Jove Jim S. AGUAS[*]

JUST SOCIETY AND THE CULTURE OF PEACE

In a just and humane society, there is respect for the human person and her dignity. The human person is not an abstract or faceless individual, and her dignity is not an abstract idea. We see the human person in workers toiling every day, in the hungry and homeless refugees, and in victims of war. Since the ultimate concern for justice is the human person, there is a need to always safeguard her dignity and rights. We need to confront any ideology that destroys or degrades the human person based on a populist, materialistic, and consumerist orientation.

Chapter 1, Article 1 of the United Nations Charter states that one of the purposes of the UN is "to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace."[1] Goal 16 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals is about "promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. People everywhere should be free of fear from all forms of violence and feel safe as they go about their lives, whatever their ethnicity, faith, or sexual orientation."[2] World peace and a just society are noble goals. Unfortunately, however, they are still elusive ideals.

Historical facts attest to this sad reality. Many studies show that in the twentieth century alone, with two world wars, almost two hundred million people were killed by war, oppression, and other forms of conflicts and atrocities. Equally horrible are the unreported violence against helpless and innocent

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[1] United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Charter (June 26, 1945), United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text.

[2] United Nations Office for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goals (Sept. 27, 2015), United Nations, https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/.

civilians, especially children and women, all around the globe, the unreported murders, rapes, kidnappings, child prostitution, and other acts of violence. Racial injustice and discrimination, as well as poverty, unemployment, unequal opportunity, and malnutrition, are still the big problems that humanity faces today.

Nevertheless, humanity continues to dream of attaining these ideals. This is manifested by the many declarations and resolutions on peace and proposals on how to attain a just society. There are many declarations and resolutions on peace: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[3] adopted in 1948, the Declaration on the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace[4] of 1978, the Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace[5] of 1984, the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace[6] of 1999, The Bruxelles Declaration *Pledge to Peace*[7] of 2011, and the Annex to the Declaration on the Right to Peace[8] adopted in 2016.

We want peace; who does not want peace? However, the facts and intentions, as evidenced by the declarations and resolutions, seem inconsistent or do not match. There are initiatives to promote world peace, but every time we make a breakthrough, another conflict happens, e.g., the Russia–Ukraine war, the war in Gaza, the Myanmar coup d'état, gang violence in many parts of the world, and many others. Furthermore, there is unending and often unreported violence against children and women, there are unreported murders, rapes, kidnappings, child prostitution, religious violence, cyber-attacks, and instances of bullying. Moreover, discrimination, in various forms, is still in the headlines of news reports. In the Philippines, for example, during the term of President Rodrigo Duterte, hundreds of thousands fell victim to the bloody war on drugs that claimed many lives, mostly the poor.[9] This deplorable situation is compounded by the unabated spread of fake news and troll farms. Can we ever feel safe and secure in our homes, in our community, in the world?

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[3] See United Nations General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Dec. 10, 1948), United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

[4] See United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace (Dec. 15, 1978), UN Documents, http://un-documents.net/a33r73.htm.

[5] See United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace (Nov. 12, 1984), United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-right-peoples-peace.

[6] See United Nations General Assembly, Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (Sept. 13, 1999), UN Documents, http://un-documents.net/a53r243.htm.

[7] See Parlement européen, Déclaration d'intention *Pledge to Peace* (Engagement pour la paix) (Nov. 28, 2011), Associazione Percorsi, https://www.associazionepercorsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Pledge-to-Peace-FRANCAIS.pdf.

[8] See United Nations General Assembly, Annex: Declaration on the Right to Peace (Dec. 19, 2026), United Nations, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/71/189.

[9] See Danielle P. O c h o a and Michelle G. O n g, "Negotiated Harms in Moralized Policies: The Case of Duterte's War on Drugs," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 10, no. 2 (2022): 554.

Aside from peace, we want a just society, and it has been the aspiration of man since time immemorial. Philosophers and other thinkers have expounded on this ideal state, and yet equality, inclusion, respect for human rights, just distribution of wealth, access to basic services, and many other goods are still unreachable, especially for those marginalized and poor. It is not difficult to see that a culture of peace and a just society are two ideals that are intertwined; justice and peace precondition each other.

The question is, how can we attain this ideal? Needless to say, politics and social structures are very much a part of attaining it. There must be political will on the part of the stakeholders: the individuals, the communities, and the nations must all not just have the political will but perform concrete actions in order to attain such an ideal. Social structures must be put in place to make this a reality. Moreover, while the political and social components are important, the ethical component is equally significant. The political resolutions and accords among nations are in place, but if ethical considerations are not part of the equation, then attaining such ideals is impossible. After all, these political and social structures depend on the ethical conduct of men. There is a reason why Aristotle linked ethics and politics. While ethics and politics are both practical sciences that deal with human beings as moral agents, ethics is primarily about the actions of human beings as individuals, and politics is about the actions of human beings in communities.[10] Aristotle believed that ethics and politics were closely linked and that ethical and virtuous conduct and life are only available to someone who participates in politics, while moral education is the main purpose of the political community. The goal of politics is the best of ends, and the main concern of politics is to engender a certain character in the citizens and to make them good and disposed to perform noble actions.[11] Ethics, on the other hand, is concerned with the right conduct and proper or ethical way of life. Attaining the ideals of peace and a just society has something to do with the right way of living, not only in our personal lives but also in society.

A CULTURE OF PEACE AND A JUST SOCIETY

What is the world peace that we aspire for? A definition of world peace may be difficult to formulate, but perhaps a description of that ideal is workable. It is the ideal state of societal friendship and harmony among peoples and nations

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[10] See A r i s t o t l e, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 6, 5–8, trans. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), The Internet Classics Archive, http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.2.ii.html.

[11] See ibidem, Book 1, 9.

where there is no hostility or violence, the condition where there is no conflict, such as war, and where there is freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups: the condition where the rights and dignity of every human being are respected and safeguarded, where truth and justice prevail, where every person and family have food on their table and a comfortable place to live, where every child can go to school without fear and get an education, where everyone, man or woman, can have a stable job and provide for their family, the condition where Mother Earth is safe from destruction caused by humans. Such a perfect scenario will require a global harmony, stability, global cooperation, non-violent resolution of conflicts, and respect for the human person and her dignity.

What is a just society? Based on the social teachings of the Catholic Church, we gather key considerations, namely, to respect and protect human life from conception to natural death, to prioritize the well-being of all people, especially the marginalized, disadvantaged, and vulnerable, to empower local communities and individuals to address social issues, to promote unity and cooperation among people, to strengthen and support the family, to provide quality education for all, especially the poor, to protect the rights of the workers, to care for the environment, which is God's creation.[12]

In a just society, there is, first and foremost, respect for the human person and her dignity. There is recognition and promotion of the good of others, the family, and the whole human community; there is a commitment to strengthen the community politically, socially, and economically; there is protection against the structural causes of poverty, inequality, lack of work, land, and housing, the denial of social and labor rights; there are no barriers caused by gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability; there are equal

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[12] These are highlighted in several Church documents, such as Leo XIII's encyclical addressing the issue of workers' rights (see L e o XIII, Encyclical on Capital and Labor *Rerum Novarum* (1891), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html) and Pius XI's encyclical on social justice (see P i u s XI, Encyclical on Reconstruction of the Social Order *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html). See also J o h n XXIII, Encyclical on Christianity and Social Progress *Mater et Magistra* (1961), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html, and The Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. In a similar vein John Paul II addressed the issue of economic justice (see J o h n P a u l II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (1991), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html) and Francis that of environmental stewardship (see F r a n c i s, Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home *Laudato Si'* (2015), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).

economic, political, and social rights and opportunities; there is priority for the needs of the marginalized and disadvantaged; there is an economy that serves people, and all persons have a right to dignified work and to fair wages and working conditions. And, finally, there is recognition and protection of the intrinsic value of the environment and the whole of God's creation.

