

# “No Longer Slaves, But Brothers and Sisters”

World Day Of Peace Message 2015

*By Pope Francis*



***A Pastoral Letter  
By Bishop Noel Treanor***

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## **The World Day of Peace**

On New Year's Day each year the Catholic tradition celebrates World Day of Peace. Pope Paul VI announced this initiative in 1967. Since 1968 the Holy Father has written a Message for the occasion, each one dealing with a burning social issue of our times.<sup>1</sup>

### **Significance of the World Day of Peace Messages**

These Messages for World Peace Day spell out the social meaning of the Gospel. They point out the social imperative arising from believing in Jesus Christ. They put before us a challenging reality: that discovering and knowing God in Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God and Son of Mary, gives us a new and sharpened sense of the dignity of each human person, as made in the image of God. This insight should inspire each believer to work for justice, truth and peace.

The World Day of Peace encourages us to give concrete expression to our faith. It tells us that worship and prayer must lead to active engagement to improve society and its structures. It reminds us that the two basic commandments – love of God and love of neighbour<sup>2</sup> – are interconnected and interdependent. Rounding off the octave of the Feast of the Nativity, on the first day of the New Year, the message for the World Day of Peace highlights our responsibility as Christian citizens. It reminds us as citizens, who are Christians, that we cannot be indifferent to the social order. As Christians we carry a responsibility for the quality of life in our world. These

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for a list of the Papal World Peace Day Messages from 1968-2015.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 12:30-31.

Messages inoculate us, Christians, against indifference to injustice.

**Theme for 2015: “No Longer Slaves, but Brothers and Sisters”<sup>3</sup>**

This is the title Pope Francis has chosen for 2015 World Day of Peace message – the 48th so far. Its subject is modern forms of slavery.

In a nut shell, his message is this: by our baptism we are introduced into a way of relating to God and to all humanity that does not leave place for “man’s exploitation by man” (no.1). Indeed the human person, once baptised in Christ, is opened to a new way of seeing the other person. Being Christian means treating and relating to all fellow human beings in a radically new way.<sup>4</sup>

When you read the text of Pope Francis’ message, you will notice that he takes his theme for this year from the New Testament Letter from St Paul to Philemon (no.2). It is a very short Letter – only one page of the Bible. Paul sends Onesimus back to his former master Philemon not as a slave; but asks him to accept and treat him as a brother in Christ out of love. (Phil.9) Paul points out that Baptism abolishes the distinction between master and slave.

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<sup>3</sup> To access the full text of Pope Francis’ World Peace Day Message (2015) visit the Vatican website: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141208\\_messaggio-xlviiii-giornata-mondiale-pace-2015.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20141208_messaggio-xlviiii-giornata-mondiale-pace-2015.html)

<sup>4</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2414.

## Activities

### Primary Schools:

- What is meant by the term ‘slavery’?
- Read about and draw a picture of the slavery of Joseph in Egypt (Genesis chs. 39-47)
- Does slavery exist in our times?
- Can you identify different forms of slavery?
- Create a collage of images that capture what people feel when they are enslaved.

### Post-Primary Schools:

- Read another one of the Annual World Peace Day Messages (Appendix A)
- What themes are addressed in this Message?
- Discuss the merits of the ‘Fair Trade’ initiative. What can we do to avoid buying products produced through child labour?
- Consider practical ways in which we could address such injustice in our society today?
- In the past, rights-based campaigns have led to changes of attitude in regard to animal testing in the field of cosmetics and pharmaceuticals. What can we learn from such initiatives that might help to counter forced labour of children and adults?

