members share a state of life based on truth, justice and respect. Finally, Francis transposed fraternity in the family to the vocation to universal fraternity: *“fraternity is generally first learned in the family [...]. The family is the wellspring of all fraternity, and as such it is the foundation and the first pathway to peace [...].”*⁵¹³ Despite this idealistic picture of the family, there are two threats to its structure and continuity for the Church: that of division and intra-family violence, whatever it may be; and that of legislative or fiscal harassment.

First, family’s breakdown is seen as contrary to man’s natural vocation and to God’s plan. John Paul II spoke of the experience of family life as the foundation of our relationship with others. In the absence of a supportive framework, the person is therefore more exposed to imperfect inner development and thus less likely to contribute to the building of peace: he said that *“the family is the first place where development occurs or does not occur. If it is healthy and wholesome, then the possibilities for the integral development of the whole of society are great.”*⁵¹⁴ He continued: *“the breakdown of the family structure, the dispersal of its members, especially the very young, and the consequent ills visited upon them [...] all are countersigns to the development of the whole person that is fostered through the social solidarity of the human family.”*⁵¹⁵ Without a stable family, the person is, according to him, more vulnerable. The lack of a structure and a reference “society” leads to a biased relationship with others, who are seen as enemies or competitors, rather than as potential brothers or sisters. Family unity is also considered as an inalienable right, which is why the *Compendium* states that *“the right of reuniting families should be respected and promoted.”*⁵¹⁶ Faced with the challenge of migration, Francis urged the Western countries to open their borders and invited each parish or Catholic community to welcome a family⁵¹⁷. Three months later, in his World Day of Peace message, he said:

How many families, amid occupational and social difficulties, make great sacrifices to provide their children with a “counter-cultural” education in the values of solidarity, compassion and fraternity! How many families open their hearts and homes to those in need, such as refugees and migrants! I wish to thank in a particular way all those individuals, families, parishes, religious communities, monasteries and shrines who readily responded to my appeal to welcome a refugee family.⁵¹⁸

By speaking of a counter-culture, he lent credence to the idea that, in the Western democracies at least, the family has become a minority model, far from the norm. For popes, this downgrading of the image of the family model is partly due to the consumerist and individualist model proposed to society after the war, partly

⁵¹³ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2014’.

⁵¹⁴ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1987’.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 298.

⁵¹⁷ ‘Il Papa: “Ogni parrocchia ospiti una famiglia di profughi”’, *La Repubblica*, 6 September 2015, https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2015/09/06/news/migranti_il_papa_ogni_parrocchia_ospiti_una_famiglia_di_profughi_-122317345/.

⁵¹⁸ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2016’.

to the sexual liberation movements that “demonised” the traditional family from the 1970s onwards, and partly to the fiscal and legislative assault on families.

Indeed, the Church’s fight to defend the family involves another argument: that of the fiscal and legislative conditions offered by national jurisdictions and social entities. According to them, it cannot be denied that good material conditions and a safe climate are not conducive to welcoming a child or building a stable home. For Benedict XVI, *“the family needs to have a home, employment and a just recognition of the domestic activity of parents, the possibility of schooling for children, and basic health care for all. When society and public policy are not committed to assisting the family in these areas, they deprive themselves of an essential resource in the service of peace.”*⁵¹⁹ A legal assault on families therefore does not only result in the deterioration of the family but is detrimental to the whole society. Sufficient conditions must therefore be provided by the State to guarantee the continuity of the family structure, as John Paul II explained in 1994:

The State also has an important role in creating the conditions in which families can provide for their primary needs in a way befitting human dignity. Poverty [is] a perennial threat to social stability, to the development of people and to peace [and] in our day affects too many families. [...] The duty of the State does not, however, excuse individual citizens: the real reply to the gravest questions in every society is in fact ensured by the harmonious solidarity of everyone. [...] Peace will always be at risk so long as individuals and families are forced to fight for their very survival.⁵²⁰

According to the Church, the State has a role to play in strengthening the family. Therefore, when the State exerts a strong fiscal pressure or fails to help families to welcome a child in decent conditions, this constitutes an important fault, against the family and against the country’s peace, as Benedict XVI said: *“whoever, even unknowingly, circumvents the institution of the family undermines peace in the entire community, national and international, since he weakens what is in effect the primary agency of peace.”*⁵²¹ Indeed, John Paul II said that the family can be considered as the strongest and most favourable institution for the integral development of the person and for peace: *“it alone ensures the continuity and the future of society. The family is therefore called to become an active agent for peace, through the values which it expresses and transmits within itself, and through the participation of each of its members in the life of society.”*⁵²² According to the Holy See, States therefore have a “duty” to support families and couples in their material and spiritual needs: John Paul II deplored the fact that *“in too many societies, the family has become a secondary element. It [...] often fails to find in the State the protection and support that it needs. Not infrequently it is deprived of the just means to which it has a right so that it can grow and provide an atmosphere where its members can flourish.”*⁵²³ According to him, it is even possible to judge a civilisation by the respect it has for families: in 1987, he stated

⁵¹⁹ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2008’.

⁵²⁰ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1994’.

⁵²¹ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2008’.

⁵²² John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1994’.

⁵²³ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1987’.

that “*the phenomena of broken families, of family members forced to separate for survival, or unable even to find shelter to begin or to maintain themselves as families, are all signs of moral underdevelopment and of a society that has confused its values. A basic measure of the health of a people or nation is the importance it gives to conditions for the development of families.*”⁵²⁴ Actually, in his opinion, to ensure a supportive environment for families’ development is not just an economic issue. In 1994, he said: “*in the face of increasing pressure nowadays to consider, as legally equivalent to the union of spouses, forms of union which by their very nature or their intentional lack of permanence are in no way capable of expressing the meaning and ensuring the good of the family, it is the duty of the State to encourage and protect the authentic institution of the family, respecting its natural structure and its innate and inalienable rights.*”⁵²⁵ Indeed, the weakening of the family model also involves, for the Church, the adoption of laws opening marriage to people of the same sex. While the Church says it is unable to provide sacramental blessing to these couples⁵²⁶ and urges states not to undermine the traditional family model by placing heterosexual and homosexual couples on an equal footing, it does encourage them, and even more so under Francis’ pontificate, to adopt legislation to protect their physical integrity⁵²⁷.

Moreover, another form of attack on the family is, in the papacy’s eyes, initiatives aimed at reducing births. First, it is important to recall that the Church is not opposed to “birth control” but exhorts the faithful and couples to use natural methods that are more respectful of people’s sexuality and bodies: this was the Paul VI’s teaching in *Humanae Vitae* (1968), and John Paul II’s one in *Evangelium Vitae* (1995). That being said, it considers medical termination of pregnancy or abortion as unacceptable means, regardless of the reason or health status of the unborn child⁵²⁸, considering him as valuable even in the case of an incurable disease. But other, less-direct forms of birth regulation are also condemned, such as the use of contraceptive or morning-after pills⁵²⁹. Finally, the one-child policy practiced by China from 1979 to 2015 was strongly condemned by the Holy See⁵³⁰. Here, however, it is appropriate to focus only on the relationship that the Vatican establishes between peace and the “right to life”. For John Paul II, “*government programmes or aid packages that virtually force communities or countries to accept contraception programmes and abortion [...] violate the solidarity of the human family because they deny the values of human dignity and human freedom.*”⁵³¹ The human dignity is at stake according to the popes: abortion is, for them, a violation of human rights. And the Church encourages people “*to do everything possible to banish from society [...] every violation of human rights, beginning with the indisputable right to life, which every person enjoys from the very moment of*

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1994’.

⁵²⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2357–59.

⁵²⁷ Mark Lowen, ‘Pope Francis Indicates Support for Same-Sex Civil Unions’, *BBC*, 21 October 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54627625>.

⁵²⁸ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* - *Letter Encyclical on the Regulation of Birth*, 1968, 14.

⁵²⁹ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* - *Letter Encyclical on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life*, 1995, 13.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁵³¹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1987’.

conception. *The violation of the individual human being's right to life contains the seeds of the extreme violence of war.*"⁵³² Insofar as it violates human nature, the right to abortion would thus be for the Church the perfect allegory of the adage that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. In his 2007 message, his successor Benedict XVI gave the following reflection, judging that abortion is a murder against a life that is already in act and not in potential:

As far as the right to life is concerned, we must denounce its widespread violation in our society: alongside the victims of armed conflicts, terrorism and the different forms of violence, there are the silent deaths caused by hunger, abortion, experimentation on human embryos and euthanasia. [...] Abortion and embryonic experimentation constitute a direct denial of that attitude of acceptance of others which is indispensable for establishing lasting relationships of peace.⁵³³

According to him, these practices are therefore detrimental to peace insofar as a human being comes to decide the purpose of one of his peers, who is equally worthy of respect. Therefore, the argument of material conditions is not considered admissible, since once again the Church considers that States should first of all work to create a more favourable framework for a child's birth: *"the extermination of millions of unborn children, in the name of the fight against poverty, actually constitutes the destruction of the poorest of all human beings"*⁵³⁴, said Benedict XVI in 2009. In his 2013 message, he affirmed that

anyone who loves peace cannot tolerate attacks and crimes against life. Those who insufficiently value human life and, in consequence, support among other things the liberalization of abortion, perhaps do not realize that in this way they are proposing the pursuit of a false peace. The flight from responsibility, which degrades human persons, and even more so the killing of a defenceless and innocent being, will never be able to produce happiness or peace.⁵³⁵

For the Church, abortion is therefore a solution that allows a "false peace": in its opinion, this is not based on justice (with regard to the child), nor on the truth of the human person, nor on charity, nor on freedom (insofar as pressure is sometimes exerted on the mother). The Argentinian pontiff is no stranger to criticism of these practices, which the Vatican delegitimises: speaking of the issue of selective abortion of children with Down's Syndrome, he described it as *"eugenics in white gloves"*⁵³⁶. In his 2016 message, he urged national leaders *"to adopt policies of cooperation which, instead of bowing before the dictatorship of certain ideologies, will respect the values of local populations and, in any case, not prove detrimental to the fundamental and inalienable right to life of the unborn."*⁵³⁷ Therefore, we can see how, in the last forty-three years, the family

⁵³² John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1995'.