Furthermore, a just and peaceful society must pursue the common good.[13] We must all consider the good of others and the good of the whole human family in organizing our society: economically, politically, and legally. John XXIII, quoting Pius XI, recommends the "re-establishment of the economic world within the framework of the moral order and the subordination of individual and group interests to the interest of the common good as the principal remedies for these evils."[14]

In a just society, there is due consideration and respect for the intrinsic value of our mother Earth as God's creation. We are responsible for protecting and cherishing the Earth's ecological diversity, beauty, and life-sustaining properties. According to Pope Francis, we must practice responsible stewardship since caring for our common home, the Earth, is important.[15] Our task is "not only to protect the environment but also to ensure economic betterment for all people, not only for the rich but, more importantly, for the poor and marginalized."[16]

Moreover, it is our duty to remove barriers that people face due to their gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability, because while we are not all the same and equal, we are all equally human. Pope Francis optimistically says: "Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with

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[13] See L e o XIII, *Rerum Novarum*; P i u s XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*; J o h n XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*; J o h n XXIII, Encyclical on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth *Pacem in Terris* (1963), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html; P a u l VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html; The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*; J o h n P a u l II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html; J o h n P a u l II, *Centesimus Annus*; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM; B e n e d i c t XVI, Encyclical Letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html.

[14] J o h n XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, Section 37.

[15] See F r a n c i s, *Laudato Si'*, Section 13.

[16] Jove Jim S. A g u a s, "Sustainable Development and Integral Ecology in the *Laudato Si'* and the Philippine Ecological Experience," *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics* 8, no. 1 (2018): 1.

his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all."[17] The state must promote equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities so that fairness can be advocated.[18] It must serve the people and not the other way around. All persons have a right to dignified work, fair wages, and working conditions.

LAW AND JUST SOCIETY

The law reflects the universal moral principles that ensure justice and fairness. It is the objective of the law to maintain social order and justice and to balance individual rights and societal justice. Hence, the law is one of the anchors of a just society. All natural and human laws emanate from the eternal law of God. St. Thomas Aquinas, in his discussion of the purposes of human law, stresses that human law, aside from providing the missing details that the natural law leaves out due to its generality, also compels those under the law to observe the standards of justice and morality, even those which the natural law does not specify. Thus, even though killing is already prohibited by natural law, human laws must still include prohibitions against murder, assault, and similar criminal acts.[19] St. Thomas Aquinas stressed that human laws are essential for the maintenance of any organized and civilized society. This implies the necessity of human law to include an additional coercive incentive to respect and promote the common good. By means of the law, those who show hostility to their fellow citizens are restrained from their evildoing through "force and fear" and may even eventually come "to do willingly what hitherto they did from fear, and thus become virtuous."[20] There are two dimensions of the common good that human law relates, namely, peace and justice. Peace requires social order, and in maintaining social order, the citizens must be free from the aggression of wrongdoers and other preventable threats to safety or livelihood.

Following Aristotle, St. Thomas further added that in preserving social order at its most basic level human law should strive to instill virtue, specifically the kind of virtue that has to do with the common good of society; the virtue in question is justice, and legal justice to be specific, because thereby man is in harmony with the law, which directs the acts of all the virtues to the common

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[17] F r a n c i s, Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship *Fratelli Tutti*, Section 8, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

[18] See J o h n XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, Section 147.

[19] See T h o m a s A q u i n a s, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 95, a. 2, trans. Laurence Shapcote (Green Bay, Wisconsin: Aquinas Institute, 2012), vol. 16, 239–40.

[20] Ibidem, I-II, q. 95, a. 1, vol. 16, 238.

good.[21] The human law must be concerned with instilling virtues insofar as those virtues perfect human beings in their dealings with fellow citizens and the broader community as a whole. St. Thomas Aquinas explains that "the good of any virtue, whether such virtue direct man in relation to himself, or in relation to certain other individual persons, is preferable to the common good, to which justice directs: so that all acts of virtue can pertain to justice, insofar as it directs man to the common good."[22] St. Thomas Aquinas regards legal justice as the political virtue par excellence; it signifies not only obedience to the law but an inner disposition of the human will by which those possessing it refer all their actions to the common good. Human law, therefore, should promote both justice and peace. Moreover, human law must also seek to preserve justice as a certain kind of fairness. This means that citizens become just by cultivating the "perpetual and constant will to render to each one his right"[23] and that legislators and judges make sure that the right of particular situations between individuals is established or restored, that each person receives what is "due" to him, such that a certain equality is maintained among citizens.[24] Since world peace is an ideal state of societal global harmony, the legislation of just laws and their fair implementation is a necessary requirement of world peace.

FOUNDATION FOR A JUST AND HUMANE SOCIETY

When we imagine a humane, just, orderly, peaceful society, we cannot help but think of the moral values—justice, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, fairness, equality, respect, etc. Without these moral values, our society will be chaotic, disorderly, and unjust. However, forming a just and humane society entails certain basic principles that serve as the foundation for a just and humane society. In the succeeding discussion, I present certain principles inspired by my readings of *Gaudium et Spes* and other Church teachings and documents.

RESPECT FOR THE HUMAN PERSON, HUMAN DIGNITY, AND RIGHTS

In a just and humane society, there is respect for the human person and her dignity. The human person is not an abstract or faceless individual, and her dignity is not an abstract idea. We see the human person in workers toiling every

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[21] See ibidem, II-II, q. 58, a. 5–6, vol. 17, 542–43.
[22] Ibidem, II-II, q. 58, a. 5, vol. 17, 542.
[23] Ibidem, II-II, q. 58, a. 1, vol. 17, 536.
[24] See J o h n XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, Section 122.

day, in the hungry and homeless refugees, and in victims of war. No less than St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John Paul II expressed such a coherent expression of the mystery of the human person and her inherent dignity. Since the ultimate concern for justice is the human person, there is a need to always safeguard her dignity and rights. We need to confront any ideology that destroys or degrades the human person based on a populist, materialistic, and consumerist orientation. When governments and states employ policies that only promote the material well-being but ignore the spiritual aspect of the human person, well-meaning people must oppose such policies. In times of political, cultural, economic, and moral confusion and ambiguities, our guiding principle must be the spiritual rootedness of the human person: the human person as *imago Dei*, or the image of God. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* states, "A just society can become a reality only when it is based on the respect of the transcendent dignity of the human person. The person represents the ultimate end of society. The social order and its development must invariably work to the benefit of the human person... not the other way around."[25]

Pope Francis stresses the invitation for us to acknowledge the dignity of the person and contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity.[26] To better understand the call to fraternity, Pope Francis adds, "Only by cultivating this way of relating to one another will we make possible a social friendship that excludes no one and a fraternity that is open to all."[27] Fraternity is a call to uphold and respect the dignity of one another to develop a better society.

