



## Archbishop Shelton's Pastoral Reflections

September 2025

### Peace is a Gift from God

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

As Pope Leo XIV has reminded us, the first words Christ spoke to his Apostles after he rose from the dead were: “Peace be with you.” (Jn 20:19). Peace is the absence of violence, certainly, but it’s also much more. St. Augustine called it “the tranquility of order,” which is certainly an important aspect of peace. When we’re at peace, we’re not filled with anxiety; our homes are not filled with loud arguments and discord; our neighborhoods are safe and well-ordered, not threatening or chaotic; and nations, races and peoples live together in harmony and mutual respect without suffering the horrors of racism, political persecution, or war.



But true peace is more than just good order or civility. The Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et Spes*, #78) teaches that peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity. Peace is much more than the absence of war or the coexistence of nations. Peace is a gift from God, the sum total of many gifts from God that help us live fully with hearts full of justice and love.

True justice means giving every human being the reverence and respect due to him or her as a child of God. Justice is structuring human affairs, and the organization of society, in accordance with God’s plan. We are just when we treat others fairly and when we work together to protect the innocent, and the vulnerable, from violence or evil. We are just when all people—regardless of race or gender, wealth or position, education or social status—live together in mutual respect and solidarity.

True love is the sharing of self that we learn most perfectly from God, who Himself is Love, and who shows us how to be for others in everything we say and do. Authentic

love is not self-serving or self-gratifying. It is the generous sharing of ourselves, including all that we have and all that we are, in ways that connect us intimately with God and with our fellow human beings—those who are closest to us (family, friends and neighbors) and those who are far from us (strangers, social outcasts, even enemies).

True peace, the peace that lasts, happens when we work for justice and when we love unselfishly. It is the product of the hard work of civilization, the rule of law and the right-ordering of social structures. Peace requires fairness, respect for human dignity and the refusal to take advantage of another's weakness. If we want peace, we must work for justice—here at home and around the world—and we must be women and men who love others as God loves us.

There is no real peace without forgiveness or without the willingness to sacrifice our individual or collective self-interest for the sake of genuine harmony. If we want peace, we must let go of our desire for revenge, and we must be willing to let old wounds heal through the saving grace of God's love. We must be merciful toward others as God is merciful to us.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (see below) teaches that “earthly peace is the image and the fruit of the peace of Christ, the messianic Prince of Peace.” Peace has been made possible for us because, by the blood of his Cross, Christ has reconciled us with God and with each other. We have been forgiven so that we may forgive others. We have been shown mercy so that we might let go of our desire for vengeance against those who do us harm to a higher form of justice that is informed by love. As Jesus said, “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:44-45).

Peace will take root in our hearts when we learn to “let go and let God.” When that day comes, nations will unite in a world order that respects the fundamental human rights and authentic cultural diversity of nations and peoples. Neighbors will help and respect one another. Families will live together joyfully. And each woman and man on earth will be calm, untroubled and at peace.

When that day comes, Christ will come again, and his peace will be established throughout all of creation. In the meantime, let's continue our search for peace by recommitting ourselves to the work of justice and by loving God and our neighbor unselfishly as Christ loves us.

May the peace of Christ be with you today and always. Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, may you find happiness and joy in working for justice and in sharing God's gifts with others in Jesus' name.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre  
Archbishop of Louisville

# **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

**Second Edition, 1997**

**Libreria Editrice Vaticana**

## **III. Safeguarding Peace**

### **Peace**

By recalling the commandment, "You shall not kill," our Lord asked for peace of heart and denounced murderous anger and hatred as immoral. (#2302)

*Anger* is a desire for revenge. "To desire vengeance in order to do evil to someone who should be punished is illicit," but it is praiseworthy to impose restitution "to correct vices and maintain justice." If anger reaches the point of a deliberate desire to kill or seriously wound a neighbor, it is gravely against charity; it is a mortal sin. The Lord says, "Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment."