⁵³³ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2007'.

⁵³⁴ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2009'.

⁵³⁵ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2013'.

⁵³⁶ 'Le pape compare certains avortements à un eugénisme "en gants blancs"', *Le Figaro*, 16 June 2018, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2018/06/16/97001-20180616FILWWW00137-le-pape-compare-certain-avortements-a-un-eugenisme-en-gants-blancs.php>.

⁵³⁷ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2016'.

has been at the heart of the papacy's concerns. The Holy See has tried to put the subject on the table of major international discussions several times: although the result is not obvious, popes seem to have been consistent on these issues. Indeed – and as many diplomats agree⁵³⁸ –, the Vatican line rarely changed on this issue. Furthermore, the popes do not fail to see the international game as a factor capable of promoting peace, despite its imperfections.

3.2 The international order

For the last three popes, only a correct understanding of human dignity can build a solid peace that is beneficial to all. From this first idea, it follows logically that the international order must ensure and safeguard it, especially through human rights. The action of international or non-governmental organisations is therefore encouraged. In this sense, the Holy See also seeks to be involved in decision-making bodies: it is an observer member of the United Nations – and acts more directly via its armed wing, the Republic of Malta, which is fully committed to the Church's ideas⁵³⁹ – and a full member of the Council of Europe, where it takes concrete action – in particular by blocking texts making a distinction between sex and gender⁵⁴⁰. As we have seen, many points are non-negotiable for the Church, such as religious freedom: on this point, it acts as much in the shadows as it condemns countries that deprive their citizens of it.

On the other hand, the Holy See, which was initially more favourable to the Western cause during the Cold War, also appreciates the importance and benefits of multilateralism. Thus, the popes and their secretaries of State have sought to take part to the important decisions of the last four decades. And not only to deliver their ideas, but above all to invite the nations' leaders and decision-making organisations to adopt an ethical attitude: the Holy See thus places itself as the moral watchdog of international relations. International actors are invited to act in accordance with the rules of classical diplomacy, which is well behaved and based on mutual respect and dialogue. Politicians also have to be “converted” in their way of working, according to the Church, by taking the weakest as the matrix for their decisions. Furthermore, the Holy See considers that peace between States can only come from peace in the hearts of the people. Therefore, the aim here is not to study the role played by the Vatican behind the curtain, but rather the way it invites leaders to promote peace.

For popes, it is above all through dialogue that the mankind's good can be considered by both parties, and then lead to cooperation in the service of a same project. This cooperation must then take shape in the

⁵³⁸ Private interview with Elisabeth Beton-Delègue, French Ambassador to the Holy See, 7 April 2021; Private interview with Patrick Renault, Belgian Ambassador to the Holy See, 4 March 2021.

⁵³⁹ Private interview with Elisabeth Beton-Delègue, French Ambassador to the Holy See.

⁵⁴⁰ Private interview with Patrick Renault, Belgian Ambassador to the Holy See.

international diplomatic game, as the political world is no stranger to the question of peace. Finally, the respect for international law is essential to achieve harmony between States and, more importantly, between peoples.

3.2.1 From dialogue to cooperation

Do everything in your power to make the way of dialogue prevail over that of force. Let this find its first application at the inward level: how can the peoples truly foster international peace, if they themselves are prisoners of ideologies according to which justice and peace are obtained only by reducing to impotence those who, before any examination, are judged unfit to build their own destinies or incapable of cooperating for the common good?⁵⁴¹

In his first message, the former Cardinal Wojtyła urged people to see dialogue as the decisive element to build a more fraternal and just international order, which can help to establish peace. Since 1979, the pontiffs have repeatedly stressed that dialogue is the first step towards mutual understanding, which is itself one of the indispensable elements of peace. Dialogue between people is the source of life. As a being of relationships⁵⁴², the human person needs others in all things: each human being first receives life from preceding persons, and then learns to live with others. From these relationships, the awareness of belonging to and sharing the same humanity rises⁵⁴³: the person learns to live in community and to cooperate with his fellow human beings for his own happiness. But man's nature also tends him to look for his own good sometimes at the expense of others' one: therefore, the Church seeks to remind that to dialogue with one's peers is necessary to seek a good which is common to all. Three pontifical messages in particular have focused on this issue, two from John Paul II and one from Francis: the 1983 message entitled "Dialogue for peace, a challenge for our time", the 2001 message entitled "Dialogue between cultures for a civilization of love and peace", and the 2020 message entitled "Peace as a journey of hope: dialogue, reconciliation and ecological conversion". Dialogue is one of the pillars of human life, so it is in the Church's discourse.

First of all, the Church does not promote dialogue for its own sake, as a cover for real enmities, but for its performative effect: dialogue, when it exists, can produce tangible consequences, starting with the creation of a relationship between multiple entities. It is rather a disposition of the person, who adopt "*an attitude of dialogue*"⁵⁴⁴. In his speech for the year 2020, for example, Francis urged people to develop a "*culture of fraternal encounter [which] shatters the culture of conflict.*"⁵⁴⁵ This "culture of encounter" is one of the great subjects of his pontificate, mentioned in the first months following his accession to the see of Peter. He summarised this idea in the same speech,

⁵⁴¹ John Paul II, 'To Reach Peace, Teach Peace - Message for the World Day of Peace 1979'.

⁵⁴² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1879–80.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1934.

⁵⁴⁴ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1983'.

⁵⁴⁵ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2020'.

The world does not need empty words but convinced witnesses, peacemakers who are open to a dialogue that rejects exclusion or manipulation. In fact, we cannot truly achieve peace without a convinced dialogue between men and women who seek the truth beyond ideologies and differing opinions. Peace “must be built up continually”: it is a journey made together in constant pursuit of the common good, truthfulness and respect for law. Listening to one another can lead to mutual understanding and esteem, and even to seeing in an enemy the face of a brother or sister.⁵⁴⁶

Indeed, dialogue is the starting point of the Bible: God gave Adam and Eve a specific mission through the word. It is then through the word that the Jewish people progressed together. Finally, it is through the coming of the one whom the evangelist John calls “*the Word*” (John 1:1) that the promise to Israel was fulfilled. Biblical texts in support, the Vatican therefore considers “*dialogue and negotiation [as] the obligatory path to peace. The willingness of parties involved to meet and talk to one another is the indispensable condition for reaching an equitable solution to the complex problems that can seriously obstruct peace. And a refusal to enter into dialogue can open the door to violence.*”⁵⁴⁷ In this sense, the absence of dialogue leads to an opposition between the parties. Therefore, the Church considers that people must be aware of the importance of dialogue at all levels of human life: as John Paul II explained, “*the qualities of true dialogue [...] apply in the first place to dialogue between individuals [and then] between social groups, between political forces in a nation, between States within the international community.*”⁵⁴⁸ In the context of the Polish crisis of the 1980s and the violent opposition between students and workers and the communist regime, the Polish pope reaffirmed, for example, that dialogue could not be broken in order to claim peace: “*dialogue for peace must be established in the first place on the national level in order to resolve social conflicts [...]. When unfortunately dialogue between government and people is absent, social peace is threatened or absent [...].*”⁵⁴⁹ Furthermore, the will to grow together can only be achieved through dialogue, in order to become a vehicle for peace. Dialogue, to sum up, is, in Church’s eyes, always possible: “*even when dialogue has not seemed possible, and when one has come to the point of armed confrontation [...], has it not been necessary to seek for dialogue?*”⁵⁵⁰ The Holy See believes that as governments see the benefits of dialogue at the national level, they will desire to offer this practice at the global level. The popes have constantly recalled that in order to remain a place of human development, international organisations must be places of dialogue. It is interesting to see that, in 1986, John Paul II said that “*dialogue can open many doors closed by the tensions that have marked East-West relations*”⁵⁵¹, and that, six years later, after the fall of the communist regime, he claimed that “*the progressive rise of new democracies has given back hope to entire peoples, inspired confidence in more fruitful international dialogue and made possible a long-awaited era of peace.*”⁵⁵² Indeed,

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1989’.

⁵⁴⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1983’.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1986’.

⁵⁵² John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1992’.

it can be seen that, while measuring the real causes of the dialogue is complicated, the Polish pope did not fail to congratulate himself for having invited the parties to it.