Moreover, we need to realize that man is not only a spiritual being, but also a social one. Thus, society must be formed so that the dignity and rights of every human person can be guaranteed. People have the right to productive work, fair wages, private property, and economic initiative, among others. In *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII emphasized the need to respect the workers' dignity and that the good of their souls must be kept in mind, to secure their rights, and to provide them with better working conditions for a better life, which are demands of justice.[28] For this reason, the Church calls for social action to improve how workers are treated. Thus, the dignity of workers becomes a priority so that human beings can enjoy life and fully live authentically and creatively.[29]

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[25] Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 2006), 132.

[26] See F r a n c i s, *Fratelli Tutti*, Section 94.

[27] Ibidem.

[28] See L e o XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, Section 20.

[29] See J o h n P a u l II, Encyclical Letter on Human Work *Laborem Exercens* (1981), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html.

UPHOLDING THE VALUE OF REASON AND WISDOM

Man is gifted with reason, and by his intellect, he is able to surpass the material universe precisely because he shares in the light of the divine mind. By relentlessly employing his talents through the ages, he has made progress in the practical sciences and in technology, and liberal arts. In our time, man has been more successful in probing the material world and subjecting it to himself.[30] However, the intellectual nature of man must be perfected by wisdom because it is wisdom that gently attracts the mind of man to a quest and a love for what is true and good. Through wisdom, he passes through visible realities to those which are unseen.[31]

Our modern era needs such wisdom more than the past eras, so that the discoveries and progress that man has attained can be further humanized. Science and technology, including artificial intelligence, have brought immense progress. However, this technological progress must promote the integral development of man, that is, both his physical and material aspects as well as his spiritual and religious aspects. Our future could be compromised unless wiser men are forthcoming. So, while reason allows us to progress, it is wisdom that will humanize the progress we have attained so that our future is secured.[32] A just and humane society is anchored on the values of reason and wisdom.

FORMING RIGHTFUL CONSCIENCE AND AUTHENTIC FREEDOM

In the depths of his conscience, man recognizes a law that he does not impose upon himself but one that holds him to obedience. A rightful conscience always loves the good and avoids evil; when necessary, the voice of conscience speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God, to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it, he will be judged.[33] Hence, man, by forming a rightful conscience, affirms and perfects his inherent dignity. A just and humane society is composed of men with a rightful conscience that guides them in moral living. In conscience, the truth presents itself as the source of moral duty, a sort of "categorical imperative."[34] According to Karol Wojtyla, it is in conscience that the good is subordinated to the

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[30] See The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Section 15.

[31] See ibidem.

[32] See ibidem.

[33] See ibidem, Section 16.

[34] Jove Jim S. A g u a s, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thought of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II)* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2014), 281.

truth. "Conscience directs the person towards the truth and in the direction of a good, willed, and chosen in the light of truth."[35]

It is only in authentic freedom that man can direct himself toward goodness. Many people have fought for and eagerly pursued freedom to the point of sacrificing their lives. However, there are also orientations that distort the very essence of freedom by interpreting it as the liberty to do whatever is pleasurable, even if it is evil. Authentic freedom is the ability to determine one's own actions guided by what is true and good. "Authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man. For God has willed that man remain 'under the control of his own decisions.'"[36] Man's dignity demands that he acts according to a knowing and free choice that is personally motivated and prompted from within, not by a blind internal impulse or merely external pressure. Man achieves such dignity when he emancipates himself from all captivity to passion, when he pursues what is good through a self-determined, effective, and skillful action.[37] There is no freedom if people are determined by the conditioning of materialistic and consumerist propaganda. Some people act by impulse; they buy or patronize products because of the excessive and sometimes false advertising. The exercise of freedom is crucial in establishing a just society, and man is most himself when subject to his own destiny and in his pursuit of goodness, truth, and beauty.

UPHOLDING TRUTH AND ACCOUNTABILITY

According to Pope John Paul II, man is called to freedom and truth. Truth is man's unshakable foundation. There is no freedom without truth. Unfortunately, false claims and fake news proliferate, and they are becoming the usual staple on social media. And many people pass these false claims and fake news as the "truth," and make these the basis of their choices and opinions. How can there be true freedom if there is no genuine truth? Freedom and truth are integrated phenomena fused into one. Truth enlightens man's intelligence and shapes his freedom, leading him to know and love the Lord and fellow men. Only freedom stemming from truth begets good; otherwise, freedom can be a force for evil, as it degenerates into license. Man's free creative forces will only develop to the full if they are based on the truth, which is given to every man as an unshakable foundation. Only then will he be able to realize himself fully and even outgrow himself. There is no freedom without truth. According to Wojtyla, the ability to decide and to choose is connected to the truth; thus, freedom has reference to the truth, and

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[35] Karol W o j t y ł a, "Person: Subject and Community," *Review of Metaphysics* 33, no. 2 (1979): 274.

[36] The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Section 17.

[37] See ibidem.

such reference to the truth is an intrinsic part of the very nature of decision-making and choice.[38] The basic condition of choice and the ability to make a choice lies in the specific reference of the will to truth. This reference to the truth permeates the intentionality of willing and constitutes the inner principle of volition.[39] Free choices must be based on truth. However, truth forces something on us, namely, accountability: accountability for our actions and decisions. In a just and human society, these are two crucial elements. Truth is our armor against falsehoods, and accountability is our shield against impunity. Pope John Paul II laments that "once the idea of a universal truth about the good, knowable by human reason, is lost, inevitably the notion of conscience also changes."[40] Hence, the idea of an objective and universal truth, a truth that is not "only true for me," must be defended against the onslaught of falsehoods and relative truths.

PROMOTING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

There is a need to be responsible not only for God's creation but also for the welfare of our fellow human beings. Our social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advancement of society are based on our relationship with one another. While there are ideologies that promote individualism and personal interests, they actually run counter to the very social nature of man. "No man is an island,"[41] is maybe an old cliché, but it is very much true; we need one another and must be responsible for one another.

In our time, human interdependence and interaction have grown rapidly all over the world. And because of this, the common good—the conditions of social life that allow social groups and their individual members to attain their own fulfillment—takes an increasingly universal character. This involves the recognition of the rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group, therefore, must consider and respect the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups and the general welfare of the entire human family.[42]

Social responsibility calls for equality and respect for the rights of others, especially for the right to life and to a decent living. But man can scarcely

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[38] See A g u a s, *Person, Action and Love*, 279.

[39] See Karol W o j t y ł a, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 137.

[40] J o h n P a u l II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), Section 32, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html.

[41] John D o n n e, "'Meditation XVII' from 'Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions,'" in John Donne, *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayward (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1945), 538.

[42] See The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Section 26.

arrive at the needed sense of responsibility unless his living conditions allow him to become conscious of his dignity and rise to his destiny by spending himself for God and others. Human freedom is often crippled when a human being encounters extreme poverty, just as it withers when he indulges in too many of life's comforts and imprisons himself in a kind of splendid isolation. Freedom acquires new strength, by contrast, when a human being consents to the unavoidable requirements of social life, takes on the manifold demands of human partnership, and commits himself to the service of the human community.

