



Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis
Consilium Internationale

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To National OFS Fraternities
To all Secular Franciscans and Franciscan Youth

Subject: Jubilee of Hope 2025: What is our hope for peace among men?

Dear brothers and sisters, peace and good!

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. A dramatic event that has forever marked the history of humanity with its tragic toll of hundreds of thousands of innocent victims killed in a flash of light. The justification was that the atomic bombing shortened the war and spared the Americans the loss of tens of thousands of soldiers by convincing Japan to surrender unconditionally.

Many years later, humanity finds itself grappling with multiple crises worldwide, as two wars rage on, resulting in staggering human casualties and widespread devastation. The prevailing belief remains that military force is the only solution to these conflicts. These, in addition to the civil wars and internal conflicts in various countries around the world (some of them have had no hope of a solution for years). Diplomatic conflicts and restrictive measures between countries are also conflicts that take away peace and freedom; Every day there are more deaths of those who often only seek to escape violence, injustice and terror.

"Military solutions" are not an effective response to the growing political instability affecting different regions of the world. "The cycle of arms accumulation" and "the logic of deterrence" create an environment of suspicion and division which distances the international community from the possibility of lasting peace. It therefore becomes necessary "to resume, with renewed urgency, the path of disarmament", also dialoguing with "interlocutors" who may be "uncomfortable". This is the position of the Holy See, expressed by its permanent observer to the United Nations, Monsignor Gabriele Caccia, in his speech to the Commission on Disarmament, as part of the 79th General Assembly of the organization, held in New York on April 8, 2025.

Winds of war are blowing again and there is talk of an arms race with the use of enormous investments, after years in which diplomacy has remained silent and the ability to negotiate put aside in a climate of greater instability and uncertainty than in the last century, with the looming of a new world conflict. There is an urgent need to establish spaces for "effective" dialogue, where constructive commitments are made to ensure stability and peaceful development, commitments that are truly fulfilled with respect and are aware that "all" the inhabitants of the planet have the right to peace and the best living conditions; this implies actions to raise awareness of our being, "all", creature and gift of God.

"What will happen if everything is overwhelmed by war?" This is a question that Zaira, a young mother of three children from Benevento, asks Leo XIV, questioning the right to peace, from the pages of the July issue of *Piazza San Pietro*, the magazine published by the Vatican Basilica, this month dedicated to the Jubilee of young people. "Yours is a cry that reaches the heart of

God", the Pontiff replies in the "Dialogue with readers" section, calling everyone - believers and non-believers - to a journey of conversion of heart". Peace, the Pope explains, is not just a desire but a personal, daily commitment, which is born from the depths and is nourished by concrete gestures, "it is built in the heart and starts from the heart".

"Let us insist on dialogue at all levels, to promote a genuine culture of connection and not of confrontation, along with commitment to limiting power, as my beloved predecessor Pope Francis always asked". This is Leo XIV's appeal, who challenges us to "combine prayer with the necessary courageous actions and with the enduring patience for gradual progress". "War will not prevail," the Pope concludes, "and children have the right to an authentic, just and lasting peace."

This is the climate in which we Secular Franciscans, fulfill our primary vocation to live the Gospel within the dynamics of the world, bearing witness to its concrete realization as a viable way of life in a society that on the one hand detaches itself from God and the Christian roots and on the other hand declares itself to be the bearer of values of clear Christian origin: human rights, the dignity of the individual, the pursuit of equality and justice, the freedom and self-determination of people. This profound contradiction within modern culture leads to the troubling issues that we are still experiencing today, highlighting the urgent need to bear witness to the Gospel and to the saving message of Christ, *Prince of Peace* (Is 9:16).

But messianic peace is the result of the change of hearts and the saving action of Jesus. Only by striving for this peace will it be possible to give a positive response to the emerging needs of society and to the problems posed by historical events which are becoming increasingly urgent and severe. It is up to us as Secular Franciscans to bring the Gospel message of peace within the social fabric, especially today, in the midst of the most pressing problems caused by the various conflicts taking place throughout the planet.

We greet you with the words of our seraphic father regarding peace: "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God*" (Mt 5:9). *They are truly peacemakers who in all the trials they endure in this world, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, preserve peace in soul and body.*"¹

SECRETARIAT FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION

¹ Am XV; FF 164