But dialogue cannot be an end in itself: it is a starting point, the first step towards greater mutual understanding. This also implies to share a project: the service of the common good. All three popes stressed this issue. First, John Paul II recalled that *“the object of dialogue for peace [...] is a question of searching for a whole more just international order, consensus on the more equitable sharing of goods, services, knowledge, information, and a firm determination to order these latter to the common good.”*⁵⁵³ Acknowledging the existence of a good that is common to everybody then implies working together to seek it out and to offer it to each person. The dialogue between nations cannot overlook this and must resolutely *“be based upon the strong conviction that the good of the people cannot be finally accomplished against the good of another people [...]”*⁵⁵⁴ His successor Benedict XVI also wanted to emphasise the role of every human being, regardless of their religious beliefs: *“for the Church, dialogue between the followers of the different religions represents an important means of cooperating with all religious communities for the common good.”*⁵⁵⁵ Dialogue, he believed, is always easier with one’s peers: undertaking to speak with someone who has a radically different opinion from one’s own is perilous, but highly beneficial for peace. Finally, Francis stated in 2017 that the common good must be built on *“an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence between individuals and among peoples [which itself] cannot be based on the logic of fear, violence and closed-mindedness, but on responsibility, respect and sincere dialogue.”*⁵⁵⁶

But the ultimate goal of dialogue, which has made people aware of their duties towards the common good, is cooperation. At the international level, this can take several forms: for John Paul II, *“policies and programmes that build open and honest relationships among peoples, that forge just alliances, that unite people in honourable cooperation, are to be fostered.”*⁵⁵⁷ However, Benedict XVI recalled that fair cooperation requires a deep understanding of others’ needs⁵⁵⁸, and that dialogue is indispensable to do so. His predecessor also stressed that *“dialogue [between cultures] leads to a recognition of diversity and opens the mind to the mutual acceptance and genuine collaboration demanded by the human family’s basic vocation to unity. As such, dialogue is a privileged means for building the civilization of love and peace [...]”*⁵⁵⁹ Finally, the German pope urged the religious people engaged in dialoguing to respect natural law’s principles, what is *“the foundation for a dialogue between the followers of the different religions and between believers and non-believers. As a great point of convergence, this is also a fundamental presupposition for authentic peace.”*⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵³ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1983’.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2011’.

⁵⁵⁶ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2017’.

⁵⁵⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1987’.

⁵⁵⁸ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*.

⁵⁵⁹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2001’.

⁵⁶⁰ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2007’.

Just as dialogue reinforces love and truth, it builds on them to be effective⁵⁶¹. In conclusion, John Paul II believed that dialogue was the surest way out of the war, and stated in 1983:

Dialogue is at the same time the search for what is and which remains common to people, even in the midst of tensions, opposition and conflicts. In this sense, it is to make the other party a neighbour. It is to accept its contribution, it is to share with it responsibility before truth and justice. It is to suggest and to study all the possible formulas for honest reconciliation, while being able to link to the just defence of the interests and honour of the party which one represents the no less just understanding and respect for the reasons of the other party, as well as the demands of the general good which is common to both.⁵⁶²

3.2.2 Diplomacy and world politics

For the Holy See, the establishment of a peaceful international order is obviously the role of the States. Therefore, it endeavours to influence the places of power, both from above and below. From above, by being a member of several international organisations or by intervening directly in interstate relations, as with the re-establishment of diplomatic ties between Cuba and the United States on the 17th of December 201, on Francis' birthday, after the latter had hosted negotiations the previous March at the Vatican; and from below *via* several networks, notably *Caritas Internationalis*, the second richest non-governmental organisation in the world behind the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)⁵⁶³, or the *Community of Sant'Egidio*, a lay Catholic association of 60,000 members around the world dedicated to social service that also plays a major role in the resolution of certain international conflicts, by engaging in talks in Mozambique, Guatemala or Kosovo in the 1990s, and more recently in Burundi and the Central African Republic in 2017⁵⁶⁴. The Church's diplomacy, of which we have only sketched one facet here, is in short, sprawling. But in the context of peace-building, it is not the concrete action that should be discussed, but rather the way in which popes have linked diplomacy, world politics and peace. Or rather, how they have urged international rulers to become peacemakers. All three popes agreed that a proper and ethical practice of international diplomacy is essential to strengthen peace. Diplomats and other world leaders must therefore abide by certain moral principles because of the special responsibility they bear. On this point, Benedict XVI proposed a reflection which is particularly accurate:

To promote moral truth in the world of politics and diplomacy [...] means acting in a responsible way on the basis of an objective and integral knowledge of the facts; it means deconstructing political ideologies which end up supplanting truth and human dignity in order to promote pseudo-values under the pretext of peace, development and human rights; it means fostering an unswerving commitment to

⁵⁶¹ Noé, *François le diplomate. La diplomatie de la miséricorde*, 197.

⁵⁶² John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1983'.

⁵⁶³ Private interview with Patrick Renault, Belgian Ambassador to the Holy See.

⁵⁶⁴ Chélini-Pont, Dubertrand, and Zuber, *Géopolitique des religions*, 71–72.

base positive law on the principles of the natural law. All this is necessary and consistent with the respect for the dignity and worth of the human person enshrined by the world's peoples in the 1945 Charter of the United Nations, which presents universal values and moral principles as a point of reference for the norms, institutions and systems governing coexistence on the national and international levels.⁵⁶⁵

The first attitude of the Church towards politics is to consider it as a service, “the highest form of charity” according to the expression consecrated by Thomas Aquinas, and then Pius XI and Francis. It follows that the Church’s duty is to recall the importance of this exercise for the common good and to invite leaders to act with virtue. In his 2019 message entitled “Good politics at the service of peace”, Francis stated that *“when political life is not seen as a form of service to society as a whole, it can become a means of oppression, marginalization and even destruction. [...] If exercised with basic respect for the life, freedom and dignity of persons, political life can indeed become an outstanding form of charity.”*⁵⁶⁶ For him then, the use of certain religious principles in the exercise of temporal power should be encouraged: *“this is also a programme and a challenge for political and religious leaders, the heads of international institutions, and business and media executives: to apply the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-12) in the exercise of their respective responsibilities.”*⁵⁶⁷ His predecessor John Paul II also insisted on the duties of politicians as a result of their power, and that *“the building of peace is a task that falls directly and principally to political leaders.”*⁵⁶⁸ Moreover, he stated that *“precisely because human beings are created with the capacity for moral choice, no human activity takes place outside the sphere of moral judgment. Politics is a human activity; therefore, it too is subject to a distinctive form of moral scrutiny. This is also true of international politics.”*⁵⁶⁹ Once again, the pontiff placed himself as a moral watchdog of international politics and encouraged political leaders to be aware that *“more than others [they] must be convinced that war is in itself irrational and that the ethical principle of the peaceful settlement of conflicts is the only way worthy of man.”*⁵⁷⁰ For the Church, politics is a provisional service, received for a given time, and therefore it cannot serve particular interests, but the common good.

Therefore, the aim of politics is obviously to participate in the construction of peace. In this sense, the three pontiffs urged the heads of States and Governments to take decisions that contribute to peace-building, first of all at national level, but also in their relationships with other nations. In 1990, John Paul II stressed *“the need for joint action on the international level [which] does not lessen the responsibility of each individual State.”*⁵⁷¹ Popes have regularly drawn the attention of States to certain problems, such as wars or injustices, while at the same time supporting or honouring them for certain decisions. In 1992, for instance, John Paul II called *“upon public authorities to strive with vigilant responsibility to prevent war and conflict, to work for*

⁵⁶⁵ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2011’.

⁵⁶⁶ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2019’.

⁵⁶⁷ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2017’.

⁵⁶⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1982’.

⁵⁶⁹ John Paul II, ‘*Pacem in Terris*: A Permanent Commitment - Message for the World Day of Peace 2003’.

⁵⁷⁰ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1984’.

⁵⁷¹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1990’.

the triumph of justice and right, and at the same time to support development which benefits everyone, and primarily those oppressed by poverty, hunger and suffering."⁵⁷² Since his appeal serves noble causes and the pope is probably the best known – and perhaps most listened to – leader, getting his good graces is often flattering for a leader (a diplomatic visit to the Holy Father is almost a must-do). Also, the willingness to comply with his message in order to obtain his congratulations can influence certain leaders: the pope has therefore a real power of influence. As an example, he said in 1999: *"steps have been taken in some regions towards the consolidation of peace. Great credit must go to those courageous political leaders who are resolved to continue negotiations even when the situation seems impossible."*⁵⁷³ Here, how can we fail to think about the "Good Friday Agreement" signed the 10th of April 1998, eight months before the redaction of this message, between the two Irelands after nearly thirty years of war⁵⁷⁴? In addition to the more controversial messages on the family or religious freedom, the popes are also multiplying their calls for almost morally indisputable battles, such as that against poverty. Despite its common philosophical acceptance, the popes deplored the fact that it is not applied in practice: as Benedict XVI pointed out, *"if the poor are to be given priority, then there has to be enough room for [...] an ethical approach to politics on the part of those in public office [...]."*⁵⁷⁵ In this sense, Francis regretted that some policies do not include more people, since politics can be *"at the service of peace if it finds expression in the recognition of the gifts and abilities of each individual."*⁵⁷⁶ And in this respect, he thought in particular of migrants: thus, he criticised *"those who, for what may be political reasons, foment fear of migrants instead of building peace are sowing violence, racial discrimination and xenophobia, which are matters of great concern for all those concerned for the safety of every human being."*⁵⁷⁷ On this point already mentioned, however, he recognised the sovereign right of states: *"by practising the virtue of prudence, government leaders should take practical measures to welcome, promote, protect, integrate and, 'within the limits allowed by a correct understanding of the common good, to permit [them] to become part of a new society.'"*⁵⁷⁸ His position was therefore primarily moral and, although he called for a change of position on the part of leaders, it cannot force them to do so. In sum, the popes have proposed, perhaps irenically, peace as a political project to the nations: *"peace, in effect, is the fruit of a great political project grounded in the mutual responsibility and interdependence of human beings."*⁵⁷⁹ But the moral practice of politics is not confined to the State's borders: indeed, the popes have also given much thought to the service of peace in international politics.