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF PEACE

As already mentioned, justice and peace must go together. A just and humane society is anchored in a culture of peace. Respect for and development of human life and promoting human dignity require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war; world peace cannot be attained without safeguarding all persons' welfare, respecting their dignity, and the rights of individuals to free association and interaction with one another. It cannot be attained whenever there are poverty, discrimination, exploitation, corruption, violence, and falsehoods, or whenever there is no solidarity among people and communities. So, the challenge now is to promote a culture of lasting peace, a culture where the human person with her dignity is respected, a culture where communities and peoples live harmoniously with each other, and the social and political ills are at least mitigated.

In a paper published many years ago, I proposed specific initiatives and courses of action through which we can promote a culture of peace.[43] The significance of these proposals, I believe, is still valid today, because we are still facing the same problems: the absence of peace, the culture of violence and death, the lack of respect for the human person and her dignity, the deplorable condition of the marginalized and poor sectors of society, and many others. So, I reiterate them here, with some modifications and additions, as they are relevant to the discussion of the topic undertaken in this paper. The context of these proposals was the culture of violence that disregards human dignity, and so the proposals are countermeasures against violence, formulated in the hope that peace could be attained. I stress that while theoretical principles provide us with certain guidelines and intellectual foundations for peace, concepts alone

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[43] Jove Jim S. A g u a s, "Promoting Human Dignity in a Culture of Peace," *Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions* 3 (2005): 55–80.

cannot create a concrete culture of peace. Attitudes and a concrete course of action are needed to establish the kind of culture we hope to attain.

CHANGE IN HUMAN ATTITUDES

Violence is not only caused by social factors; it is also due to a human being's aggressive nature, which sometimes predisposes him to violent behavior. However, that aggressive nature is rooted in the physiological aspect of the human being; it stems from his lower order of passions and instincts. Such a lower order can be governed and controlled by the higher order of reason. The mind and the heart can check a human being's violent or aggressive nature. And this can be done by allowing the mind and the heart to rule over the lower order of passions and instincts. We cannot ignore our passions and instincts, but we can put them under the mind and heart's guidance and control.

A change of mind and heart, word, and action is essential to our work for peace; what we need most is not a change of human beings but a change in human beings. In a culture of violence, the human person is both the victim and the culprit; therefore, there must be a change in the attitudes towards the person, her life, her rights, her dignity, and the basic institutions of human persons, like the family and the community. We can achieve this through (1) love and respect for the human person, (2) understanding of and sensitivity to differences, and (3) genuine concern and dialogue.

Love and Respect

The first basic element of this change in human attitudes is love and respect for the human person. The human person has a higher value than things or objects. Every human person enjoys the same dignity and equal rights. All of us are human persons, and we are all equal in the eyes of God. Hence, everyone must work toward that proper attitude of loving and respecting human life and human dignity. Love and respect transcend boundaries and differences; what is important is the commonality shared by people. "Respect and love should also be extended to those who think and act differently than we do in social, political, and even religious matters."[44] As a Catholic, I have to be respectful and accommodating also to a Muslim co-worker or neighbor, not because he is a Muslim, but because he is a human person. According to Pope Francis, in promoting love and respect, one must promote the inalienable dignity of each

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[44] The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Section 28.

human person, regardless of her origin, race, or religion, and the supreme law of fraternal love.[45]

Understanding and Sensitivity

While we are all persons, we also have our differences. We represent different nations, races, and religions, and have our own cultures and practices. However, these differences should not be the source of conflict among men. Different people must overcome these differences and work for harmony among them. One basic element of the promotion of harmony among people of different cultures, races, and religions is the proper understanding of the differences among religions, races, cultures, and peoples. This understanding should bring about sensitivity to these differences. We know that each group of people has its own religious and cultural practices and doctrines; we need to be understanding and sensitive to these practices and beliefs. This does not mean acceptance of their beliefs, but respect for other people's beliefs, individuality, and uniqueness, as long as those beliefs do not undermine or violate the dignity and rights of others. In the Philippines, for instance, to address the challenges, conflicts, and tensions brought about by religious diversity and differences, programs and initiatives have been undertaken. Such programs and initiatives to promote interreligious dialogue were implemented to reduce tension, build trust, and cross religious boundaries among or between ethno-religious identities. One common practice is the interfaith prayer, which is usually done during interreligious activities.

Genuine Concern and Dialogue

Another element that helps promote an atmosphere of harmony is genuine concern and dialogue. We know that certain ideas or interests cannot be easily reconciled, and whenever there are seemingly irreconcilable differences, the best option is a genuine concern and dialogue. In genuine concern and dialogue, one need not abandon one's own standpoint but try to extend one's hand over the other in a dialogue characterized by respect and sensitivity. Genuine dialogue is an open exchange of ideas and beliefs with the hope that such an exchange will bring about mutual understanding and harmony. This can be done in issues or matters of religion, culture, or some other interests. Genuine dialogue is not limited to the exchange of ideas and views; it can also

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[45] See F r a n c i s, *Fratelli Tutti*, Section 39.

be at the level of day-to-day life and experiences in the workplace, in schools, and in communities.

According to Martin Buber, in a genuine dialogue, "each should regard his partner as the very one he is."[46] Each one becomes aware of the other as different and unique in each particular way, but still accepts the other as the person that each one is. Therefore, "I can direct what I say to him as the person he is."[47] I must, at certain points, offer opposition to his beliefs and personal conviction, but what is essential, according to Buber, is that I accept this person with whom I struggle; I struggle with him as his partner; I oppose his conviction, but I affirm him as a person. In genuine dialogue, I confirm my partner as this existing unique being even while I oppose him and his conviction. It is true, Buber notes, that it now depends on the other whether genuine dialogue can arise between us, but I must trust him and suppose that he is also ready to deal with me as his partner. "But if I thus give to the other who confronts me his legitimate standing as a man with whom I am ready to enter into dialogue, then I must trust him and suppose him to be also ready to deal with me as his partner."[48]

In the Philippines, dialogue workshops are organized and focused on social issues, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. One particular example is the program of the Initiative for International Dialogue (IID), a regional advocacy institution doing policy, campaigns, and solidarity work to advocate for people-to-people solidarity through its peacebuilding and thematic work in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. Its peace process program aims to highlight various civil society engagement and advocacy initiatives on both formal and community-based peace processes happening in the Philippines, as well as those in the region.[49]

MORAL REVOLUTION

One cause of the culture of violence is the deterioration of our social and moral lives and values. Today, corruption, falsehoods, immorality, and unethical practices are almost everywhere. Social media are saturated with accounts of the deterioration of our moral values. The best way to counter this is a change in our moral life. What is needed is a moral revolution, a drastic change in our

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[46] Martin B u b e r, "Elements of the Interhuman," trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, in Martin Buber, *Knowledge of Man: A Philosophy of the Interhuman*, trans. Maurice Friedman and Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Harper & Row Publishing, 1965), 79.

[47] Ibidem.

[48] Ibidem, 80.

[49] See Initiatives for International Dialogue, "What We Do," https://iidnet.org/what-we-do/.

moral values, and this could be done through (1) a renewed ethic of justice and caring, (2) the promotion of personal responsibility, (3) the strengthening of fundamental moral values, and (4) the formation of ethical character.

