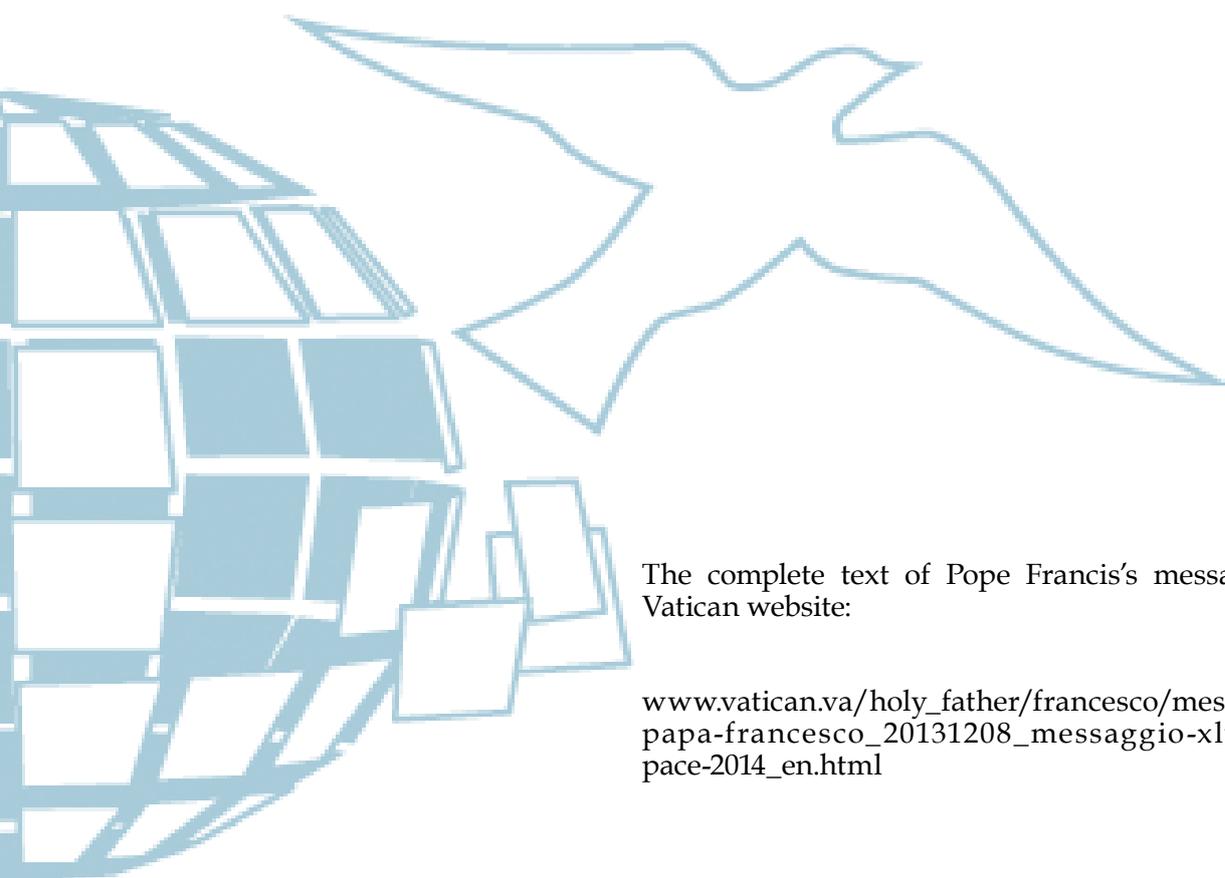


# ACSJC Discussion Guide: World Day of Peace Message 2014

Pope Francis delivered his first World Day of Peace Message on New Year's Day, 2014. A papal message to Christians and all people of the world has been given each year since 1968.

The theme of the 2014 Message is: *Fraternity: the Foundation and Pathway to Peace.*

Each year, the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council issues a brief discussion guide to help promote the peace message. This guide consists of a brief summary of the message, some points for reflection and discussion, and prayer.