⁵⁷² John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1992'.

⁵⁷³ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1999'.

⁵⁷⁴ '10 avril 1998, signature de l'accord du "Vendredi saint" sur la paix en Irlande', *La Croix*, 10 April 2018, <https://www.la-croix.com/Debats/Ce-jour-la/10-avril-1998-signature-laccord-Vendredi-saint-paix-Irlande-2018-04-10-1200930446>.

⁵⁷⁵ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2009'.

⁵⁷⁶ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2019'.

⁵⁷⁷ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2018'.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2019'.

Although an ardent defender of national identity and memory⁵⁸⁰, John Paul II was also an advocate of institutional multilateralism, convinced of the importance of dialogue in the search for a common and genuine peace. In 2003, he observed first that because the world was becoming increasingly interdependent and global, *“the common good of humanity had to be worked out on the international plane.”*⁵⁸¹ He advocated *“for a public authority, on the international level, with effective capacity to advance the universal common good; an authority which could not [...] be established by coercion but only by the consent of nations.”*⁵⁸² According to him, the advent of such an entity was not supposed to begin with the redaction of *“the constitution of a global super-State. Rather, it means continuing and deepening processes already in place to meet the almost universal demand for participatory ways of exercising political authority [...]”*⁵⁸³ Indeed, the Holy See has always looked favourably on the UN-led march towards unification. For its fifteenth birthday, he rejoiced that the organization *“in fidelity to its founding inspiration, ha[d] recently taken on ever more extensive responsibility for maintaining or restoring peace.”*⁵⁸⁴ In 2004 also, he stated that, *“even with limitations and delays due in great part to the failures of its members, [the United Nations] made a notable contribution to the promotion of respect for human dignity, the freedom of peoples and the requirements of development, thus preparing the cultural and institutional soil for the building of peace.”*⁵⁸⁵ Already in 1997, four years after the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, he welcomed these *“other organizations at the continental and regional level [which] also have great importance as instruments for promoting peace [...]”*⁵⁸⁶ Moreover, he encouraged all the *“forms of mediation which offer hope to peoples in apparently helpless situations.”*⁵⁸⁷ According to him, international – global such as regional ones – organisations are key-elements for peace: they provide places for talks, and allow leaders to solve their divergences peacefully. Finally, John Paul II affirmed the following year that

in the face of modern armed conflicts, negotiation between parties, with appropriate attempts at mediation and pacification by international and regional bodies, is of the greatest importance. Negotiation is necessary in order to prevent such conflicts and to end them once they have broken out, restoring peace through an equitable settlement of the rights and interests involved. This conviction concerning the positive role played by mediation and pacification agencies should be extended to the non-governmental humanitarian organizations and religious bodies which [...] promote peace between opposed groups and help to overcome age-old rivalries, reconcile enemies, and open the way to a new and shared future.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁰ John Paul II, *Memory and Identity: Personal Reflections*, W&N, 2005.

⁵⁸¹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2003’.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1997’.

⁵⁸⁵ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2004’.

⁵⁸⁶ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1997’.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2000’.

To sum up, world politics are, for the Polish pope, governed by consensus, negotiation, or, at least, dialogue. This view seems close to that of the idealist school, almost Kantian, according to which the purpose of foreign policy should be the respect of moral values and the resolution of disputes through the art of negotiation.

On some issues, the Church does not even consider international cooperation to be a favourable option among others, but rather an obligation, given the high stakes involved. This is particularly the case with ecology, a cause for which Benedict XVI already stressed that *“the international community and national governments are responsible for sending the right signals in order to combat effectively the misuse of the environment.”*⁵⁸⁹ Looking at his pontificate and that of his predecessor, it is easy to see that Benedict XVI was not a political pope⁵⁹⁰: nonetheless, he has partly taken ownership of the international issue by being less complimentary than his predecessor about international organisations. In a message to members of the European People’s Party in 2006, he encouraged them to preserve Europe’s Christian heritage against *“a culture [...] which relegates to the private and subjective sphere the manifestation of one’s own religious convictions.”*⁵⁹¹ Indeed, from his point of view, what matters the most is undoubtedly the strengthening of the truth and of Christian values: in 2011, he declared that *“politics and diplomacy should look to the moral and spiritual patrimony offered by the great religions [...] to acknowledge and affirm universal truths, principles and values which cannot be denied without denying the dignity of the human person.”*⁵⁹² His successor, however, turned out to be a great politician. As Francis stated in 2016, *“national leaders are also called to renew their relations with other peoples and to enable their real participation and inclusion in the life of the international community, in order to ensure fraternity within the family of nations as well.”*⁵⁹³ The last pontiff is quick to encourage all initiatives that go in the direction of unifying the human family: he therefore supported leaders not only to be concerned about their citizens, but to put themselves at the service of the human being. At the beginning of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the bishop of Rome urged the better-off nations not to worry only about their own good, but to keep a watchful eye for the poor countries⁵⁹⁴. In his 2021 message, he renewed his *“appeal to political leaders [...] to spare no effort to ensure access to Covid-19 vaccines and to the essential technologies needed to care for the sick, the poor and those who are most vulnerable.”*⁵⁹⁵ Without foreshadowing the direct impact of this plea, it is worth noting that France, through the voice of its president Emmanuel Macron, has responded to it by proposing to send *“3% to 5%”* of its vaccines to Africa⁵⁹⁶.

⁵⁸⁹ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2010’.

⁵⁹⁰ Christophe Dickès, *L’héritage de Benoît XVI*, Essais (Paris: Tallandier, 2017), 123–25.

⁵⁹¹ Benedict XVI, ‘Address to the Members of the European People’s Party on the Occasion of the Study Days on Europe - 30 March 2006’.

⁵⁹² Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2011’.

⁵⁹³ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2016’.

⁵⁹⁴ Francis, ‘Extraordinary Moment of Prayer - 27 March 2020’.

⁵⁹⁵ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2021’.

⁵⁹⁶ ‘Coronavirus: Macron veut transférer des vaccins à l’Afrique’, *Le Point*, 19 February 2021, https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/coronavirus-macron-veut-transferer-des-vaccins-a-l-afrique-19-02-2021-2414618_3826.php.

To conclude, we can see that, for the Holy See, world politics and international organisations should first be places where peace is promoted, defended and consolidated, rather than threatened or jeopardised by national interests. Therefore, politicians are called to go beyond their passions and proper benefits to think of the whole society's one. In conclusion, it is interesting to re-read the words of John Paul II who, in 1983, addressed the international decision-makers in these terms:

I address it in the first place to you, the Heads of State and Government! May you be able, in order that your people may know real social peace, to permit all the conditions for dialogue and common effort [...]! May you be able to conduct this dialogue on equal terms with the other countries, and assist the parties in conflict to find the paths of dialogue, of reasonable reconciliation and of just peace!

I also appeal to you, the diplomats, whose noble profession it is, among other things, to deal with disputed points and to seek to resolve them through dialogue and negotiation, in order to avoid recourse to arms, or to take the place of the belligerents. It is a work of patience and perseverance, which the Holy See values [...].

I wish above all to repeat my confidence in you, the leaders and members of the International Organizations, and in you, the international officials! [...] Whether they are regional or worldwide, your Organizations have an exceptional chance to seize: to regain, in all its fullness, the mission which is theirs by virtue of their origin, their charter and their mandate; to become the places and instruments par excellence for true dialogue for peace.⁵⁹⁷

3.2.3 International law

*“Peace and international law are closely linked to each another: law favours peace”*⁵⁹⁸ declared John Paul II in 2004. Finally, respect for international law is, for the Holy See, indispensable if people of all nations and States themselves want to live in peace. The international order, thus conceived with its set of treaties and agreements, must be the basis for a more solid peace, as long as this body of law is consistent with the moral law: *“the juridic norm, which regulates relationships between individuals, disciplines external conduct and establishes penalties for offenders, has as its criterion the moral norm grounded in nature itself. [...] The moral norm must be the rule for decisions of conscience and the guide for all human behaviour.”*⁵⁹⁹ It is, moreover, this view of the law that partly underpins the moral power of the Vatican⁶⁰⁰. In his last speech for the World Day of Peace, John Paul II summed up this idea by saying that *“international law must ensure that the law of the more powerful does not prevail. Its essential purpose is to replace ‘the material force of arms*

⁵⁹⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1983’.

⁵⁹⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2004’.

⁵⁹⁹ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2008’.

⁶⁰⁰ Marie Buclin, ‘L’influence du Saint-Siège dans les organisations internationales depuis le Concile Vatican II : illustration d’une multi-track diplomacy’ (Coëtquidan, Ecole spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr, 2014), 31.

with the moral force of law' [...].⁶⁰¹ The respect of the law is, to sum up, both the basis of a fair dialogue and the condition for it.