Renewed Ethic of Justice and Caring

"Peace is an enterprise of justice."[50] Justice is a virtue that requires us to give to others what is due to them. It consists of the constant and firm will to give what is due to fellow man. It disposes an individual to respect the rights of others and to establish harmonious human relationships. It promotes equity concerning the person and the common good and requires that we share the fruits of the earth with others. In promoting a culture of peace, justice must be a priority in society. As John Rawls states, "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought."[51] Thus, peace can only be attained if justice is achieved and promoted.

However, justice alone is not enough. Justice may emphasize the autonomy of the moral person in giving to others what is due to her and may put more emphasis on autonomy and separateness; a renewed ethic of justice should stress more the interconnection and interrelation of persons. This renewed ethic of justice is based on an ethic of caring. This ethic of caring stresses our concern for others and our interpersonal relations with them as the basis for giving them what is due to them. While justice tells us to regulate our actions or lives following certain general moral principles, a renewed ethic of justice based on caring stresses the good and the welfare of others, unmediated by principles, rules, or judgments. It tells us that we ought to be concerned about their welfare. One who cares about the welfare of others without having to rely on or be guided by explicit moral principles or thinking is more connected with those others than someone who acts only on the basis of such mediating principles or thoughts. This ethic of caring stresses our concern for others and our interpersonal relations with them as the basis for giving them what is due to them.[52] During times of calamities, extending a helping hand through donations and offering shelter to the victims are gestures of an ethic of caring.

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[50] The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Section 78.

[51] John R a w l s, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 3.

[52] See Jolanda v a n D i j k e et al., "Care Ethics: An Ethics of Empathy?" *Nursing Ethics* 26, no. 5 (2018): 1282–91.

Promotion of Personal Responsibility

Most of the problems we experience in life and society are due to our failure to accept personal responsibility. With all the problems in our society, it seems no one is willing to admit that he or she is responsible. Whatever happens to our world is the responsibility of everyone; if there is violence all over us, that is because we fail to be responsible for everyone and for our society.

As persons, we are given our freedom; as persons, we are free moral agents, and as such, we must be responsible for our acts and the consequences of our actions. Therefore, the notion of individual freedom requires a concomitant view of personal responsibility. Since, as individuals, we are free to choose how to lead our lives and take our actions, then we must be held accountable for those choices and actions. The promotion of personal responsibility requires that everyone not only be responsible for their actions but also for the consequences of their actions, especially those that affect others. For instance, throwing or disposing of garbage and trash anywhere, especially into waterways, has negative and often catastrophic consequences; hence, any responsible person would refrain from doing such an irresponsible act.

Personal responsibility extends to our fellow men, neighbors, society, and the world. This responsibility for the other starts with the person being responsible for himself or herself. This responsibility for the other then originates from the self, or person, and returns to the self, so that the immensity of this responsibility can only be understood by someone who has a complete awareness of the value of the person, both his or her own and that of the other. Irresponsible garbage disposal would have negative consequences not only for oneself but also for others and Mother Earth.

Strengthening of Fundamental Moral Values

The modern world is marked by great progress in economics, commerce, technology, and science. However, parallel with this progress is the weakening or, worse, the abandonment of certain fundamental moral values. We are pressured to keep up with the pace of development, and in the rush of everyday life, we become absorbed into the prevailing materialism and individualism which are so characteristic of the modern world. In a fast-changing world, we often change our values; fundamental moral values are either ignored or totally abandoned. Values like honesty, truthfulness, justice, and respect for others are delegated to the background and replaced by dishonesty, falsity, injustice, selfishness, and other pragmatic, relativistic, and individualistic values.

There is a need to strengthen our moral values, which should start in our families and our schools, because values are formed during the early years of a person's life. Pope Francis writes that a moral conscience must be formed at a very young age so that the foundation for striving for a moral society is strong.[53] If these values are not fortified during the age of formation, then chances are the person will abandon these moral values for pragmatic or selfish values in the face of the demands and pressures of the modern world. Thus, value formation must begin even in the early stages of a child's life in the family.

We need to nurture and strengthen our values. By nurturing the value of faith and hope, we strengthen our spirits; by strengthening the value of compassion, we are moved to show concern towards others; by strengthening humility and kindness, we put the needs and interests of others ahead of our own; by nurturing patience and perseverance, we endure the long struggle for justice and peace; and with charity, we treat others with respect and love.

Formation of Ethical Character

The real ethical character involves the adoption of absolute values and norms.[54] The formation of ethical character is significantly oriented towards absolute values, moral virtues, and nurturing interpersonal relations with fellow men. Thus, a moral character is a well-rounded moral personality—imbued with good values and moral virtues and the capacity to care for others.[55]

Strengthening our moral values can be done through character formation or education. Character education or formation is about developing good virtues and moral values and deepening the individual's capacities for interpersonal relations. Character formation is not just about acquiring the right views or politically correct opinions and concepts about politics, family, economy, ecology, and other controversial issues. It is more than just forming one's mind and acquiring motor skills; it is about building a well-rounded moral personality.[56]

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[53] See F r a n c i s, Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family *Amoris Laetitia* (2016), Section 263, the Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf.

[54] See Martin B u b e r, *Between Man and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Glasgow: Collins, Sons & Co., 1979), 108.

[55] See Jove Jim S. A g u a s, "Character Formation: A Challenge to Educational Institutions," *Karunungan: Journal of Philosophy* 19 (2002): 182–96. In this article, I developed and discussed the essence of ethical character. In the present discussion I am following my views expressed in the article, using the term "formation" instead of "education."

[56] See ibidem: 186.

The formation of ethical character is not simply educating the mind or the intellect, disregarding the importance of the affective and moral aspect of the person, or just depositing information into the minds of individuals, especially young people. It is developing values in their hearts. When we feed them with information and ideas only, they simply become smart or bright, but devoid of values like honesty, love, generosity, respect, and understanding. Any character formation conceived independently of its relational contexts would ultimately lead to solitariness and to a human being all for himself. Sometimes, those who sow violence are gifted with intelligence and skills, but because they are devoid of ethical character, they use their intelligence and skills to hurt or kill others.

SOCIAL ACTION

A change in human attitude and moral revolution is not enough; there must be some concrete actions in the social realm if we hope to promote a culture of peace. The forces of competition, conflict and aggression, and domination advanced by some sociological theories can be confronted and countered by the forces and principles of dialogue, cooperation, community-building, and development. The following are concrete steps that should be undertaken in order to promote a culture of peace: (1) participation in the community, (2) intercultural and interreligious dialogues, (3) conflict resolution, and (4) social development.