### Parish Councils / Parish Groups/ Charitable Organisation

- Read together St Paul’s Letter to Philemon.
- Identify the themes discussed by St Paul in this letter.
- What does it tell us about Christian faith and lifestyle?
- Consider ways to address the exploitation and slavery of individuals.
- *In this Year of Consecrated Life – consider inviting a Sister / Brother / missionary Priest / lay volunteer / organisation - to tell of their work with people in the developing world.*



*Stained Glass Window of Flight of Egypt –  
Parish of Drumbo & Carryduff*

## **The disruption caused by the negative reality of sin**

Pope Francis looks at the phenomenon of slavery as a direct result of the negative reality of sin. Drawing on the Bible, he reflects on how God’s plan for humanity is disrupted by sin (no.2): how human fraternity is undone by sinful action; how this disruption has given rise to a “culture of enslavement”. He then considers how humanity is offered a way out of this enslavement through responding to the call of conversion to

Christ.<sup>5</sup> Here Pope Francis presents the ever new “Good News of Jesus Christ, in whom God makes “all things new” (Rev 21.5)”. This Good News, he reminds the reader, “is also capable of redeeming human relationships, including those between slaves and masters...” (no.2).

### **‘What I say to you, I say to all: awake!’ (Mk.13.37)**

We heard this concluding verse of Mark’s gospel on the first Sunday of Advent 2014, the opening day of the Christian liturgical year. With this verse the Word of God calls us to be on the alert, to keep our eyes open to reality throughout the

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<sup>5</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church, # 549, 601, 1741.*

year. Christians may never bury their heads in the sand!

Pope Francis states the alarming truth, which we realise, yet, alas, so quickly forget : “millions of people today – children, women and men of all ages - are deprived of freedom and are forced to live in conditions akin to slavery” (no.3). He comments on the plight and injustices suffered by migrants, victims of human trafficking, those enslaved in prostitution. He shines the light on the crimes of commercial trade in human organs, kidnappings and sexual exploitation. He decries the crimes perpetrated against the disappeared and the many persons tortured, mutilated and killed.

We, of course, readily denounce and lament these exploitations and the criminal activity associated with them. It is almost unthinkable that across the globe, an estimated 2.5 million people are in forced labour at any given time as a result of trafficking.<sup>6</sup>

The UK National Crime Agency notes in its detailed Strategic Assessment of the Nature and Scale of Human Trafficking that there were 2,744 potential victims in the UK of human trafficking recorded in the calendar year 2013. This marked an increase of 22% compared with a similar study in 2012.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, this report notes that it is most likely that the number of victims of human trafficking may be significantly higher than the recorded data. Of the 37 recorded cases of

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<sup>6</sup>*International Labour Organization, Forced Labour Statistics Factsheet (2007).*

<sup>7</sup> *To access a full copy of the Strategic Assessment of the Nature and Scale of Human Trafficking during 2013, visit [www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/399-nca-strategic-assessment-the-nature-and-scale-of-human-trafficking-in-2013/file](http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/399-nca-strategic-assessment-the-nature-and-scale-of-human-trafficking-in-2013/file). (Published September 2014) pp. 4-5.*

exploitation and trafficking in Northern Ireland (2013), there were at least 10 cases of labour exploitation and 17 cases of sexual exploitation.<sup>8</sup>

It is shocking to realise that human trafficking and slave labour are practiced in our midst and in our country. Yet, as we know, this is a reality. It is a blight on our society.

Pope Francis refers directly to this phenomenon:

*“my thoughts also turn to those who...in order to remain within the law agree to disgraceful living and working conditions, especially those cases where the laws of a nation create or permit a structural dependency of migrant workers on their employers, as, for example, when the legality of their residency is made dependent on their labour contract. Yes, I am talking about slave labour” (No.3.5)*



*‘Girdhari Lal and his wife Saengan, from Sindh province in Pakistan, are bonded labourers in the agriculture sector and farm cotton. Support for Trócaire has enabled the charity to help thousands of bonded labourers to gain freedom from slavery since 2006. Photo Conor O’Loughlin, Trócaire.’*

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<sup>8</sup>Strategic Assessment of the Nature and Scale of Human Trafficking during 2013, p. 42.



## Issues for Reflection

What kind of attitude do I have towards immigrants?

Do I treat them fairly and with justice?

Do my attitudes and actions dehumanise others?

Do I treat them in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ:  
rates of pay; working conditions; contracts; holiday leave,  
conditions of rented accommodation etc...?