Over the centuries, the Church has, like its position on human rights, increasingly supported the idea of international law. Moreover, it has accompanied this movement, along with many Christian jurists. John Paul II explained this point in length in 2004:

From the sixteenth century on, jurists, philosophers and theologians were engaged in developing the various headings of international law and in grounding it in the fundamental postulates of the natural law. This process led with increasing force to the formulation of universal principles which are prior to and superior to the internal law of States, and which take into account the unity and the common vocation of the human family. Central among all these is surely the principle that *pacta sunt servanda*: accords freely signed must be honoured. This is the pivotal and exceptionless presupposition of every relationship between responsible contracting parties. The violation of this principle necessarily leads to a situation of illegality and consequently to friction and disputes which would not fail to have lasting negative repercussions. It is appropriate to recall this fundamental rule, especially at times when there is a temptation to appeal to the law of force rather than to the force of law.⁶⁰²

The *pacta sunt servanda*'s principle, enshrined in the international legal order by the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties⁶⁰³, requires that any country signing a treaty respect it: while some major powers have not even signed it – such as France or India –, some signatory countries have in fact never ratified it – such as the United States of America or Iran. For the Holy See, however, keeping one's word is one of the basic principles of the international order. As Benedict XVI pointed out, this is not always the case: *"the recognition that there exist inalienable human rights connected to our common human nature has led to the establishment of a body of international humanitarian law which States are committed to respect, even in the case of war."*⁶⁰⁴

Indeed, the Holy See is also in the forefront of promoting humanitarian law in war situations. As John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis all stated, the humanitarian law is an indispensable element of the strengthening of peace, but also a tool at the service of the human development. The Polish pope stated that, in the face of conflictual situations that could leave people homeless, *"there is a need to affirm the preeminent value of humanitarian law and the consequent duty to guarantee the right to humanitarian aid to suffering civilians and refugees."*⁶⁰⁵ For his part, his successor considered that this law should be seen as a *"means of limiting the devastating consequences of war as much as possible, especially for civilians [since the Holy See believes] that the truth of peace exists even in the midst of war."*⁶⁰⁶ Moreover, according to him, international

⁶⁰¹ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2004'.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ 'Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties' (1969), art. 26.

⁶⁰⁴ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2007'.

⁶⁰⁵ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2000'.

⁶⁰⁶ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2006'.

law's value *"must be appreciated and its correct application ensured; it must also be brought up to date by precise norms applicable to the changing scenarios of today's armed conflicts and the use of ever newer and more sophisticated weapons."*⁶⁰⁷ Indeed, the German pope expresses two strong beliefs: the first in the existence of a *jus in bello* which, as opposed to *jus ad bellum*, is not the right to wage war but a moral and legislative injunction to respect the law when a conflict is taking place; secondly, that humanitarian law must be reformed to deal with the new problems posed by the possibility of total war. Francis has also spoken out extensively on respect for humanitarian law, notably by encouraging the development of humanitarian corridors⁶⁰⁸, largely financed by *Sant'Egidio*, which has repeatedly asked for their implementation. For his 2021 message, he recalled that *"urgent is the need to respect humanitarian law, especially at this time when conflicts and wars continue uninterrupted."*⁶⁰⁹

But the popes also saw the limits of international law, which they said is not perfectly applied. For Francis, even if the inspiration of international organisations is a great idea, *"we cannot however fail to observe that international agreements [...] are not of themselves sufficient to protect humanity from the risk of armed conflict."*⁶¹⁰ In the aftermath of the Cold War, his predecessor John Paul II also declared: *"it is urgently necessary at this moment of history to strengthen juridical instruments capable of promoting freedom of conscience in the areas of political and social life. The gradual and constant development of an internationally recognized legal order could well provide one of the surest bases for the peace and orderly progress of the human family."*⁶¹¹ The Holy See believes that the emergence of new threats makes the deployment of new legislative measures indispensable: a legal arsenal adapted to the image of man is also called for by the Polish pope for whom *"what is needed without delay is a renewal of international law and international institutions [...] whose starting-point and basic organizing principle should be the primacy of the good of humanity and of the human person over every other consideration."*⁶¹² He insisted on this point in 2004: *"in the necessary fight against terrorism, international law is now called to develop legal instruments provided with effective means for the prevention, monitoring and suppression of crime. In any event, democratic governments know well that the use of force against terrorists cannot justify a renunciation of the principles of the rule of law."*⁶¹³ His successor Benedict XVI agreed, stating that international law *"has not been consistently implemented in certain recent situations of war. [...] The new shape of conflicts, especially since the terrorist threat unleashed completely new forms of violence, demand[s] that the international community [...] apply it to all present-day situations of armed conflict, including those not currently provided for by international law."*⁶¹⁴ In conclusion,

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁸ Valérie Régner, 'Les couloirs humanitaires : un modèle d'initiative européenne, citoyenne et chrétienne', *Communio* 266, no. 6 (2019): 79–86.

⁶⁰⁹ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2021'.

⁶¹⁰ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2014'.

⁶¹¹ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1991'.

⁶¹² John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2000'.

⁶¹³ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2004'.

⁶¹⁴ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2007'.

international law is seen as a tool that must be continually adapted to the threats facing humanity, but not as an end in itself: for the popes, it remains only one instrument among others to achieve international peace, but never the foundation. In other words, the Vatican's approach is no more positivist than it was realist with regard to international organisations.

3.3 Human and social development

Finally, to reach peace, the Church promotes human and social development. This latter is supposed to participate to the growth of society, at the same time intellectual, material and spiritual. Popes therefore urged their faithful and “all people of good will” to put their teachings into practice in order to contribute to this development, which is in accordance with their vision of man and the world. As Paul VI explained in *Populorum Progressio*, “the development [...] cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man.”⁶¹⁵

Integral human development theory is – as we have already seen – a major element of the Church's teaching, and *Populorum Progressio* is the text that is its foundation. With *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987) and *Caritas in veritate*, John Paul II and Benedict XVI have deepened this question. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the text written by Paul VI, Francis inaugurated in 2016 a new dicastery dedicated to this issue – encompassing under its wing four former pontifical councils, including “Justice and Peace” – and placed under the leadership of the Ghanaian Cardinal Peter Turkson⁶¹⁶. As it is explained in its statutes, the existence of the dicastery is the expression of “the Holy See's concern for issues of justice and peace, including those related to migration, health, charitable works and the care of creation.”⁶¹⁷ Furthermore, the approach adopted by this dicastery towards the human person is similar to that of the popes: it is holistic, *i.e.* it considers phenomena as the result of global processes, as the fruit of multiple but intrinsically linked causes. It postulates that the whole person should be the focus of national and international public policies, with the aim of developing the whole society.

According to the papacy then, this human and social development must be based on three main pillars: the respect for history and culture, the search for justice and intergenerational solidarity, and finally an education to peace.

⁶¹⁵ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 14.

⁶¹⁶ Nicolas Senèze, ‘Comprendre le “développement humain intégral”’, *La Croix*, 13 January 2017, <https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Religion-et-spiritualite/Comprendre-developpement-humain-integral-2017-01-13-1200816940>.

⁶¹⁷ Francis, ‘Statutes of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development’ (2016), art. 1.

3.3.1 History and cultures

First of all, human development, which is itself necessary to build peace, requires, according to the Church, respect for each person's history and culture. In this sense, popes took up Simone Weil's idea that *"one owes respect to a field of wheat, not for itself, but because it is food for men. In a similar way, one owes respect to a community [...] not for itself, but as food for a number of human souls."*⁶¹⁸ To respect these roots is also a means to strengthen peace since it helps people to learn from past mistakes and successes. According to popes, history provides convincing examples of peace, which often leaves less visible traces at first sight. A good transmission of history and cultures is therefore necessary to preserve the awareness of peace.

First, history is presented by popes as a source from which to draw lessons. For instance, John Paul II provided during his first message a reflection on the concept of revolution with a view to showing how history allowed us to better grasp the meaning of certain contemporary realities:

Any factors of life and progress that may have been found even in wars and revolutions were derived from aspirations of an order other than that of violence: aspirations of a spiritual nature, such as the will to see recognition given to a dignity shared by all mankind, and the desire to save a people's soul and its freedom. Where such aspirations were present, they acted as a regulator amid the conflicts, they prevented irreparable breaks, they maintained hope, and they prepared a new chance for peace.⁶¹⁹

In addition, he looked at how history could be an example: according to him, *"the experience of history, even recent history, shows in fact that dialogue is necessary for true peace."*⁶²⁰ It is also littered with human models and sources of inspiration: *"history is filled with marvellous examples of women who, sustained by this knowledge, have been able successfully to deal with difficult situations of exploitation, discrimination, violence and war"*⁶²¹ he said in 1995. Therefore, education must be geared towards the learning of a peace's history, and not only a *"history of victory and defeat in war."*⁶²² Finally, Benedict XVI saw in history the source of a spiritual awakening that he called for: *"may Europe rather be reconciled to its own Christian roots, which are fundamental for understanding its past, present and future role in history; in this way it will come to experience justice, concord and peace by cultivating a sincere dialogue with all peoples."*⁶²³ Indeed, the Church, which considers itself an *"expert in humanity"*⁶²⁴, does not fail to look at itself through history, judging its own civilisational work with benevolence. Finally, Francis, who visited Japan in 2019, said in his speech for the

⁶¹⁸ Weil, *L'enracinement*, 15.

⁶¹⁹ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1979'.

⁶²⁰ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1983'.

⁶²¹ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1995'.

⁶²² John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1996'.

⁶²³ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2011'.