Participation in Community and the Common Good

Participation in communal life is oriented towards the value of the common good. Community is not simply a plurality of persons, but the dynamic unity of that plurality. In a community, the individuals simply exist and act together with others. If one looks at a community, there is a shared commonality in almost all communities.[57] According to Karol Wojtyla, the coexistence and cooperation of members in a community have a fundamental norm: the common good.[58]

The common good in the subjective sense conditions and somehow initiates in the persons acting together with others.[59] In this sense, the common good

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[57] See A g u a s, *Person, Action and Love*, 134.
[58] See W o j t y ł a, "The Person: Subject and Community": 291.
[59] See W o j t y ł a, *The Acting Person*, 281.

corresponds to the social nature of man. The common good in the subjective sense is the principle of correct participation, which "allows the person acting together with other persons to perform authentic actions and fulfill himself through these actions."[60] Participation in the community and the common good enable the person to realize her full potential in communion with her fellow men. In the Philippines, for instance, joint community service projects are planned for collaborative initiatives for social development. One good example is the Madaris Volunteer Program, a joint initiative of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines and the Ateneo de Davao University to promote interreligious and intrareligious dialogue. In the southern Philippines, where the majority of the population is Muslim, the Ateneo, a Catholic university run by the Jesuits, has been promoting dialogue and social peace through education for some years. The Madaris, traditional Islamic schools that teach Arabic, the Quran, and Islamic principles, the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, and the National Association for Bangsamoro Education support the Jesuit initiative in collaboration with the regional government of Mindanao. According to Fr. Joel E. Tabora, SJ, the goal was to support and promote education as it is essential to advance the culture of respect between denominations, common well-being, and peace.[61]

Interreligious Dialogues

The term "interreligious dialogue" is meant to cover the various forms of relations with people of different religious traditions. Such interaction and collaboration are aimed at mutual knowledge, enrichment, lessening tensions and misunderstandings, and promoting common goals.

There are many forms of interreligious dialogue.[62] First, interreligious dialogue is an intellectual exchange in which learned people expose their religious beliefs, moral codes, and rituals, and hold a debate with their interlocutors. However, this form of doctrinal discourse may not be beneficial, especially if those involved are not prepared enough and have not reached a certain level of mutual trust. The second form is the dialogue at the level of daily life, where people of different religions interact in the family, in the place of work or recreation, and in society in general, drawing from the ideals of their religions

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[60] Ibidem, 282.

[61] See Santosh D i g a l, "Mindanao: Jesuits Promote Peace and Interreligious Dialogue through Education," PIME Asia News, July 20, 2023, https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mindanao%3A-Jesuits-promote-peace-and-interreligious-dialogue-through-education-58836.html.

[62] See Francis A r i n z e, "Christian Humanism and Interreligious Dialogue," *Ad Veritatem* 1, no. 2 (2002): 301–302.

without discussing specific religious questions. The third is the dialogue of social works by which believers of different religions join hands to promote some projects for the benefit of the community. The fourth is the exchange of religious experiences, where people who are deeply committed to their religious beliefs share their experiences on topics such as union with God, prayer, silence, self-control, and surrender to God or the Absolute. Whatever form they may take, interreligious dialogues promote mutual respect and understanding among people of different religious beliefs.

All faiths share a common openness to God's action, a sincere search for religious truth and values, openness to other people and respect for differences, a readiness for self-examination and criticism, and a willingness to work and collaborate with others.[63] In any form of dialogue, there must always be love and respect for the human person, an understanding and sensitivity to differences, especially in religious convictions and beliefs, a genuine concern, trust, and sincerity, and the attitude of solidarity. We must take a gentler and more accommodating stance regarding the differences in our religious convictions and regard other religions with understanding, openness, and respect.[64]

Pope John Paul II stressed that those engaged in interreligious dialogue "must be consistent with their own religious traditions and convictions and be open to understanding those of the other party without pretense or close-mindedness, but with truth, humility, and frankness, knowing that dialogue can enrich each side."[65]

Conflict Resolution

A conflict[66] may stem from a clash of interests, values, or from deprivation of one party's basic human needs. These interests and values are basically grounded in our need for recognition, development (and self-actualization), security, identity,

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[63] See J o h n P a u l II, "Dialogue for Peace, a Challenge for our Time: Message for the Celebration of the Day of Peace 1 January 1983," The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19821208_xvi-world-day-for-peace.html.

[64] See Jove Jim S. A g u a s, "A Critical Look at Religious Diversity and Responding to Its Challenges," In *Philosophies of Appropriated Religions: Perspectives from Southeast Asia*, eds. Soraj Hongladarom, Jeremiah Joven Joaquin, and Frank J. Hoffman (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2023), 349–50.

[65] J o h n P a u l II, Encyclical on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html.

[66] Conflict is a natural and typical phenomenon that is part of every type of human relationship at every level, from interpersonal to social and to global. People and communities get involved in conflicts because their interests or their values are challenged or because their needs are not met.

and bonding. Disagreements and clashes of interests, values, motives, and beliefs cannot be totally avoided as they are parts of human interaction; thus, conflicts will always be part of social living, organizational structure, and the community. While conflict cannot be totally avoided, discussions can be facilitated, its understanding can be promoted, and emotional responses can be put under control. One can end a conflict through violence or war and by destroying one's opponent. Or one can also end a conflict by surrender and capitulation. One can still temporarily de-intensify a conflict by deceiving one's opponent. While these ways may end conflicts, they cannot be regarded as beneficial options for ending conflicts.

Conflict resolution is the process of ending a disagreement or dispute and reaching an agreement that satisfies all parties involved. Since conflict is an essential part of being human, effective conflict resolution is not designed to avoid disagreements. Instead, conflict resolution skills are used to facilitate discussions, increase understanding, control emotional responses, and eventually come to a mutual agreement. Conflict resolution is a peaceful and mutually satisfactory way to end or significantly or permanently de-escalate a conflict. Hence, the key to conflict resolution is the recognition and satisfaction of these basic needs of both parties. The conflicting parties, the people or groups directly involved in a conflict, can be the true conflict resolvers.

Conflicting parties may come into a negotiation where two or more parties come together to reach some goal through compromise or resolution that is agreeable to all those involved. However, parties' perceptions of each other and of the issues of the conflict may be so biased and limiting that they cannot see mutually satisfactory, mutually beneficial, or integrative options, even when they desire to settle their differences. In such cases, intermediaries or third parties can be the most helpful.

While mediators, intermediaries, third parties, etc., are not themselves conflict resolvers, they can facilitate directly involved parties in their endeavor to resolve their conflict. The identity and interests of minority groups must be recognized and given more opportunities for development, and their culture must be respected. Both parties must be willing to work out their differences and avoid actions that will aggravate the conflicts. The keys to conflict resolution include the preservation of the right of peoples to peace, the renunciation of the use of force, and the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. Pope John Paul II has always advocated dialogue as an open communication to resolve conflicts.

Social Development

Social development is a key element in establishing a just and orderly world. In such a world, people need not resort to violent means to secure their

basic needs. In the words of Pope John Paul II, just as there is a collective responsibility for avoiding war, so too is there a collective responsibility for promoting development. He adds that an integral and authentic development is needed if we want to have a peaceful society. This idea is true because development is a new language of peace due to the fact that a developed society will strive for justice and goodness.[67]

In most cases, the root of war is real, and serious grievances like injustices are suffered, legitimate aspirations frustrated; there are poverty and exploitation of multitudes of desperate people who see no real possibility of improving their conditions through peaceful means. Development not only serves the interest of justice but also contributes greatly to lasting peace. Hence, social development initiatives, like generous and targeted assistance, sustainable development, economic empowerment of the poor, and support for human rights and democracy, are essential works of peace.