*Stations of the Cross, St Mary's Church, Ballinderry, Co. Antrim by Joe McWilliams*

## Personal empowerment: being a practicing Christian

In the face of the numerous forms of modern slavery one is tempted to feel powerless to effect change. What can one do to change things, one wonders in thought and prayer.

As Christians we are members of the world-wide communion of women, men and young people who by living the gospel message make up the mystical body of Christ which is the Church. This Christian presence right around the world, envelops, penetrates and contributes to human society. By its active charity through each person of faith it makes a difference to human suffering. The extent of the difference it makes depends on you and me.

As throughout the centuries, many in the Church today are working on the horrifying issues to which Pope Francis draws attention. In this Year for Consecrated Life he fittingly singles out for mention the work of Religious Congregations and especially of Religious sisters (no.5.1).

It is important to inform ourselves as individuals and parish communities about these types of initiative, of which there are many. Supporting them empowers us to address the evils represented by these modern forms of slavery.

Let's take note of some examples of these initiatives.

### **Religious, National and International Organisations Addressing Slavery and Human Trafficking**

In 2005, various religious congregations and missionary societies throughout Ireland expressed a concern about the growing reality of the worldwide trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation. They met in December 2005 to explore ways of working together and created the initiative to Act to Prevent Trafficking (APT). In their ongoing work, they seek to raise awareness of the issue of trafficking in

persons. They work in collaboration with others, including statutory agencies, for the prevention of the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation.

They address slavery and human trafficking through developing links with networks of religious in countries of origin of victims and countries of destination. They raise public awareness of the issue by offering presentations about human trafficking to schools, parishes and groups. They also lobby politically for just and effective legislation to protect the rights of victims of trafficking. They work with other groups to address the issue of demand for purchased sex, which fuels the trade in human trafficking. They pray and encourage others to pray for those trafficked, for traffickers and for an end to this appalling violation of human rights. Many of the Religious working in Ireland and abroad, whom we know, are members of Congregations, Orders, Missionary Societies which have been active in this work for many years. Their work is a form of response to the issues raised by Pope Francis and deserves our support.

### **Examples of Organisations working to Prevent Human Trafficking**

At national, European and international levels, a wide network of Catholic and ecumenical associations now collaborate closely to address the issue of human trafficking and to support victims and prevent forced labour. Some examples of such organisations are:

<b><i>Organisation</i></b>	<b><i>Website</i></b>
Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCCE)	<a href="http://www.ccee.eu/">www.ccee.eu/</a>
Commission of the Episcopal Conferences of the European Union (COMECE)	<a href="http://www.comece.org/">www.comece.org/</a>
International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)	<a href="http://www.icmc.net/">www.icmc.net/</a>
Episcopal Commission <i>Pro Migrantibus</i>	<a href="http://www.promigrantibus.be/">www.promigrantibus.be/</a>
International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons (Talitha Kum)	<a href="http://www.talithakum.info">www.talithakum.info</a>
European Network of Religious Against Trafficking (RENATE)	<a href="http://www.renate-europe.net">www.renate-europe.net</a>
Solidarity with Women in Distress (SOLWODI)	<a href="http://www.solwodi.co.ke/">www.solwodi.co.ke/</a>
Act to Prevent Trafficking (APT)	<a href="http://www.aptireland.org">www.aptireland.org</a>
Jesuit Refugee Service	<a href="http://jrseurope.org/">http://jrseurope.org/</a>
Ecumenical:  Network of Christian Organisations Against Trafficking (COATNET)	<a href="http://www.caritas.org/resources/Coatnet/Coatnet.html">www.caritas.org/resources/Coatnet/Coatnet.html</a>
Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)	<a href="http://www.ccme.be/">www.ccme.be/</a>

## **Ending slavery: a commitment to be shared**

It is noteworthy that Pope Francis presents his comments on tackling slavery and human exploitation in terms of shared commitment and partnership between individuals and agencies. All components of human society need to work together to combat slavery in all its contemporary forms.

So that this might happen, we need first and foremost to address our own attitudes. We need to consider if we have grown indifferent to these issues.