Deliberate hatred is contrary to charity. Hatred of the neighbor is a sin when one deliberately wishes him evil. Hatred of the neighbor is a grave sin when one deliberately desires him grave harm. "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." (#2303)

Respect for and development of human life require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace can not be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is "the tranquility of order." Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity. (#2304)

Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ, the messianic "Prince of Peace." By the blood of his Cross, "in his own person he killed the hostility," he reconciled men with God and made his Church the sacrament of the unity of the human race and of its union with God. "He is our peace." He has declared: "Blessed are the peacemakers." (#2305)

Those who renounce violence and bloodshed and, in order to safeguard human rights, make use of those means of defense available to the weakest, bear witness to evangelical charity, provided they do so without harming the rights and obligations of

other men and societies. They bear legitimate witness to the gravity of the physical and moral risks of recourse to violence, with all its destruction and death. (#2306)

*(A selection from the Catechism of the Catholic Church on Safeguarding Peace)*



*(CNS photo/Vatican Media)*

## **A Message from Pope Leo: In the one Christ, we are one**

Dear brothers and sisters, happy Sunday!

In today's Gospel Jesus invites us to consider how we will invest the treasure that is our life (cf. Lk 12:32-48). He says: "Sell your possessions and give alms" (v. 33).

He exhorts us not to keep to ourselves the gifts that God has given us, but rather to use them generously for the good of others, especially those most in need of our help. It is not simply a matter of sharing the material goods we have, but putting our skills, time, love, presence and compassion at the service of others. In short, everything in God's plan that makes each of us a priceless and unrepeatable good, a living and breathing asset, must be cultivated and invested in order to grow. Otherwise, these gifts dry up and diminish in value, or they end up being taken away by those, who like thieves, snatch them up as something simply to be consumed.

The gift of God that we are is not made to be used in such a manner. We need space, freedom and relationships in order to come to fulfillment and express ourselves. We need love, which alone transforms and ennobles every aspect of our existence, making

us more and more like God. It is not by chance that Jesus pronounces these words while he is on the road to Jerusalem, where he will offer himself on the cross for our salvation.

The works of mercy are the most secure and profitable bank where we can entrust the treasure of our existence, because there, as the Gospel teaches us, with “two small copper coins” even the poor widow becomes the richest person in the world (cf. Mk 12:41-44).

In this regard, Saint Augustine says: “If you gave a pound of coppers and received a pound of silver, or a pound of silver and received one of gold, you would be delighted at your luck. What you give will certainly be transformed; it isn’t gold, it isn’t silver, but eternal life that will come your way” (Sermon 390, 2, PL 39, 1706). And he explains why: “It will be transformed, because you yourself will be transformed” (ibid).

To understand what he means by this, we can think of a mother who embraces her children: is she not the most beautiful and richest person in the world? Or a boyfriend and girlfriend, when they are together: do they not feel like king and queen? We could think of many other examples.

Therefore, wherever we are, in the family, parish, school or workplace, we should try not to miss any opportunity to act with love. This is the type of vigilance that Jesus asks of us: to grow in the habit of being attentive, ready and sensitive to one another, just as he is with us in every moment.

Sisters and brothers, let us entrust to Mary this desire and responsibility: may she, the Morning Star, help us to be the “watchmen” of mercy and peace in a world marked by many divisions. Saint John Paul II taught us this (cf. [Vigil of Prayer for the 15th World Youth Day](#), 19 August 2000). And in a beautiful way, so did the young people who came to Rome for the Jubilee.

*(Angelus Message of Pope Leo XIV, Sunday, August 10, 2025)*

## **My Prayer for You**

Please join me in praying the words of Saint John Paul II in the Vigil of Prayer for the 15th World Youth Day on August 19, 2000 as referenced above by Pope Leo XIV:

*May Mary most holy, the Virgin who said “yes” to God throughout her whole life, may Saints Peter and Paul and all the Saints who have lighted the Church’s journey down the ages, keep you always faithful to this holy resolve! Amen.*