In the Philippines, there are numerous programs and legal frameworks specifically designed to address injustices, exploitation, and poverty, particularly for the most vulnerable sectors of society. These initiatives often fall under the umbrella of social protection and are implemented by various government agencies, with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) at the forefront. For instance, the Comprehensive Program for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC) provides a range of services for children who have experienced abuse, neglect, exploitation, or are victims of an armed conflict. The program includes residential care, psychosocial intervention, and reintegration into their families and communities.[68] The Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons (RRPTP) provides comprehensive services for victims of human trafficking, including temporary shelter, legal assistance, psychosocial counseling, medical aid, and livelihood support to help them rebuild their lives.[69] The Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) is also a program for addressing immediate poverty and injustice. It provides swift financial and material aid to people who are facing an emergency, such as those displaced by disasters, victims of violence, or those with urgent medical and burial needs.[70]

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[67] See J o h n P a u l II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), Sections 27 and 33, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html.

[68] See Department of Social Welfare and Development, "Comprehensive Emergency Program for Children," Republic of the Philippines: Disaster Response Management, https://drm.dswd.gov.ph/comprehensive-emergency-program-for-children/.

[69] See Department of Social Welfare and Development, "Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons (RRPTP)," Assistance in the Philippines, https://dswdcashassistance.ph/dswd-recovery-and-reintegration-program-for-trafficked-persons-rrptp/.

[70] See Department of Social Welfare and Development, "Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) Program," DSWD, https://old.dswd.gov.ph/aics/.

The Philippine government often works closely with international bodies like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to address the consequences of armed conflict. This collaboration is vital for providing specialized humanitarian assistance, ensuring adherence to international humanitarian law, and addressing the needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

The final requirement is global solidarity. The promotion of peace and human dignity is not just the concern of some people or some countries; it is the concern of the whole world. And what we hope for can only be realized if the whole world is one and united in this goal. Though this task is difficult, a just and humane society can only be peaceful if human persons can commit to solidarity. Global solidarity and shared responsibility are important since they evoke our genuine concern for the other.[71] Global solidarity can be anchored on: (1) the recognition of global citizenship and shared humanity, (2) the promotion of universal dignity and rights, (3) the promotion of social justice, equity, and fairness, (4) empathy, understanding, and compassion.

Recognition of Global Citizenship and Shared Humanity

The radical bases of our solidarity are our common origin, nature, and destiny as human beings. St. Thomas Aquinas argues that "all men born of Adam may be considered as one man, inasmuch as they have one common nature, which they received from their first parents; even as in civil matters, all who are members of one community are reputed as one body, and the whole community as one man.... Accordingly, the multitude of men born of Adam are so many members of one body."[72] Men also have one common ultimate end, which is happiness. As part of one human family, we share common experiences, values, dignity, rights, and identity as human beings. We relate to and understand each other's experiences. We recognize the universality of human experiences of suffering and resilience, hope and aspiration, struggle and perseverance, love and affection. Despite our differences, we are all part of one

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[71] See Farhang T a h z i b, "Global Solidarity, Justice and Moral Failures," *European Journal of Public Health* 31, no. Supplement_3 (2021): https://academic.oup.com/eurpub/article/31/Supplement_3/ckab164.456/6405867.

[72] T h o m a s A q u i n a s, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 81, a. 1, vol. 16, 115.

human family, and we have duties to others, especially the underprivileged, the oppressed, the victims of wars, the poor, and the hungry.

However, though we are part of one family, there are ideologies that somehow keep us apart, one of which is individualism. Individualism is a stance or position that prioritizes the needs of an individual over the needs of a group as a whole. According to Karol Wojtyla—John Paul II, "it isolates the person from others by conceiving him solely as an individual who concentrates on himself and on his own good; this latter is also regarded in isolation from the good of others and the community."[73] Individualism goes against the principle of participation that emphasizes acting together with others. Wojtyła writes: "It isolates the person from others by conceiving him solely as an individual who concentrates on himself and on his own good; this latter is also regarded in isolation from the good of others and the community."[74] To counter such an ideology, we need to apply the principle of participation we have already discussed and to recognize our global citizenship; that is, understand that we are citizens of the world. A global citizen recognizes that each of us is part of the human family, and we are all interconnected and interdependent. Thus, loving our neighbor has global dimensions. We must see ourselves in others and collaborate in meaningful activities. We must see the world as a human family and that we are children of God. Each of us is part of the human family, and we are all interconnected and interdependent. Solidarity is a recognition that we are "all in this together" and a commitment to strengthening the community and promoting a just society.

Promotion of Universal Dignity and Rights

Human solidarity, which makes humanity one family, is based upon the equal dignity of all human beings and presupposes the ethical mediation of justice. Thus, we cannot have human solidarity without respect for human dignity and human rights.[75] However, although human solidarity is mediated by justice, solidarity goes beyond justice, especially since, as Christians, we are all united with each other by the bond of mutual love. Hence, Christian solidarity goes further than justice and perfects the natural love of human solidarity.[76] According to St. Thomas, following Aristotle, as social animals, we need to be helped by other men in order to attain our own end; as social and

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[73] W o j t y ł a, *The Acting Person*, 273.

[74] Ibidem

[75] See Fausto G o m e z, *Solidarity: The Heart of Human Praxis* (Manila: UST Social Research Center, 1984), 11.

[76] See ibidem.

political animals, our flourishing is inextricably linked to the well-being of the community. Hence, the good of one man is not the last end, but is ordained to the common good, that is, to common happiness.[77] He further stresses that the ultimate bond of human solidarity is the theological virtue of charity (*caritas*). Charity is the "friendship of man for God,"[78] and from this primary friendship flows the love of one's neighbor. The mutual love should motivate us to respect and promote the dignity and rights of all our fellow men.

In this regard, education plays a vital role in shaping virtues, values, attitudes, and behaviors towards others. Promoting peace education, which emphasizes empathy, conflict resolution skills, and intercultural understanding can help cultivate a culture of peace from a young age. Similarly, fostering global citizenship education can instill a sense of solidarity, interconnectedness, and responsibility towards the global community. Civil society organizations and grassroots movements also play a vital role in promoting peace, human rights, and social justice at the local, national, and international levels. Supporting their efforts and creating an enabling environment for their work is essential for building a more just and peaceful world from the bottom up.

Promotion of Social Justice, Equity, and Fairness

The defense and promotion of human dignity and rights entails a practice of social justice. While we have already talked about justice in the earlier part of this paper, we now relate justice to the praxis of solidarity. The realization of social justice is a permanent and necessary condition of solidarity,[79] otherwise, the supposed practice of solidarity is nothing but lip service. The realization of social justice carries with it the task of fighting injustices and violence, not only in our communities, but on the global stage. Global solidarity anchored on social justice, equity, and fairness must be established against poverty, hunger, child prostitution, drug trafficking, kidnapping, and other forms of violence. We also need to establish solidarity to promote children's welfare, women's rights, labor rights, and the welfare of war victims and other victims of violence. In the face of global evil—injustice, worldwide poverty, violence, the inequalities between developed and developing countries, and between the rich and the poor—there must be a global effort to fight all these evils. Of course, we acknowledge the efforts of governments and non-governmental organizations in fighting these global evils, many of which we have already mentioned.

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[77] See T h o m a s A q u i n a s, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 90, a. 2, vol. 16, 199.
[78] Ibidem, II-II, q. 23, a. 1, vol. 17, 204.
[79] See G o m e z, *Solidarity: the Heart of Human Praxis*, 16.