The complete text of Pope Francis's message can be found at the Vatican website:

[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131208\\_messaggio-xxvii-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20131208_messaggio-xxvii-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014_en.html)

# FRATERNITY, THE FOUNDATION AND PATHWAY TO PEACE

In his first message for the World Day of Peace, Pope Francis expresses his wish for everyone to live a life filled with joy and hope. Every human heart has an irrepressible longing for fraternity, which draws us to fellowship with others. Fraternity helps us 'look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother'.

*Without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace. (#1)*

Today's highly-connected world makes us 'powerfully aware of the unity and common destiny of all people and nations'. Yet, in many places, 'there seems to be no end to grave offences against fundamental human rights', the Pope says.

Pope Francis recalls Pope Benedict's comment that globalisation makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers and sisters. This lack of fraternity and solidarity is shown in today's individualism, egocentrism and consumerism, which are

*... fuelling that 'throw away' mentality which leads to contempt for, and the abandonment of, the weakest and those considered 'useless'. (#1)*

## 'WHERE IS YOUR BROTHER?'

To understand more fully this human call to fraternity, and to recognise and overcome what prevents us from realising it, we must understand God's plan, as presented in sacred Scripture. The story of Cain and Abel reminds us of our profound calling to fraternity, and our tragic capacity to betray that calling.

*This is witnessed by our daily acts of selfishness, which are at the root of so many wars and so much injustice: many men and women die at the hands of their brothers and sisters who are incapable of seeing themselves as such, that is, as beings made for reciprocity, for communion and self-giving. (#2)*

The Pope poses a question: Can human beings ever fully respond to the longing for fraternity and, by their power alone, overcome indifference, egoism and hatred, and accept the legitimate differences typical of brothers and sisters?

Pope Francis's answer is this: human fraternity is regenerated *in and by* Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection: human beings are not capable of generating it themselves. The basis of our fraternity lies in the fact that God is the father of all of us, and 'the specific and extraordinarily concrete personal love of God for each man and woman'.

*In God's family, where all are sons and daughters of the same Father, and, because they are grafted to Christ, sons and daughters in the Son, there are no 'disposable lives'. All men and women enjoy an equal and inviolable dignity. All are loved by God. All have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, who died on the Cross and rose for all. This is the reason why no one can remain indifferent before the lot of our brothers and sisters. (#3)*

The Holy Father quotes the words of Pope Paul VI: 'in this sacred communion, we must also ... work together to build the common future of the human race'. Pope Francis continues:

*In the first place, this duty falls to those who are most privileged. Their obligations are rooted in human and supernatural fraternity and are manifested in three ways: the duty of solidarity, which requires the richer nations to assist the less developed; the duty of social justice, which requires the realignment of relationships between stronger and weaker peoples in terms of greater fairness; and the duty of universal charity, which entails the promotion of a more humane world for all, a world in which each has something to give and to receive, without the progress of the one constituting an obstacle to the development of the other. (#4)*

Fraternity, he says, is the principal foundation of peace.

## OVERCOMING POVERTY AND SEEKING ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Pope Francis reminds us of Benedict XVI's comment that the lack of fraternity between peoples is a significant cause of poverty. Absolute poverty is being reduced, the Pope says, but 'on the other hand there is a serious rise in relative poverty' - that is, in inequality between people living together in particular regions.

*[E]ffective policies are needed to promote the principle of fraternity, securing for people – who are equal in dignity and in fundamental rights – access to capital, services, educational resources, healthcare and technology so that every person ... can develop fully as a person. (#5)*

There is a call to rediscover fraternity in the economy, as highlighted in the ‘grave financial and economic crises of the present time – which find their origin in the progressive distancing of man from God and from his neighbour’. The economic crises the world has undergone should lead us to ‘a timely rethinking of our models of economic development and to a change in lifestyles’. (#6)

#### **FRATERNITY EXTINGUISHES WAR**

Pope Francis also turns his attention to those who have suffered in war.