⁶²⁴ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 13. The Latin term is *"Quapropter Christi Ecclesia, iam rerum humanarum peritissima..."*. In English, the passage has been officially translated as follows: *"The Church, which has long experience in human affairs..."*, while in French and Italian the translations are respectively: *"Experte en humanité, l'Église..."* and *"Esperta di umanità, la Chiesa..."*.

year 2020 that, *“like the Hibakusha⁶²⁵, many people in today’s world are working to ensure that future generations will preserve the memory of past events, not only in order to prevent the same errors or illusions from recurring, but also to enable memory, as the fruit of experience, to serve as the basis and inspiration for present and future decisions to promote peace.”*⁶²⁶

For the Holy See, a genuine peace also depends on a good understanding and integration of cultures into the human matrix. Firstly, it *“presupposes a refusal to accept any doctrine of national or cultural supremacy”*⁶²⁷: the Church regards all cultures as legitimate, without entering into a form of relativism. In fact, it agrees to recognise that *“every culture, as a typically human and historically conditioned reality, necessarily has its limitations.”*⁶²⁸ But this does not detract from the fact that people should seek to be enriched by other cultures rather than to elevate their own to a higher rank. John Paul II deplored the fact that a straitjacket was imposed on certain cultures⁶²⁹. Therefore, he had spoken out in favour of minority rights since they *“are threatened with cultural extinction.”*⁶³⁰ Francis made the same assertion in 2016, calling *“for respect for indigenous peoples whose very identity and existence are threatened.”*⁶³¹ According to John Paul II indeed, *“culture is the form of man’s self-expression in his journey through history, on the level of both individuals and social groups.”*⁶³² The Church is unambiguously in favour of intercultural dialogue, as this is indispensable for keeping the ties that bind heterogeneous populations strong. In this respect, and as an example applicable to other Western countries, the French political scientist Jérôme Fourquet explained how, until about fifty years ago, France had no need for such a dialogue since cultural homogeneity was indisputable, notably thanks to the influence of the Catholic Church⁶³³. It was therefore its loss of momentum and unifying status that led it to consider itself a minority and become a promoter of a dialogue between cultures, noting that there is an *“increasing difficulty to maintain solidarity between people of different cultures and civilizations living together in the same territory”*⁶³⁴ and that *“dialogue between cultures emerges as an intrinsic demand of human nature itself, as well as of culture.”*⁶³⁵

Finally, the papacy does not limit itself to look at history as an immutable “given”: on the contrary, it intends to study it in order to understand its vicissitudes and to help peoples to resolve their problems. As Francis said in 2020, *“the peace process thus requires enduring commitment. It is a patient effort to seek truth and justice, to honour the memory of victims and to open the way, step by step, to a shared hope stronger than*

⁶²⁵ The *Hibakusha* is a Japanese word that literally designates “a person who is affected by a bomb”: it is now merely used to speak about the people who survived to the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

⁶²⁶ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2020’.

⁶²⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1981’.

⁶²⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2001’.

⁶²⁹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1985’.

⁶³⁰ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1989’.

⁶³¹ Francis, ‘Tweet on @Pontifex Account’, Twitter, 9 August 2016.

⁶³² John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2001’.

⁶³³ Jérôme Fourquet, *L’archipel français* (Le Seuil, 2019).

⁶³⁴ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2001’.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

the desire for vengeance.”⁶³⁶ Indeed, popes have long developed the notion of forgiveness on a historical level. But it can only be a forgiveness that is the first step towards reconciliation. On this arduous path, John Paul II acknowledged the existence and the importance to deal with “the burden of history”:

The difficulty of forgiving does not only arise from the circumstances of the present. History carries with it a heavy burden of violence and conflict which cannot easily be shed. [...] The truth is that one cannot remain a prisoner of the past, for individuals and peoples need a sort of “healing of memories”, so that past evils will not come back again. This does not mean forgetting past events; it means re-examining them with a new attitude and learning precisely from the experience of suffering that only love can build up [...]. The deadly cycle of revenge must be replaced by the new-found liberty of forgiveness.⁶³⁷

In the same message dedicated to forgiveness, in 1997, the Roman pontiff urged people “*to read the history of other peoples without facile and partisan bias, making an effort to understand their point of view.*”⁶³⁸ According to him, history is never a smooth element, but rather an object that must be studied from different angles: so it does not agree to sweep the twentieth century under the carpet, claiming that “*on this century in particular, it must be acknowledged that mankind’s path has been greatly illuminated by progress in the socio-cultural, economic, scientific and technological spheres. Unfortunately, this new light coexists with persistent dark shadows, especially in the areas of morality and solidarity.*”⁶³⁹ The struggle between light and darkness, between Good and Evil, is at the heart of Christian theology: the use of such an image to evoke history was therefore not insignificant, as the pope sought to link the Church to good events, and to impute the horrors to its absence, or at least to the estrangement of men from it, which teaches morality and solidarity. Moreover, rather than a standardisation of cultures, he promoted “*a correct reading of history [that] will make it easier to accept and appreciate the social, cultural and religious differences [...]. [Their suppression] can result in apparent peace, but it creates a volatile situation which is in fact the prelude to fresh outbreaks of violence.*”⁶⁴⁰

Finally, the Church, who sees Jesus both as the Redeemer⁶⁴¹ and as the “*Prince-of-Peace*” (Isa 9:5), considers that “*peace will be the last word of History.*”⁶⁴² This vision of history, strictly linear, is that human history is nothing other than the history of salvation⁶⁴³: peace can therefore only be the end and the means to “conclude” history.

⁶³⁶ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2020’.

⁶³⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1997’.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁴¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1040.

⁶⁴² John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1979’.

⁶⁴³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2422.

3.3.2 Inter-generational justice and solidarity

Development is not the prerogative of one age group that holds the power in its hands, but calls for greater solidarity between people, and especially between generations. Indeed, youth has been at the heart of the preoccupations of popes from John Paul II to Francis: initiated by the Polish pope, the “World Youth Days” are an authentic testimony of this. Every two or three years, the pontiffs have gathered around them several million young people in different countries of the world (Canada, Brazil, Spain, Philippines, Australia...). If, compared to John Paul II who became a “pope-star” for a whole generation, Benedict XVI is often considered less close to young people because of his age or his sensitivity, the same cannot be said of his successor. Indeed, Francis is even the first pope to have dedicated an apostolic exhortation to young people, *Christus Vivit* (2019). In sum, the popes have argued that, in the strengthening of peace, youth had a special role to play: for John Paul II, “Peace and youth go forward together”, as he stated in the title of his message for the International Youth Year in 1985.

For them three, youth has always been synonymous with hope. They all praised it, inviting the younger generations to be ever more aware of their responsibility. In 1979 already, the newly-elected pontiff said: *“young people, be builders of peace. You are workers with a full share in producing this great common construction. [...] Follow the paths suggested by your sense of free giving, of joy at being alive, and of sharing. [...] You are the hope of peace.”*⁶⁴⁴ In 1985, in a dedicated message to young people, he insisted, inviting them to dare: *“Do not be afraid of your own youth, and of those deep desires you have for happiness, for truth, for beauty and for lasting love! [...] When I look at you, the young people, I feel great gratitude and hope. [...] The future of peace lies in your hearts.”*⁶⁴⁵ For two years in a row, in 1996 and 1997, he repeated the same refrain. He first stated that *“with their enthusiasm and youthful idealism, young people can become ‘witnesses’ and ‘teachers’ of hope and peace to adults”*⁶⁴⁶; then, he praised their commitment to peace among people: *“you young people, who cherish great hopes in your hearts, learn to live with one another in peace [...]. Respond to violence with works of peace, in order to build a world which is reconciled and fully human.”*⁶⁴⁷ His successor Benedict XVI said in his own dedicated speech that young people were *“a precious gift for society.”*⁶⁴⁸

Therefore, the special place that youth occupied in popes’ speeches leads us to look at the role they have assigned to them in the construction of a peaceful world. In his 1985 message, John Paul II identified *“a new awareness of [their] responsibility and a fresh sensitivity to the needs of [their] fellow human beings.”*⁶⁴⁹ In view of this vigour, he warned the new generation against misusing it for less praiseworthy purposes: *“put*

⁶⁴⁴ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1979’.

⁶⁴⁵ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1985’.

⁶⁴⁶ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1996’.

⁶⁴⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1997’.

⁶⁴⁸ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2012’.

⁶⁴⁹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1985’.

yourselves on guard against the fraud of a world that wants to exploit or misdirect your energetic and powerful search for happiness and meaning."⁶⁵⁰ Further, he pronounced a sentence that seems directly addressed to young people striving in Eastern countries against communist regime: *"you must then decide what values you want to build society upon. Your choices now will decide whether in the future you will suffer the tyranny of ideological systems that reduce the dynamics of society to the logic of class struggle."*⁶⁵¹ Once again, the Roman pontiff gave the impression of interfering in Soviet politics: if, by calling on the students to choose a system that renounces the logic of class struggle, he did not directly name the power in place, no one can fail to see in this a form of legitimisation of revolts. Moreover, in 1987, one year before the student riots that occurred in March 1988 in Poland, he called the youth of the world *"to use every means to forge new bonds of peace in fraternal solidarity with young people everywhere."*⁶⁵² Here also, the pontiff can be seen as urging his young compatriots to overthrow the structures and overcome the limitations on travel and relations with the Western powers.

