



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
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THE FOUR PILLARS OF PEACE: TRUTH, JUSTICE, CHARITY AND FREEDOM

HOMILY DURING PONTIFICAL MASS ON REMEMBRANCE DAY 2016

Today we fulfill our duty to remember all those who died serving our country in times of conflict, all those who gave their lives in order that we may enjoy peace and security.

Pope Francis greeted Members of the Armed Forces at Saint Peter's on 30 April 2016, as they gathered to celebrate the Jubilee Year of Mercy. He had this to say to them on that solemn occasion: "Members of the Armed Forces have the mission to guarantee a secure environment in order that every citizen may be able to live in peace and serenity. In your families, in the different milieus in which you operate, strive to be instruments of reconciliation, builders of bridges, sowers of peace".

You are indeed called not only to prevent, to manage and to put an end to conflicts, but also to contribute to the building of an order based on truth, on justice, on charity (love) and on freedom, according to the definition of peace given by Saint John XXIII in his Encyclical "Pacem in terris".

The affirmation of peace is not an easy task, especially due to the fact that war hardens the hearts of men and increases violence and hatred. I exhort you not to loose heart".

These words by Pope Francis echoed the words of Jesus in today's Gospel: "When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end" ... "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes".

Since Pope Francis referred to the teaching of Saint John XXIII in "Pacem in terris" (1963), endorsing the four pillars of peace in social life: Truth, Justice, Charity and Freedom, I would like to propose these four pillars for your reflection, dear Members of the Armed Forces, adapting each one of them to your role in society and your own personal experience as members of a disciplined corps. My main message to you is this: in order to be effective keepers of the peace in society you need to promote the four pillars of peace in the way you

treat each other as members of the Armed Forces and in the way you perform your duties to the State.

The first pillar is truth. As Saint John XXIII says, “before a society can be considered well-ordered, creative, and consonant with human dignity, it must be based on truth. St Paul expressed this as follows: ‘Putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbour, for we are members one of another’. And so will it be, if each man acknowledges sincerely his own rights and his own duties toward others” (PT 35). The first pillar therefore encourages you to acknowledge each and every one’s rights and duty as citizens of the Republic, including the rights and duties of your own men and women members of the Armed Forces. This requires in the leadership of the Army a strong sense of the State at the service of the common good.

The second pillar is justice. Saint John XXIII has this to say: “Human society... demands that men be guided by justice, respect the rights of others and do their duty”. Today’s first reading from the Prophet Malachy has this beautiful prophecy: “But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays”. Psalm 98 which we heard at the Responsorial Psalm solemnly declares: “He will rule the world with justice and the peoples with equity”. Leadership and service based on justice means that people “respect the rights of others and do their duty”. If you acknowledge rights and duties you are more able to respect the fundamental human rights of citizens, more able do your duty under the rule of law.

The third pillar is charity (love). This is what Pope Roncalli has to say on the matter: “[Human society] demands, too, that men be animated by such love as will make them feel the needs of others as their own, and induce them to share their goods with others, and to strive in the world to make all men alike heirs to the noblest of intellectual and spiritual values”. I encourage you to promote an environment of charity among all ranks, avoiding cruel gossip that poisons your morale, striving to cherish the gifts that each and everyone of you brings to the Armed Forces. In the name of the people of our fair islands, I would like to thank you for your heroic work in civil protection, and for the part you play in humanitarian missions in the Mediterranean. This is indeed a generous witness to charity that is worthy of our praise and admiration.

The fourth pillar is freedom. This is what Pope John XXIII says: “Human society thrives on freedom, namely, on the use of means which are consistent with the dignity of its individual members, who, being endowed with reason, assume responsibility for their own actions”. The question of freedom in the context of any army subject to military discipline is indeed a delicate one. My prayer is that the leadership and the ranks will never be faced with the tragic choice between the call of duty and the demands of conscience. As to the relationship of the Armed Forces to us, ordinary citizens of the Republic, my prayer is that you will never be

called by the powers that be to deny our freedoms by force or unjust violence. May we always find in you the keepers of our security, the defenders of our freedoms.

Pope Francis words to you were also words of encouragement: “Continue on your pilgrimage of faith and open your hearts to God the merciful father who never tires of forgiving us. In the face of your daily challenges, shine forth that Christian Hope that gives us the certainty of the victory of love over hatred and of peace over war” (Pope Francis). As the Lord says in today’s Gospel: “By your perseverance you will secure your lives”.

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