



Archbishop Shelton's Pastoral Reflections

October 2025

The peace of Christ is the way to achieve lasting peace

In *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict XVI writes, “Peace aims at the overcoming of boundaries and at the renewal of the earth through the peace that comes from God.” The earth belongs to all the children of God but especially to those who are meek and humble of heart. The rich and the powerful attempt to control the land by any means at their disposal including warfare and genocide, but, in the end, they will be unsuccessful.

All of God’s creation is intended to become the land of the king of peace, and every eucharistic assembly is for us Christians a place where the king of peace reigns. The universal communion of Christ’s Church is thus a preliminary sketch of the world of tomorrow, Pope Benedict wrote, which is destined to become a land of Jesus Christ’s peace.



We long for the world of tomorrow, the time when there will be no more discord among individuals, families, neighbors, or nations. As Pilgrims of Hope, we pray that the Lord’s coming will inspire us all to live differently. We fervently desire, and profoundly hope, that we can set aside our jealousy, our fear, our desire for economic control and political domination, our aversion to strangers from foreign lands and our discomfort with those who are different from us. We pray for peace, forgetting that acceptance and forgiveness (the way of the meek, the way of Jesus Christ) is the only way to peace.

We Catholics appeal to our Blessed Mother, the Queen of Peace, to watch over us and guide us on the way to peace, which is her divine Son. One of the prayers given to us by the Church for the first day of the new year, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, expresses our hope in this way:

*Father, source of light in every age,
The virgin conceived and bore your Son
Who is called Wonderful God, Prince of Peace.
May her prayer, the gift of a mother's love,
Be your people's joy through all ages.
May her response, born of a humble heart,
Draw your Spirit to rest on your people.
May Christ's peace reign in our hearts,
now and forever. Amen*

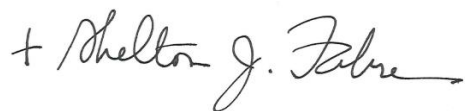
We Christians believe that true and lasting peace comes only through the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent into the world by His Father to be the ultimate peacemaker. Pope Leo XIV has reminded us that there is an essential connection between divine Sonship and the kingship of peace. That's why we rely on Mary's prayer, "the gift of a mother's love," to intercede for us. That's also why we recall the Lord's promise to David: I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days ... He shall be my son, and I will be his father (1 Chr 22:9).

Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God (Mt 5:9). We become children of God when we are reconciled to Him—through our baptism and our communion with Christ our Lord in and through the Church. But when we lose sight of God, through our own blindness, selfishness and sin, peace disintegrates, and violence proliferates to a formerly unimaginable degree of cruelty. We have witnessed this spiraling out of control of violence, hate, and incivility all too often in recent days.

Enmity with God is the source of all that poisons us. Overcoming this enmity is the basic condition for peace in the world. Only if we are reconciled with God can we also be reconciled and in harmony with each other, and only when we are reconciled with God and with each other can we hope to establish peace in our hearts, our families, our neighborhoods, and throughout the world.

Christ is the way to peace. May we follow him always.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "+ Shelton J. Fabre". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The plus sign is at the beginning, followed by the first name, middle initial, and last name.

Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre
Archbishop of Louisville

**APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION
EVANGELII GAUDIUM
OF THE HOLY FATHER
FRANCIS
TO THE BISHOPS, CLERGY,
CONSECRATED PERSONS
AND THE LAY FAITHFUL
ON THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL
IN TODAY'S WORLD**

**The Solemnity of Christ the King
November 24, 2013**

The Church's teaching on social questions

182. The Church's teachings concerning contingent situations are subject to new and further developments and can be open to discussion, yet we cannot help but be concrete – without presuming to enter into details – lest the great social principles remain mere generalities which challenge no one. There is a need to draw practical conclusions, so that they “will have greater impact on the complexities of current situations”.^[148] The Church's pastors, taking into account the contributions of the different sciences, have the right to offer opinions on all that affects people's lives, since the task of evangelization implies and demands the integral promotion of each human being. It is no longer possible to claim that religion should be restricted to the private sphere and that it exists only to prepare souls for heaven. We know that God wants his children to be happy in this world too, even though they are called to fulfillment in eternity, for he has created all things “for our enjoyment” (1 Tim 6:17), the enjoyment of everyone. It follows that Christian conversion demands reviewing especially those areas and aspects of life “related to the social order and the pursuit of the common good”.^[149]