Therefore, he also called young people to follow their intuitions, welcoming the existence of *"a remarkable worldwide consensus exists among young people about the necessity of peace"*⁶⁵³; but he also encouraged them to transform their desire *"into a firm moral conviction that encompasses the full range of human problems and builds on deeply treasured values."*⁶⁵⁴ In 1998, he urged youth to develop a sort of counter-culture, a silent resistance to dominant models: he invited them *"to reject the temptation of unlawful short-cuts towards false mirages of success and wealth [and] on the contrary, [to] value what is right and true, even when to do so requires sacrifice and commits [them] to going against the current."*⁶⁵⁵ In 2012, Benedict XVI's message was entitled "Educating young people in justice and peace": in it, he developed this idea by inviting young people to cultivate with perseverance *"the taste for what is just and true, even when it involves sacrifice and swimming against the tide."*⁶⁵⁶ Moreover, he made a long appeal to them in which he presented their contribution to peace as a sign of renewal:

Do not yield to discouragement in the face of difficulties and do not abandon yourselves to false solutions which often seem the easiest way to overcome problems. [...] Be confident in your youth and its profound desires for happiness, truth, beauty and genuine love! [...] Realize that you yourselves are an example and an inspiration to adults, even more so to the extent that you seek to overcome injustice and corruption and strive to build a better future. Be aware of your potential; never become self-centred but work for a brighter future for all.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1987'.

⁶⁵³ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1985'.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1998'.

⁶⁵⁶ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2012'.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

Finally, Francis also stated that youth could have a special contribution, encouraging them in their efforts *“which often pass unobserved.”*⁶⁵⁸ The Church indeed seeks to ensure the renewal of peacemakers: so, over the years, it has not failed to see in the youth the new generation that could provide it with a new lease of life in its work of world peace – the case of environmental concern is a good example, as the papal ecological discourse has intensified as the environment has become an important issue for the younger generation.

But more than that, it urges young people to do their part in building that peace, directly, by committing themselves to others. On this point, Francis argued that a good practice of politics should include young people as well: otherwise, they could *“be tempted to lose confidence, since they are relegated to the margins of society without the possibility of helping to build the future. But when politics concretely fosters the talents of young people and their aspirations, peace grows in their outlook and on their faces.”*⁶⁵⁹ Before him, the German pope had also stressed out this issue. According to him, *“attentiveness to young people and their concerns [...] represents a primary duty for society as a whole, for the sake of building a future of justice and peace.”*⁶⁶⁰ As he said, the appreciations expressed by young people must be taken seriously by the authorities, since they *“demonstrate that they desire to look to the future with solid hope.”*⁶⁶¹ And here again, John Paul II had also expressed his opinion: *“it is in the interests of the whole of society to ensure that these young people give up violence and take the path of peace, but this presupposes patient education given by people who sincerely believe in peace.”*⁶⁶² According to him, the work of youth is not limited to its own age group, but to the whole of humanity, from the oldest to those who will follow them: *“those of us who have preceded you want to share with you a deep commitment to peace. Those who are your contemporaries will be united with you in your efforts. Those who come after you will be inspired by you [...].”*⁶⁶³ Intergenerational solidarity is therefore at work when the action of young people is directed towards peace, which is a collective and long-lasting good.

3.3.3 Education to peace

In order to make the work of peace permanent and to ensure its preservation over time, the popes finally insisted at length on the central role of education. This task of transmission is a collective one, since everyone must be both an educator and educated in peace, at every stage of life. However, it is primarily the responsibility of parents and teachers with regard to children. Their role is special insofar as, as sociologists have identified, the family and the school are the two main places of socialisation in childhood. As John Paul II pointed out in 2000, these two entities are the more important ones to strengthen peace, which *“is a building*

⁶⁵⁸ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2016’.

⁶⁵⁹ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2019’.

⁶⁶⁰ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2012’.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁶² John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1994’.

⁶⁶³ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1985’.

*constantly under construction [and] involves [both] parents who are examples and witnesses of peace in their families [and] teachers who are able to pass on the genuine values present in every field of knowledge [...].*⁶⁶⁴

In the eyes of the Church, education is a decisive period: it is a task that allows for the full development of the person, and therefore it must be given utmost importance, whether on an individual level – parents towards their children – or on an institutional level – the State towards the younger generations. Education is therefore aimed at helping children *“to experience peace in the thousands of everyday actions that are within their capacity [...].”*⁶⁶⁵ From Benedict XVI’s point of view, *“educating – from the Latin educere – means leading young people to move beyond themselves and introducing them to reality, towards a fullness that leads to growth.”*⁶⁶⁶ Finally, according to Francis, it *“is one of the pillars of a more just and fraternal society.”*⁶⁶⁷ Despite their complementarity, these three statements also reveal the differences between the popes: while John Paul II saw education as a process of maturation in charity, Benedict XVI considered it more as a realisation of each person’s human nature, while Francis argued that it is the basis for fraternity between people. However, these minor differences do not indicate an invalidation of the doctrine by either pontiff, but rather the expression of a personal viewpoint. What they all think was summarised by John Paul II in 1996: *“it can hardly be hoped that children will one day be able to build a better world, unless there is a specific commitment to their education for peace. Children need to ‘learn peace’: it is their right, and one which cannot be disregarded.”*⁶⁶⁸

According to the magisterium, parents are the first educators of peace. Having already mentioned the place of the family, it is appropriate here to insist only on the educational dimension: the family being a school of peace, parents are its teachers. In 1996, John Paul II stated that *“in the formative process, the family is indispensable. The family is the appropriate environment for the human formation of the younger generation. From [parents’ example] depends to a large degree the [children’s] moral character [...].”*⁶⁶⁹ Thus, parents have a particular role to play. In doing so, they can rely on the school, which *“is also fundamental to the formation of conscience [but] never morally indifferent, even when it claims to be neutral with regard to ethical and religious values.”*⁶⁷⁰ On this subject, the Church, which has mobilised extensively to safeguard denominational and private schools, particularly in France in 1984 against the Savary bill, insists on the freedom of parents to choose the education they prefer, to the point of including it in the *Catechism*: *“as those first responsible for the education of their children, parents have the right to choose a school for them which corresponds to their own convictions. This right is fundamental. [...] Public authorities have the duty of*

⁶⁶⁴ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2000’.

⁶⁶⁵ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1979’.

⁶⁶⁶ Benedict XVI, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2012’.

⁶⁶⁷ Francis, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 2021’.

⁶⁶⁸ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1996’.

⁶⁶⁹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1998’.

⁶⁷⁰ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1991’.

guaranteeing this parental right and of ensuring the concrete conditions for its exercise."⁶⁷¹ Less than two years after the publication of the text, the Polish pope stressed this question during his 1994 message, saying that fundamental *"is the right of parents to decide, freely and responsibly, on the basis of their moral and religious convictions and with a properly formed conscience, when to have a child, and then to educate that child in accordance with those convictions."*⁶⁷² In 2012, Benedict XVI also evoked this, recalling that parents should be allowed *"to choose the educational structures they consider most suitable for their children."*⁶⁷³ For although the Church holds the family unit in high esteem, it does not fail to see the benefits of the school, which it has historically contributed greatly to developing in certain so-called mission countries, to teach peace.

In 1982, John Paul II stated that, to help youth provide its contribution for peace, *"educational programmes must necessarily give a special place to information about actual situations in which peace is under threat, and about the conditions needed for its advancement."*⁶⁷⁴ Education to peace is seen as indispensable since school is also a place where each child is supposed to learn to live in society, to go beyond the animal stage which tends to make the other a threat. The pontiff even claimed for a *"right to a specific training for peace at school [...]."*⁶⁷⁵ In his dedicated message to youth, his successor Benedict XVI pleaded *"political leaders to offer concrete assistance to families and educational institutions in the exercise of their right and duty to educate."*⁶⁷⁶ For the German pope, the aim of school education is to participate in the human formation of the person: *"education, indeed, is concerned with the integral formation of the person, including the moral and spiritual dimension, focused upon man's final end and the good of the society to which he belongs. Therefore, in order to educate in truth, it is necessary first and foremost to know who the human person is, to know human nature."*⁶⁷⁷ To support these processes, the Church knows that it only has the wealth of men and women of good will: thus, the popes have specifically addressed teachers. In 1998, John Paul II encouraged them *"to form [children] in moral and civic values, instil in them a lively sense of rights and duties, beginning with the experience of the school community itself."*⁶⁷⁸ Francis also did so, in 2016, recalling to teachers that they endorse a special duty to train a generation to overcome indifference: *"teachers, who have the challenging task of training children [...], should be conscious that their responsibility extends also to the moral, spiritual and social aspects of life. The values of freedom, mutual respect and solidarity can be handed on from a tender age."*⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2229.

⁶⁷² John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1994'.

⁶⁷³ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2012'.

⁶⁷⁴ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1982'.

⁶⁷⁵ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1996'.

⁶⁷⁶ Benedict XVI, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2012'.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁸ John Paul II, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 1998'.

⁶⁷⁹ Francis, 'Message for the World Day of Peace 2016'.

Finally, for the Church, which itself takes part in the education for peace of the new generations – directly in the school setting, but also indirectly through patronages, chaplaincies, etc. –, parents and teachers must strive for co-education and make the growth of the child the centre of their relationship. They should not oppose each other but help cooperate in the best interests of the child. As John Paul II said in 1995, *“the effectiveness of this education for peace will depend on the extent to which it involves the co-operation of those who, in different ways, are responsible for education and for the life of society. Time dedicated to education is time truly well spent, because it determines a person’s future, and therefore the future of the family and of the whole of society.”*⁶⁸⁰ To conclude, he delivered a message in 1997 to recall that all those engaged in the educational process deserve great respect since they endorse a decisive responsibility:

To you parents, the first educators of your children [...], I ask you to help your children to look upon all people as their brothers and sisters, to reach out to others without prejudice, with an attitude of trust and acceptance. [...] And you educators, called to teach young people the true values of life by introducing them to the complexity of history and human culture, help them to live in every situation the virtues of tolerance, understanding and respect; hold up to them as models those who have been artisans of peace and reconciliation.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁸⁰ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1995’.

