

Peace Sunday 2024

Pope Francis has spoken out so often about the folly of war and our vocation as Catholics to be peacemakers and peace - builders as part of our faith in action.

Today, Peace Sunday, is an annual opportunity to renew our own commitment to work for peace and justice in our world. Each year Pope Francis (and other popes before him since 1968) gives us a theme for our prayer and reflection.

This year's theme may seem a bit too abstract or technical for us to grasp: **Artificial Intelligence and Peace** – yet that title alerts us to the new threats that are facing us on the world stage and in our own homes.

In his message on the theme Pope Francis says:

“We rightly rejoice and give thanks for the impressive achievements of science and technology, as a result of which countless ills that formerly plagued human life and caused great suffering have been remedied. At the same time, techno-scientific advances are placing in human hands a vast array of options, including some that may cause a risk to our survival and endanger our common home”.

Artificial intelligence, will become increasingly important Pope Francis adds:

“ We need to be aware of the rapid transformations now taking place and to manage them in ways that safeguard fundamental human rights and respect the institutions and laws that promote human development”

In particular he alerts us to the dangers of conducting military operations through remote control systems which has led to a lessened perception of the devastation caused by those weapon systems.

There are great risks, Pope Francis warns, in developments in A.I but also great opportunities to create **“a more equitable and humane world”**. He urges the global community of nations to work together **“to adopt a binding international treaty that regulates the development and use of AI in its many forms”**

Pope Francis ends his message with this:

“It is my prayer at the start of the new year that the rapid development of forms of AI will not increase cases of inequality and injustice all too present in today's world, but will help to put an end to wars and conflicts and alleviate many forms of suffering that afflict our human family. May Christian believers, followers of various religions, and men and women of good will, work together in harmony to embrace the opportunities and confront the challenges posed by the digital revolution and thus hand on to future generations a world of greater solidarity, justice and peace.”

Peace Sunday (designated by the Bishops of England and Wales for this Sunday of the year each year) is also an opportunity to highlight the work of Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for peace and nonviolence, which embodies in every aspect of its work the peacemaking and peace - building that Pope Francis reminds us is so central to our Catholic faith in action.

We are all aware of the terrible violence that has erupted in Israel and Palestine. Advocating for a just peace there is part of Pax Christi's ongoing work, alongside building a culture of non-violence and campaigning against war, nuclear weapons and the arms trade in line with clear papal teaching. Supporting its members and the Church itself, Pax Christi produces resources on peace and non-violence issues, organises events and vigils, represents the Catholic Church in the peace movement and works with young people in both schools and churches.

Pax Christi, in this country, is a small organisation – would that it were bigger – It has chosen not to be a charity so that it can speak out clearly in the name of gospel teaching. Its peace work is very dependent on donations, especially on Peace Sunday.

Thank you very much for listening and thank you, in advance, on behalf of Pax Christi for your generosity.

Pax Christi England and Wales
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