

Pope's World Day of Peace Message: Good Politics is at the Service of Peace

In this year's World Day of Peace Message on Jan.1, Pope Francis called on all of us to engage with our civic systems saying, "Political responsibility belongs to every citizen and, in particular, to those that have received the mandate to protect and to govern." Instead of indifference, cynicism or thinking our voices do not matter, the Gospel calls us to raise our voices for the common good, for "politics is one of the highest forms of charity."

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Advocating for and with communities who are oppressed, disadvantaged, or excluded is a response to our baptismal call to love all members of the Body of Christ, in imitation of Christ's love. God created human beings as social and relational creatures, made in his own image. We are called to reach out and build relationships of love and justice, making love visible in structures and policies through political engagement.

Catholic Social Teaching demands that politics must have a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, and not be used to promote violence or marginalize those in poverty. Instead, "Good politics is at the service of peace," Pope Francis said.

Two areas in which we are called to protect human dignity is in our "concern for the future of life and of the planet, of the youngest and littlest." We must work to ensure that the dignity of all is protected through our political, social, and economic systems. As Pope Francis teaches us in his World Day of Peace Message, these systems must always work to promote peace in our communities.

See the Pope's full remarks at <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace.index.html>.

What Can You Do?

1. **Pray.** Pray for the grace to approach all political and social issues from a starting point of faith, love, and a spirit of generosity. Visit Wearesaltandlight.org to enrich your experience of prayer for peace.
2. **Learn.** Civic participation and faithful citizenship requires us to understand the political and social issues that impact our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Visit USCCB.org resources on Catholic Social Teaching and civic engagement. Sign up for the St. Matthew Peace & Social Justice Ministry email at Peace.SMCC@gmail.com.
3. **Act.** Join tens of thousands of Catholics to advocate for policies that support justice and peace in the U.S. and those experiencing poverty or conflict around the world. Take action today by visiting Confrontglobalpoverty.org. Join Catholic Advocates on Capitol Hill for the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering (Feb. 2-5). Be the hands and feet of Jesus here at home through one of St. Matthew's service ministries. See a list at stmatthewcatholic.org/ministries.

Pope Francis Prayer for Peace

Lord God of peace, hear our prayer! We have tried so many times and over so many years to resolve our conflicts by our own powers and by the force of our arms. How many moments of hostility and darkness

have we experienced; how much blood has been shed; how many lives have been shattered; how many hopes have been buried . . .

Now, Lord, come to our aid! Grant us peace, teach us peace; guide our steps in the way of peace. Open our eyes and our hearts and give us the courage to say: "Never again war!" . . . Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.

Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way may peace triumph at last, and may the words "division", "hatred" and "war" be banished from the heart of every man and woman. . . . Renew our hearts and minds, so that the word which always brings us together will be "brother", and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam! Amen.

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- *From the World Day of Peace Handout, USCCB.org*