What we can do, we should do – whether by supporting Trocaire, by educating our youth to the social message of the Gospel, by introducing our youth to the Social Teaching of the Church, by lobbying politicians on such matters, or by joining or supporting the work of ‘Justice and Peace’, etc.<sup>9</sup>

We can also get to know and support the work of the many Religious Orders of women and men in the Church who have given their lives and talents to help and support the destitute of the earth and those who are victims of countless forms of injustice and structural evil (cf. no. 5). Pope Francis rightly draws attention to the forgotten work of these Religious. Many of us have seen the work of such Sisters, Brothers, priests and lay volunteers of all ages in tragically impoverished and dehumanising situations. We have seen how they help to transform hopelessness with Christian love. Deciding to support this kind of mission and work is worth thinking about at the beginning of a New Year.

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<sup>9</sup>For further reading on the Social Teaching of the Church, see DeBerri, E.P. et al, (2003), *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York and McKenna, Kevin, (2002), *A Concise Guide to Catholic Social Teaching*, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana.

## **What working *together* on these issues involves**

Pope Francis does not underestimate the immense task of addressing the exploitation of human persons. In this regard he refers to the irreplaceable role of institutions (no.5). This raises an aspect of civic life and governance that requires urgent re-evaluation in our times.

The wheels of institutions turn with our own flesh and blood - family members in whom values are nurtured by parents, aunts, uncles. Attitudes and values are also formed and instilled by teachers, neighbours, clergy, sports leaders and trainers, journalists, lecturers, professors, community leaders and numerous others among us. Institutional capacity for public service, for political and social transformation, is linked directly to the value system we instil in our children and build in our society. The formation of attitudes and inner dispositions rooted in virtue and values is key to addressing causes of slavery and human exploitation.

As ever, the prophetic voice of the Gospel calls Christians to constitute in the times ahead a presence in society that enables humanity to rise to the vision and realisation of a human communion of fraternity that strives after justice for all.

Pope Francis signals the roles of various components of society in this work. He makes particular reference to the role of the State, of inter-governmental organisations, national and international institutions, agencies of civil society and indeed of business. (no.5).

Here there arises a question for parents, for educators at all levels, and indeed for all who shape public opinion: how do we build a humanism and a value system that gives life, credibility and sustainable vitality to our contemporary institutions at local, national, European and international levels? The State, public institutions, civic and social agencies, are dependent on and are fuelled by values and value systems which they themselves cannot create.<sup>10</sup> The sources of these values are numerous. Religious faith, the Christian gospel in particular, is a well-spring of these values. More particularly, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a source of the inspiration and strength of purpose to pursue and live these values in the face of opposition even to the cost of one's life. The public square and the body politic lives in permanent need of the prophetic voice that is the faith-inspired Christian contribution to debate about public policy and law.

In particular, our times have seen a weakening of our understanding of prayer, Sunday worship and involvement in the Christian community for building up that faith in Christ which flows into a concrete living out of values of the gospel. As Christians in our challenging times we all have a responsibility to find ways, imaginative and creative ways, of doing something about this. This is a creative work-site for Parish Councils, Catholic organisations, Catholic schools, Catholic Youth workers, catechists, parents and parishioners.

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<sup>10</sup>*This refers to the work of Böckenförde E-W, eg. State, Society, and Liberty: Studies in Political Theory and Constitutional Law". 1991, Berg, New York; Der säkularisierte Staat, Sein Charakter, seine Rechtfertigung und seine Probleme im 21 Jahrhundert, 2007.*

## Mobilising humanity's capacity for goodness

Pope Francis rightly comments that “we ought to recognize that we are facing a global phenomenon which exceeds the competence of any one community or country” (no.6). In this regard, Pope Francis alludes to the vital role of international organisations and institutions of governance. Their work is key to peace and justice in our contemporary world. Their value systems are determinative of the ultimate success of their work and service.



*Picture by Fr Kim en Joong above altar  
in Parish of Drumbo & Carryduff*

He recalls the work of Religious Congregations, public institutions and civil society organisations. He refers to the work of the Holy See and its agencies over the years to assist and defend the downtrodden and powerless. All of this is part of the work of the Church. That work is so important for suffering individuals and peoples. We support it also through our contributions to charitable organisations, to the annual ‘Peter’s Pence’<sup>11</sup> collection organised in our parishes and through the countless charitable and development initiatives promoted by our youth and others who address us from time to time at Sunday Mass.