Global solidarity could be manifested in the following concrete steps: economic equality, mutual cooperation, and de-escalation of armed conflicts.

Global Empathy and Compassion

Solidarity requires that we think and act in terms of our obligations as members of a global community despite our race, religion, or cultural differences. In an increasingly interconnected world, loving our fellow men and neighbors has a global dimension. Global solidarity challenges us to give more of ourselves emotionally, financially, and spiritually, and to receive more by seeing with our own eyes the struggles and joys inherent in the lives of our fellow men around the world. It reflects the recognition that our responsibility to our fellow men has an international dimension and that we are called to work for justice and peace for people in all areas of the world. John XXIII stresses that "the solidarity which binds all men together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery, and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary human rights."[80] The nations are "becoming more and more dependent on one another, and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist."[81] John XXIII further adds: "Justice and humanity demand that those countries which produce consumer goods, especially farm products, in excess of their own needs should come to the assistance of those other countries where large sections of the population are suffering from want and hunger."[82] Global compassion encompasses empathy, kindness, and understanding across cultures, borders, and ideologies. It requires understanding diverse perspectives. There are, of course, global compassion initiatives being undertaken by non-governmental organizations like the Red Cross / Red Crescent and Caritas International, among others, that advocate and initiate poverty alleviation, disaster relief, refugee support, and healthcare programs.

JUSTICE AND WORLD PEACE
A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

A just and humane society is an ideal that, although lofty and elusive, is not impossible. There are hindrances and challenges, and time and again, efforts to

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[80] J o h n XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, Section 157.
[81] Ibidem.
[82] Ibidem, Section161.

attain it or at least approximate such an ideal are impeded and suffer setbacks because of social and political factors: inequality, discrimination, violence, corruption, and poverty, just to name a few. But for those who are optimistic and believe in the goodness of man, such an ideal is not an impossible utopia. There are means to achieve such an end.

World peace is a global challenge, and our response must also be global. Almost sixty years ago, the Catholic Church, through Pope John XXIII, laid out before us a visionary framework for world peace in his encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, which retains its freshness today. *Pacem in Terris* proposed a political order in service of the common good, defined in terms of the defense and promotion of human rights. According to John XXIII, human society "demands that men be guided by justice, respect the rights of others, and do their duty. It demands, too, that they be animated by such love as will make them feel the needs of others as their own and induce them to share their goods with others and to strive in the world to make all men alike heirs to the noblest of intellectual and spiritual values."[83] In a prophetic insight, anticipating the globalization of our problems, Pope John XXIII called for new forms of political authority adequate to satisfy the needs of the universal common good.[84]

World peace does not consist merely in 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.[85] World peace is found in sharing the goodness of life and in living together in harmony despite our differences. Peace can never be attained if every human person's personal well-being and dignity are not safeguarded and if everyone does not truly and trustingly share with others the riches of his inner spirit and talents.[86]

The Catholic Church's positive vision of a peaceful world includes, among others (1) the primacy of the global common good for political life, (2) the role of social and economic development in securing the conditions for a just and lasting peace, (3) the moral imperative of solidarity between affluent, industrial nations and poor, developing ones, (4) the recognition of the universal common good.[87]

A peaceful world is a global order oriented to the full development of all peoples, with governments committed to the rights of citizens and a framework of authority that enables the world community to address fundamental

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[83] J o h n XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, Section 35.

[84] See United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "'The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace': A Reflection of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on the Tenth Anniversary of 'The Challenge of Peace'" (November 17, 1993), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, https://www.usccb.org/resources/harvest-justice-sown-peace.

[85] See The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Section 78.

[86] See ibidem.

[87] See United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace."

problems that individual governments fail to resolve. In this framework, sovereignty is in the service of the people. All political authority has as its end the promotion of the common good, particularly the defense of human rights.[88]

Forming a just and human society and promoting a culture of peace is arduous, considering that behind us is a human history marked by violent struggles and transformation. This challenging task is compounded by an environment and culture where falsehoods, impunity, and acts of violence are so much a part of our daily life and often glorified or magnified by the media. The challenge to create a world where the human person is respected, a culture where her human dignity is promoted, and her human rights are protected in a just and humane society is a big task. However, peace is humankind's hope for a blissful and happy life in this world. We hope that in the near future, we will be living in a world of peace and not violence; we hope that our society will be just, orderly, and humane, and our children will no longer live in fear but in trust, security, and harmony. Such is an immense task among the very serious obligations incumbent upon men of high principles. John XXIII admonishes that we must establish "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."[89] Pope Francis says we need to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity and develop new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society.

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[88] See ibidem.
[89] J o h n XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, Section 163.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Jove Jim S. AGUAS, Just Society and the Culture of Peace

A just society and world peace are ideals that have remained elusive. Historical facts attest to this sad reality. Many studies show that in the twentieth century alone, with two world wars, almost two hundred million people were killed by war, oppression, and other forms of conflicts and atrocities. But still, humanity continues to dream of attaining these ideals. This is attested by the many declarations and resolutions on peace and proposals on how to achieve a just society. It is not difficult to see that a culture of peace and a just society are two ideals that are intertwined. From a Christian perspective, based on the Church's social teachings, I propose certain basic principles that serve as the foundation for a just and humane society and specific initiatives and courses of action through which we can promote a culture of peace and create a just society. Forming a just and human society and promoting a culture of peace is arduous, considering that behind us is a human history marked by violent struggles and transformation. However, peace is humankind's hope for a blissful and happy life in this world.

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Sprawiedliwe społeczeństwo i światowy pokój to ideały, które dotychczas pozostają nieosiągalne. O tej smutnej rzeczywistości świadczą fakty historyczne. Liczne opracowania ukazują, że w samym dwudziestym stuleciu, w którym doszło do dwóch wojen światowych, w ich wyniku, a także wskutek wszelkich innych konfliktów, prześladowań i okrucieństw śmierć poniosło dwieście milionów ludzi. Ludzkość nie przestaje jednak marzyć o osiągnięciu ideałów, którymi są sprawiedliwość i pokój. Dowodem tego pragnienia są liczne deklaracje i rezolucje dotyczące pokoju, a także propozycje dróg wypracowania społeczeństwa sprawiedliwego. Nietrudno dostrzec, że kultura pokoju i społeczeństwo sprawiedliwe to ideały, które są ze sobą splecione. Z perspektywy chrześcijańskiej, w oparciu o nauczanie społeczne Kościoła, proponuję z jednej strony pewne fundamentalne zasady, które mogą służyć jako podstawa do budowy sprawiedliwego społeczeństwa humanitarnego, z drugiej zaś konkretne inicjatywy i sposoby działania pozwalające na promocję kultury pokoju i społeczeństwa sprawiedliwego. Formowanie społeczeństwa sprawiedliwego, humanitarnego, i promowanie kultury pokoju to proces żmudny, zważywszy na fakt, że mamy za sobą historię pełną zmagań i transformacji, którą naznaczyła przemoc. Pokój pozostaje jednak nadzieją ludzkości na radosne i szczęśliwe życie w świecie doczesnym.

<div align="right">Translated by Dorota Chabrajska</div>

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