⁶⁸¹ John Paul II, ‘Message for the World Day of Peace 1997’.

Conclusion

In this final thesis, we have tried to see how, both as heirs to the political tradition of the Holy See and as artisans of a personal leadership, have Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis used the word to advocate peace, in particular in their speeches for the World Day of Peace. In the first part, we first sought to show what material the Catholic Church and the successors of Peter relied on in their undertaking to promote peace: alongside the Holy Scriptures, the Church as an institution developed a whole dogmatic, pastoral and philosophical arsenal in the service of its irenic project. In a second stage, we went to the heart of the pontifical message by analysing the different elements which, according to the three popes, threaten peace and its sustainability: these factors of two types, immanent and structural, are as many flaws as possible in the evangelical project of pacifying the world. In the third and final part, the question was to present the different sources that can strengthen or restore peace according to the Church: according to it, the aim is to allow an “integral human development”, based on several pillars, which is at the service of man, of society, and finally of the whole of humanity. In sum, we have seen that the Church tries to play a key role in the promotion of peace. The abundant literature at its disposal encourages a constant reproduction of the same discourse: popes regularly quote each other or take up the ideas of their predecessors, proof of the importance of tradition in the Holy See’s international discourse. However, the last three pontiffs have also shown personal initiative: each speech, although often written by advisors or members of the Roman Curia, is at the image of the person who signed it. Differences between the periods are thus apparent: the popes have not always given equal importance to the same subject, each one also making use of his personal experience, even to the point of attempting a shift in the line adopted until then.

While it is difficult to quantify the real impact of these messages, their symbolic significance is often considerable. Moreover, they constitute a crucial element of the political doctrine of the Holy See. Indeed, these messages could be compared to a broad invitation addressed to the whole of humanity: that of a profound cultural renewal that reintegrates man into his social and collective dimension, from which he cannot be torn without being distorted. According to the Church, it is to an order that men aspire, and this order has a name: peace. However, it must not be understood as a distant horizon: peace is above all a dynamic order, already in the process of being realised through the people who are concerned to see it triumph over the human sufferings, founded on “*truth, justice, charity, and liberty*.”⁶⁸² The order of peace, which is, in the Christian vision, the natural order of creation as it was conceived from the beginning, already exists: it must not be created but welcomed and defended. For this reason, the papal discourse is unique: the goal of every person is to become a peacemaker since he has received peace and understood what it should be. For the Church, to each person falls the responsibility to promote and strengthen it: each human being is supposed to take its own part to work for the common good. The vision of international relations is therefore also turned upside down: the Catholic

⁶⁸² John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*.

Church sees peace not only as a geopolitical issue, but first and foremost as a human duty that everyone must honour. Since peace is an individual responsibility, society must be established in relation to the individual. From a political point of view, such a statement tends to question the role of the State. However, the political community is not delegitimised: on the contrary, the Church exhorts the faithful and all people of good will to participate in the building of a society that is more respectful of the person, and therefore more just, more fraternal, and more peaceful.

To conclude, the commitment of the popes to peace has been permanent from 1978 to 2021: John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis have tried to carry out this irenic project, despite the difficulties they have faced. Entrusting his Apostle Peter with the keys of his Church, Jesus assured him that the *“the gates of the underworld can never overpower it”* (Matt 16:18b). In the face of multiple threats to peace, the Church has persevered in its endeavour to promote peace, both internationally, nationally and personally. It has sought to highlight the various conditions that can help to strengthen and put peace into practice. Moreover, each pope has tried to conform in his own way to the Peace Prayer attributed to Francis of Assisi: *“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.”*

Abbreviations of biblical books

Old Testament

Gen: Genesis

Exo: Exodus

1 Kings: First Book of Kings

Isa: Isaiah

Mic: Micah

Zech: Zechariah

New Testament

Mat: Gospel of Matthew

Mark: Gospel of Mark

Luke: Gospel of Luke

John: Gospel of John

Acts: Acts of the Apostles

Rom: Epistle to the Romans

2 Cor: Second Epistle to the Corinthians

Gal: Epistle to the Galatians

Eph: Epistle to the Ephesians

Col: Epistle to the Colossians

1 Tim: First Epistle to Timothy

Heb: Epistle to the Hebrews

James: Epistle of James

1 Pet: First Epistle of Peter

Double-entry table representing the different occurrences of the most frequent topics in the speeches of the popes for the World Day of Peace from 1979 to 2021

Pope	Year	Title	Human rights / Human dignity	Social injustice and unemployment	Family and right to life	Wars and conflicts	International cooperation	Education
John-Paul II	1979	To reach peace, teach peace	X					
	1980	Truth, the power of peace	X			X		X
	1981	To serve peace, respect freedom	X	X			X	
	1982	Peace: a gift of God entrusted to us	X	X		X	X	
	1983	Dialogue for peace, a challenge for our time	X	X		X	X	
	1984	From a new heart, peace is born	X			X	X	X
	1985	Peace and youth go forward together	X	X	X			X
	1986	Peace is a value with no frontiers. North-South, East-West: only one peace	X	X				
	1987	Development and solidarity: two keys to peace	X	X	X	X		
	1988	Religious freedom: condition for peace	X	X			X	
	1989	To build peace, respect minorities	X	X	X			
	1990	Peace with God the creator, peace with all the creation	X		X	X		X
	1991	If you want peace, respect the conscience of every person	X		X	X	X	X
	1992	Believers united in building peace	X	X		X		
	1993	If you want peace, reach out to the poor	X	X		X	X	X
	1994	The family creates the peace of the human family	X	X	X	X		X
	1995	Women: teachers of peace	X		X	X		X
	1996	Let us give children a future of peace	X		X	X		X
	1997	Offer forgiveness and receive peace	X	X		X	X	X
	1998	From the justice of each comes peace for all	X	X	X	X	X	X
	1999	Respect for human peace: the secret of true peace	X	X	X	X	X	X
Benedict XVI	2000	"Peace on earth to those whom God loves"			X	X	X	X
	2001	Dialogue between cultures for a civilization of love and peace	X	X	X			X
	2002	No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness	X					
	2003	<i>Pacem in terris</i> : a permanent commitment	X	X	X	X	X	
	2004	An ever timely commitment: teaching peace	X			X	X	X
	2005	Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good	X	X	X	X		
	2006	In truth, peace		X		X	X	
	2007	The human person, the heart of peace	X	X	X	X	X	
	2008	The human family, a community of peace	X	X	X			X
	2009	Fighting poverty to build peace	X	X	X	X	X	X
Francis	2010	If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation	X		X	X	X	X
	2011	Religious freedom, the path to peace	X	X	X	X	X	X
	2012	Educating young people in justice and peace	X	X	X			X
	2013	"Blessed are the peacemakers"	X	X	X			X
	2014	Fraternity: the foundation and pathway to peace	X	X	X	X	X	
	2015	No longer slaves, but brothers and sisters	X	X	X	X	X	X
	2016	Overcome indifference and win peace	X	X	X	X	X	X
	2017	Nonviolence: a style of politics for peace	X	X	X	X	X	
	2018	Migrants and refugees: men and women in search of peace	X		X	X	X	X
	2019	Good politics is at the service of peace	X	X	X	X		
	2020	Peace as a journey of hope: dialogue, reconciliation and ecological conversion		X		X		X
	2021	A culture of care as a path to peace	X		X	X	X	X
		Totaux	40	32	31	30	27	26

Pope	Year	Freedom of religion and conscience	Truth against relativism	Consumption society	International law	Totalitarianisms	Culture and history	Individualism	Youth	Ecology	News and information	Democracy	Modernity
John-Paul II	1979		x	x			x		x		x		
	1980		x								x	x	
	1981	x		x	x	x	x						
	1982				x	x			x		x		
	1983		x				x					x	
	1984		x			x					x		
	1985	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x
	1986			x		x		x					
	1987	x	x			x							x
	1988	x	x	x		x		x					
	1989	x					x						
	1990			x				x		x			
	1991	x	x			x	x				x		
	1992	x										x	
	1993	x		x									
	1994												
	1995												
	1996				x		x		x				
	1997		x	x			x		x	x	x		x
	1998				x			x					
Benedict XVI	1999	x				x		x		x		x	
	2000				x	x			x	x		x	
	2001					x	x	x	x		x		x
	2002					x							
	2003				x	x					x	x	
	2004				x							x	
	2005			x									
	2006		x		x	x							
	2007	x	x		x					x			
	2008		x					x					
Francis	2009			x					x				x
	2010			x				x	x	x	x		
	2011	x	x		x	x	x						
	2012	x	x	x			x	x	x				x
	2013	x	x	x								x	
	2014	x		x	x			x		x			
	2015				x								
	2016	x	x	x				x	x	x	x		
	2017		x		x				x	x	x		
	2018								x				
	2019	x			x				x	x		x	
	2020	x	x	x	x		x	x		x		x	
	2021	x		x	x		x	x		x	x		
	18	18	18	17	17	15	14	14	14	14	12	11	6

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