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<sup>11</sup> *Peter’s Pence* is the name given to the financial support offered by the faithful to the Holy Father as a sign of their sharing in the concern of the Successor of Peter for the many different needs of the Universal Church and for the relief of those most in need. See [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) for further details.



In the face of the global phenomenon of slavery, Pope Francis calls us to “practise acts of fraternity towards those kept in a state of enslavement” (no.6). He calls for a ‘globalisation of fraternity’ as an antidote to the spread of slavery and indeed to the spread of indifference to the exploitation of persons:



*The Suffering Christ*

“I urgently appeal to all men and women of good will, and all those near or far, including the highest levels of civil institutions, who witness the scourge of slavery, not to become accomplices to this evil, not to turn away from the sufferings of our brothers and sisters, our fellow human beings, who are deprived of their freedom and dignity. Instead may we have the courage to touch the suffering flesh of Christ, revealed in the faces of those countless persons whom he calls “the least of my brethren” (Mt 25. 40, 45)” (no.6)

Yet, the globalization of indifference, of which Pope Francis speaks, is growing. It is a symptom and an abiding reminder of the consequence of that estrangement from God (no.2.6) that is generated by the negativity of sin – a permanent challenge for humanity motivated by the grace of God.

Mobilising Christian fraternity gives new hope to those who are oppressed, enslaved or trafficked. Giving shape on the ground to this solidarity is the job of each Christian through membership of Christ’s body, the living Church.

## Food for Christian thought and action

Reviewing the World Day of Peace Message 2015, some key themes are worth unravelling in discussion with others:

1. *Fraternity*: Conversion to Christ constitutes a new birth that generates fraternity as the fundamental bond of family life and the basis of life in society (no. 2.1)
2. *The negative reality of sin*: (It) often disrupts human fraternity and constantly disfigures the beauty and nobility of our being brothers and sisters in the one human family (no. 2.4); Estrangement from God... gives rise to a culture of enslavement (no. 2.6) – A loss of the memory of God threatens human freedom and leads ultimately to forms of enslavement. ‘If you take away freedom, you take away dignity’.<sup>12</sup>
3. *Being / becoming a Christian*: involves the exercise of personal freedom (no. 2.7) and linking personal prayer and worship with forms of involvement in the life of society.
4. *The power of the Gospel to heal*: The Good News of Jesus Christ, in whom God makes all things new (Rev. 21.5) is also capable of redeeming human relationships. (no.2.8)
5. *The many faces of slavery* today affecting both minors and adults (no. 3.1-8)

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<sup>12</sup> *St Columbanus, Letter IV.5.*

6. *The vital importance of ethics in business, finance and commerce:*

“Businesses have the duty to ensure dignified working conditions and adequate salaries for their employees ... they must be vigilant that forms of subjugation or human trafficking do not find their way in to the distribution chain. Together with the social responsibility of businesses, there is also the social responsibility of consumers. Every person ought to have the awareness that “purchasing is always a moral – and not simply an economic – act” (no.5)

7. *The deeper causes of slavery:* the rejection of another person’s humanity (no. 4.2); extreme poverty (no. 4.3); corruption, armed conflict, criminal activity, terrorism. (no. 4.4)

8. *Addressing these forms of slavery:*

- a. The need to undo/overcome our own indifference (no. 5.1)
- b. *Mobilising a globalised fraternity:* we are facing a global phenomenon which exceeds the competence of any one community or country (no.6.3). Here we hear echoes of Pope John XXXIII’s call already in 1963 for an international public authority equipped with worldwide power and adequate means for

achieving the universal common good.<sup>13</sup> As citizens we need to grow in our understanding of the need for enhanced cooperation between nations and peoples through international institutions, based on agreed principles to serve and promote the common good of humanity.

- c. *Support for work already being done through the Church:* the work of Religious Orders and Congregations; the work of Christian organisations; the work of the Holy See and its agencies.
  