183. Consequently, no one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society. Who would claim to lock up in a church and silence the message of

Saint Francis of Assisi or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta? They themselves would have found this unacceptable. An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters. If indeed “the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics”, the Church “cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice”.^[150] All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world. This is essential, for the Church’s social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change and in this sense it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ. At the same time, it unites “its own commitment to that made in the social field by other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, whether at the level of doctrinal reflection or at the practical level”.^[151]

184. This is not the time or the place to examine in detail the many grave social questions affecting today’s world, some of which I have dealt with in the second chapter. This Exhortation is not a social document, and for reflection on those different themes we have a most suitable tool in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, whose use and study I heartily recommend. Furthermore, neither the Pope nor the Church have a monopoly on the interpretation of social realities or the proposal of solutions to contemporary problems. Here I can repeat the insightful observation of Pope Paul VI: “In the face of such widely varying situations, it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. This is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country”.^[152]



(CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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

The world is currently marked by conflicts and divisions, which makes it all the more important that you are united by a strong and courageous “no” to war and a “yes” to peace and fraternity. As Pope Francis taught us, war is not the right way to resolve a conflict. “The willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 227) is the wisest path, the path of the strong. Your presence bears witness to this wisdom, which unites cultures and religions, and is that silent force that enables us to recognize each other as brothers and sisters, despite all our differences.

According to Scripture, the first fraternal relationship between Cain and Abel immediately and tragically became conflictual. However, that first murder should not lead us to conclude that “it has always been this way.” No matter how ancient or widespread, Cain’s violence cannot be tolerated as “normal.” On the contrary, the norm is revealed in God’s question to the guilty party: “Where is your brother?” (*Gen* 4:9). It is in this question that we find our vocation, the rule and measure of justice. God does not take revenge on Cain for Abel, but asks him a question that echoes throughout the course of history.

Today more than ever, we must make this question our own as a principle of reconciliation. Once internalized, it will resonate in this way: “Brother, sister, where are you?” Where are you in the “business” of wars that shatter the lives of young people forced to take up arms; target defenseless civilians, children, women and elderly people; devastate cities, the countryside and entire ecosystems, leaving only rubble and pain in their wake? Brother, sister, where are you among the migrants who are despised, imprisoned and rejected, among those who seek salvation and hope but find walls and indifference? Where are you, brother, sister, when the poor are blamed for their poverty, forgotten and discarded, in a world that values profit more than people? Brother, sister, where are you in a hyper-connected life where loneliness corrodes social bonds and makes us strangers even to ourselves?

The answer cannot be silence. You are the answer, with your presence, your commitment, and your courage. The answer is choosing a different direction of life, growth and development.

Recognizing that the other person is a brother or sister means freeing ourselves from the pretense of believing that we are isolated individuals or from the logic of forming relationships only out of self-interest. It is not only self-interest that makes us enter into relationships. Great spiritual traditions and the maturation of critical thinking enable us to go beyond blood or ethnic ties, beyond those kinships that recognize only those who are similar and reject those who are different. It is interesting that in the Bible, as revealed by scientific exegesis, it is the most recent and mature texts that narrate a fraternity that transcends the ethnic boundaries of God’s people and is founded on a common humanity. The stories of creation and the genealogies bear witness that all peoples, even enemies, have the same origin, and the Earth, with its goods, is for everyone, not just for some.

At the heart of the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, we read: “Social friendship and universal fraternity necessarily call for an acknowledgement of the worth of every human person, always and everywhere” (n. 106).

Fraternity is the most authentic name for closeness. It means rediscovering the face of the other. For those who believe, they recognize the Mystery: the very image of God in the face of the poor, the refugee and even the adversary.

(A selection from the Address of Pope Leo XIV to participants in the third World Meeting on Human Fraternity, September 25, 2025)

My Prayer for You

Please join me in this “Prayer to the Creator” from the encyclical of Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*.

*Lord, Father of our human family,
you created all human beings equal in dignity:
pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit
and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter,
dialogue, justice and peace.
Move us to create healthier societies
and a more dignified world,
a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.*

*May our hearts be open
to all the peoples and nations of the earth.
May we recognize the goodness and beauty
that you have sown in each of us,
and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects,
and shared dreams. Amen.*