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## Pope Francis: “May government leaders do everything in their power to safeguard peace.”

The Pope delivered a speech that consisted of two parts, with the first devoted to an analysis of the present tragic events and the second to a renewed commitment of the faithful of all religions to stop the war. Pope Francis thus concluded the international meeting promoted by the Community of Sant'Egidio in the "spirit of Assisi" on the theme: "The cry for peace - Religions and cultures in dialogue." Thirty-six years after Pope Saint John Paul II convened the first historic meeting in Assisi, speaking at Rome's Colosseum Bergoglio quoted from the Saint John XXIII's radio message of 25 October 1962 and from Saint John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris*. Francis renewed to today's rulers the same appeal launched by the 'good Pope' sixty years ago: "Let them do everything in their power to safeguard peace." "Today peace has been gravely violated, assaulted and trampled upon, and this in Europe, on the very continent that in the last century endured the horrors of two world wars – and we are experiencing a third", the Pope said in the opening lines of his speech. "Sadly, since then, wars have continued to cause bloodshed and to impoverish the earth. Yet the situation that we are presently experiencing is particularly dramatic", Francis denounced: "That is why we have raised our prayer to God, who always hears the anguished plea of his sons and daughters." "Peace is at the heart of the religions, their sacred writings and their teaching", Pope Francis reminded those present: "This evening, amid the silence of prayer, we have heard that plea for peace: a peace suppressed in so many areas of the world, violated by all too many acts of violence, and denied even to children and the elderly, who have not been spared the bitter sufferings of war."

"That plea for peace is often stifled, not only by hostile rhetoric but also by indifference",

Francis warned: "It is reduced to silence by hatred, which spreads as the fighting continues. Yet the plea for peace cannot be suppressed: it rises from the hearts of mothers; it is deeply etched on the faces of refugees, displaced families, the wounded and the dying. And this silent plea rises up to heaven. It has no magic formulas for ending conflict, but it does have the sacred right to implore peace in the name of all those who suffer, and it deserves to be heard. It rightfully summons everyone, beginning with government leaders, to take time and listen, seriously and respectfully." "That plea for peace expresses the pain and the horror of war, which is the mother of all poverty", the Pope remarked: "Every war leaves our world worse than it was before", he reiterated quoting from *Fratelli tutti*: "War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil." "These convictions are the fruit of the painful lessons of the twentieth century, and sadly, once more, this part of the twenty-first", said the Pope, for whom "today something we dreaded and hoped never to hear of again is threatened outright: **the use of atomic weapons**, which even after Hiroshima and Nagasaki continued wrongly to be produced and tested." "In this bleak scenario, where, sad to say, the plans of potent world leaders make no allowance for the just aspirations of peoples, God's plan for our salvation, which is 'a plan for peace and not for evil', never changes." The Pope assured: "Here the voice of the voiceless finds a hearing; here the hope of the poor and the powerless is firmly established: in God, whose name is Peace. Peace is God's gift, and we have implored that gift from him. Yet peace must be embraced and nurtured by us men and women, especially by those of us who are believers."

"Let us not be infected by the perverse rationale of war; let us not fall into the trap of hatred for the enemy"

Addressing religious leaders, the Pope said: "Let us once more put peace at the heart of our vision for the future, as the primary goal of our personal, social and political activity at every level. Let us

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defuse conflicts by the weapon of dialogue.” Francis thus quoted from an appeal sent out by Saint John XXIII in a radio message in October 1962, “amid a grave international crisis, when military confrontation and nuclear holocaust seemed imminent: ‘We plead with all government leaders not to remain deaf to this cry of humanity. Let them do everything in their power to safeguard peace. They will thus spare the world the horrors of a war, the terrible consequences of which cannot be foreseen... Promoting, fostering, and accepting dialogue at all levels and in all times is a rule of wisdom and prudence that attracts the blessing of heaven and earth’. Sixty years later, these words still impress us by their timeliness. I make them my own”, the Pope exclaimed, speaking on behalf all believers:

“We are not neutral, but allied for peace, and for that reason we invoke the *ius pacis* as the right of all to settle conflicts without violence.”

**“In recent years, fraternal relations between religions have taken decisive steps forward”**, the Pope said with regard to the progress made so far: “More and more, we feel that we are all brothers and sisters! A year ago, gathered here before the Colosseum, we launched an appeal that is all the more timely today: ‘Religions cannot be used for war. Only peace is holy and no one is to use the name of God to bless terror and violence. If you see wars around you, do not resign yourselves! The peoples desire peace’.” “This is what we will strive to do ever better each day”, Francis assured:

“Let us never grow resigned to war,

let us cultivate seeds of reconciliation. Today let us raise to heaven our plea for peace, again in the words of Saint John XXIII: ‘May all peoples come together as brothers and sisters, and may the peace they so deeply desire ever flourish and reign in their midst’” Francis said quoting from *Pacem in terris*, followed by the appeal for peace signed by the Pope along with all world religious leaders attending the meeting.

M.Michela Nicolais