- d. *Acts of Fraternity:* Pope Francis calls us to practise acts of fraternity towards those kept in a state of enslavement (no.6.2); to globalise fraternity (no.6.1); to effect “a mobilization comparable in size to that of the phenomenon [of modern slavery] itself” (no.6.3).

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<sup>13</sup> *Pope Saint John XXIII, Encyclical, Pacem in Terris no. 137-138 viz. See Camdessus M., Church Teaching and Globalisation, America, 15 October, 2001.*

## Prayer

*Lord God,*

*In the waters of Baptism, you give us new life in Christ, a new life which calls us to see your image in every person, a new life which calls us to act justly and to promote justice for all.*

*Sharpen our awareness of the subtle modern forms of slavery. Awaken within us an awareness of the Social Teaching and Mission of the Church as we strive to live the Great Commandment to love God and our neighbour. Strengthen the social outreach of our faith in Jesus Christ in what we say and do.*

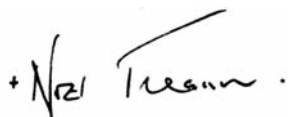
*May the power of the Gospel, as it forms our attitudes, values and actions, lead to personal, institutional and structural renewal in the Christian community and in the structures of society.*

*Help us to support the mission of the Church as we, the people of God, making up the mystical body of Christ in the world, address the plague of slavery in our midst.*

*May the suffering Christ and the Holy Family who experienced the abandonment and isolation of the flight into Egypt, sustain us in our service and care for victims of slavery, and all forms of human exploitation and abuse. We ask this through Christ our Lord.*

+ Noel Treanor

Bishop of Down and Connor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Noel Treanor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

New Year's Day 2015 – Feast of Mary, the Holy Mother of God.

## Appendix A

### Annual Papal World Day of Peace Messages

(Accessible through Vatican Website: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va))

<b>Pope</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Title of Message</b>	
<b>Pope Paul VI</b>	1968	The Day of Peace	
	1969	The promotion of Human Rights, the way to Peace	
	1970	To be reconciled with each other, to educate themselves for Peace	
	1971	Every man is my brother	
	1972	If you want Peace, work for Justice	
	1973	Peace is possible!	
	1974	Peace depends on you too	
	1975	Reconciliation - the way to peace	
	1976	The real weapons of peace	
	1977	If you want peace, defend life	
	1978	No to violence, yes to peace	
	<b>Pope John Paul II</b>	1979	"To reach peace, teach peace"
		1980	Truth, the power of peace
1981		To serve peace, respect freedom	
1982		Peace: a gift of God entrusted to us!	
1983		Dialogue for peace, a challenge for our time	
1984		"From a new heart, peace is born"	
1985		Peace and youth go forward together	
1986		Peace is a value with no frontiers North-South, East-West: only one peace	
1987		Development and solidarity: two keys to peace	
1988		Religious freedom: condition for peace	
1989		To build peace, respect minorities	
1990		Peace with God the Creator, peace with all of creation	
1991		If you want peace, respect the conscience of every person	

	1992	Believers united in building peace
	1993	If you want peace, reach out to the poor
	1994	The family creates the peace of the human family
	1995	Women: teachers of peace
	1996	Let us give children a future of peace
	1997	Offer forgiveness and receive peace
	1998	From the justice of each comes peace for all
	1999	Respect for human rights: the secret of true peace
	2000	"Peace on earth to those whom God loves!"
	2001	Dialogue between cultures for a civilization of love and peace
	2002	No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness
	2003	Pacem in terris: a permanent commitment
	2004	An ever timely commitment: teaching peace
	2005	Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with the good
<b>Pope Benedict XVI</b>	2006	In Truth, Peace
	2007	The Human Person, the Heart of Peace
	2008	The Human Family, a Community of Peace
	2009	Fighting Poverty to Build Peace
	2010	If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation
	2011	Religious Freedom, the Path to Peace
	2012	Educating Young People in Justice and Peace
	2013	Blessed are the Peacemakers
<b>Pope Francis</b>	2014	Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace
	2015	No longer slaves, but brothers and sisters

