

‘No Peace Without Justice, No Justice Without Forgiveness’

by Nina Ogden

Pope John Paul II’s notable message for World Peace Day, Jan. 1, 2002, was presented on Dec. 11 by Cardinal Francois-Xavier Van Thuan, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. International media coverage distorted the message’s content, suggesting that the Pope’s condemnation of terrorism as “a true crime against humanity,” means his support for the Afghanistan war, and for anti-terrorist war-fighting in general.

The principles and issues stressed by Lyndon LaRouche—a dialogue of civilizations based entirely on the conception of the human being as God’s creative image, and the policy of peace uniquely through economic development—point to a clearer understanding of the Pope’s message. The Pope is implicitly calling for the principles of the Peace of Westphalia, which ended the disastrous religious wars of the 17th Century, to be urgently applied to the current global crisis, “a world in which the power of evil seems once again to have taken the upper hand.” The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 was a unique treaty, based entirely on the agreement to “complete forgiveness” from all the warring states and religious parties, for the violence committed against them in the Thirty Years War; and on the full recognition by each of the sovereignty of the others within their territory.

The press has distorted the passionate intent for peace of Pope John Paul’s message, by putting only a few phrases into media circulation. The first sentence beginning section 5, for example, on self-defense against terrorism, has been widely quoted; but the sentence that follows it has been ignored: “The guilty must be correctly identified since criminal culpability is always personal *and cannot be extended to the nation, ethnic group or religion to which the terrorists may belong*” (emphasis added).

For that reason, we publish here extensive excerpts of the Papal message on “Forgiveness, The High Road,” which can be read in full at www.vatican.va/latest_en.html.

Excerpts of the message of His Holiness John Paul II, for the Jan. 1, 2002 World Day of Peace; issued from the Vatican, Dec. 8, 2001.

1. The World Day of Peace this year is being celebrated in the shadow of the dramatic events of 11 September last. On that day, a terrible crime was committed: in a few brief hours thousands of innocent people of many ethnic backgrounds were slaughtered. . . .

2. Recent events, including the terrible killings just mentioned, move me to return to a theme which often stirs in the depths of my heart when I remember the events of history which have marked my life, especially my youth.

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? My reasoned conviction, confirmed in turn by biblical revelation, is that the shattered order cannot be fully restored except by a response that combines justice with forgiveness. The pillars of true peace are justice and that form of love which is forgiveness.

3. But in the present circumstances, how can we speak of justice and forgiveness as the source and condition of peace? We can and we must, no matter how difficult this may be; a difficulty which often comes from thinking that justice and forgiveness are irreconcilable. But forgiveness is the opposite of resentment and revenge, not of justice. . . . For more than 1,500 years, the Catholic Church has repeated the teaching of Saint Augustine of Hippo on this point. He reminds us that the peace which can and must be built in this world is the peace of right order—*tranquillitas ordinis*, the tranquillity of order (cf. *De Civitate Dei*, 19,13).

True peace therefore is the fruit of justice, that moral virtue and legal guarantee which ensures full respect for rights and responsibilities, and the just distribution of benefits and burdens. 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. . . . Justice and forgiveness are both essential to such healing. . . .

The Reality Of Terrorism

4. 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. Well-organized terrorist groups can count on huge financial resources and develop wide-rang-

ing strategies, striking innocent people who have nothing to do with the aims pursued by the terrorists.

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 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.

5. There exists therefore a right to defend oneself against terrorism, a right which, as always, must be exercised with respect for moral and legal limits in the choice of ends and means. The guilty must be correctly identified, since criminal culpability is always personal and cannot be extended to the nation, ethnic group or religion to which the terrorists may belong. International cooperation in the fight against terrorist activities must also include a courageous and resolute political, diplomatic and economic commitment to relieving situations of oppression and marginalization which facilitate the designs of terrorists. . . .

Still, it must be firmly stated that the injustices existing in the world can never be used to excuse acts of terrorism. . . . The terrorist claim to be acting on behalf of the poor is a patent falsehood. . . .

You Shall Not Kill In God's Name!

6. . . . Respect for a person's conscience, where the image of God himself is reflected (cf. *Genesis* 1:26-27), means that we can only propose the truth to others, who are then responsible for accepting it. To try to impose on others by violent means what we consider to be the truth is an offence against human dignity, and ultimately an offense against God whose image that person bears. For this reason, what is usually referred to as fundamentalism is an attitude radically opposed to belief in God. Terrorism exploits not just people, it exploits God: it ends by making him an idol to be used for one's own purposes. . . .

The Need For Forgiveness

8. I would reaffirm that forgiveness inhabits people's hearts before it becomes a social reality. Only to the degree that an ethics and a culture of forgiveness prevail can we hope for a "politics" of forgiveness, expressed in society's attitudes and laws, so that through them justice takes on a more human character. . . .

9. Forgiveness therefore, as a fully human act, is above all a personal initiative. But individuals are essentially social beings, situated within a pattern of relationships through which they express themselves in ways both good and bad. Consequently, society too is absolutely in need of forgiveness. Families, groups, societies, States and the international community itself need forgiveness in order to renew ties that have been sundered, go beyond sterile situations of mutual condemnation and overcome the temptation to discriminate against others without appeal. The ability to forgive lies at the

very basis of the idea of a future society marked by justice and solidarity.

By contrast, the failure to forgive, especially when it serves to prolong conflict, is extremely costly in terms of human development. Resources are used for weapons rather than for development, peace and justice. What sufferings are inflicted on humanity because of the failure to reconcile! What delays in progress because of the failure to forgive! Peace is essential for development, but true peace is made possible only through forgiveness. . . .

10. . . . My ministry at the service of the Gospel obliges me, and at the same time gives me the strength, to insist upon the necessity of forgiveness. I do so again today in the hope of stirring serious and mature thinking on this theme, with a view to a far-reaching resurgence of the human spirit in individual hearts and in relations between the peoples of the world. . . .

The present troubled international situation prompts a more intense call to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has now been going on for more than fifty years, with alternate phases of greater or lesser tension. 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. The rights and demands of each party can be taken into proper account and balanced in an equitable way, if and when there is a will to let justice and reconciliation prevail. Once more I urge the beloved peoples of the Holy Land to work for a new era of mutual respect and constructive accord. . . .

Prayer For Peace

15. No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: this is what in this Message I wish to say to believers and unbelievers alike, to all men and women of good will who are concerned for the good of the human family and for its future.

No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: this is what I wish to say to those responsible for the future of the human community, entreating them to be guided in their weighty and difficult decisions by the light of man's true good, always with a view to the common good.

No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: I shall not tire of repeating this warning to those who, for one reason or another, nourish feelings of hatred, a desire for revenge or the will to destroy.

On this World Day of Peace, may a more intense prayer rise from the hearts of all believers for the victims of terrorism, for their families so tragically stricken, for all the peoples who continue to be hurt and convulsed by terrorism and war. May the light of our prayer extend even to those who gravely offend God and man by these pitiless acts, that they may look into their hearts, see the evil of what they do, abandon all violent intentions, and seek forgiveness. In these troubled times, may the whole human family find true and lasting peace, born of the marriage of justice and mercy!