*To all those who live in lands where weapons impose terror and destruction, I assure you of my personal closeness and that of the whole Church, whose mission is to bring Christ’s love to the defenceless victims of forgotten wars through her prayers for peace, her service to the wounded, the starving, refugees, the displaced and all those who live in fear. (#7)*

He issues a heartfelt plea to ‘all those who sow violence and death by force of arms’ to see their opponents not as ‘an enemy to be beaten’ but rather as ‘your brother or sister’.

*Wars are a concrete refusal to pursue the great economic and social goals that the international community has set itself’. (#7)*

#### **CORRUPTION AND ORGANISED CRIME THREATEN FRATERNITY**

Fraternity, Pope Francis says,

*generates social peace because it creates a balance between freedom and justice, between personal responsibility and solidarity, between the good of individuals and the common good. And so a political community must act in a transparent and responsible way to favour all this. Citizens must feel themselves represented by the public authorities in respect for their freedom. (#8)*

He names the evils that result from the breakdown of fraternity and the abuse of power:

*... drug abuse, the devastation of natural resources and ongoing pollution, and the tragedy of the exploitation of labour ... illicit money trafficking and financial speculation ... prostitution, which every day reaps innocent victims, especially the young ... the horror of slavery still present in many parts of the world; the frequently overlooked tragedy of migrants, who are often victims of disgraceful and illegal manipulation. (#8)*

#### **FRATERNITY HELPS TO PRESERVE AND CULTIVATE NATURE**

The Pope reminds us that nature is a gift from God to all humanity and that we are called to exercise a responsible stewardship over it.

*Yet so often we are driven by greed and by the arrogance of dominion, possession, manipulation and exploitation; we do not preserve nature; nor do we respect it or consider it a gracious gift ...*

*We need, then, to find ways by which all may benefit from the fruits of the earth, not only to avoid the widening gap between those who have more and those who must be content with the crumbs, but above all because it is a question of justice, equality and respect for every human being. (#9)*

In conclusion Pope Francis reminds us that fraternity is a quality that ‘needs to be discovered, loved, experienced, proclaimed and witnessed to’. Christ, he says,

*... has come to the world so as to bring us divine grace, that is, the possibility of sharing in his life. This entails weaving a fabric of fraternal relationships marked by reciprocity, forgiveness and complete self-giving. (#10)*

### FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What is your understanding of 'fraternity as the foundation and pathway to peace'? How is it lived out in your family, parish, diocese?

2. Pope Francis says: *In this mutual understanding and friendship, in this sacred communion, we must also ... work together to build the common future of the human race. In the first place, this duty falls to those who are most privileged.*

How do you deal with this responsibility of being one of the most privileged?

3. *In God's family, where all are sons and daughters of the same Father, and, because they are grafted to Christ, sons and daughters in the Son, there are no 'disposable lives'.*

How does Australia's treatment of asylum seekers measure up to this standard?

### RESOURCES

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Statement 2013-14, *Lazarus at Our Gate: A critical moment in the fight against world poverty* (available on the ACSJC website: [www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au)).

J Ferguson, H Kearins, D Brennan, *Reading the Signs of the Times: A basic introduction to Catholic social teaching*. Catholic Social Justice Series No. 70, Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (2011).

### PRAYER

God of all creation,  
you call us to profound fraternity,  
in relationship with one another and with all the earth.

Inspire us with a deep awareness of our relatedness  
so that we learn to look upon and to treat each person  
as a true sister or brother,  
and to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace.

May we continually open ourselves to your love  
so that, once welcomed,  
it becomes the most powerful means  
of transforming our lives and relationships with others,  
and opening us to solidarity and to genuine sharing.

We ask this through Jesus Christ,  
who gave us his new commandment:  
that we love one another even as he loved us,

And who through his life, death and resurrection  
made of us a new humanity,  
in full communion with the will of God.

Amen

**building**  
social justice  
networks

**researching**  
policy

**educating**  
on issues

**presenting**  
Catholic teaching

**promoting**  
a spirituality of  
justice

**advocating**  
change

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