



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE ECUMENICAL SYMPOSIUM
IN THE PANNONHALMA **ARCHABBEY****

*Your Holiness, dear Brother Bartholomew,
Most Reverend Archabbot Cirill,
esteemed monastic community of Pannonhalma,
dear participants of the Symposium!*

“Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come” (*Rev 1:4*).

You have gathered, dear brothers and sisters, at this Ecumenical Symposium to consider and deepen, in the prayerful atmosphere of the historic Pannonhalma Abbey, the theme of peace in its multiple aspects.

You are doing so while, unfortunately, globalized humanity is hurt and threatened by a piecemeal world war that, fought directly in some regions of the globe, however has consequences that damage the life of everyone, especially the poorest.

You have come together in a place that eminently recalls the “*pax benedictina*”. When the Saint Pope Paul VI declared Saint Benedict patron saint of Europe, he described him as “a messenger of peace, a bringer of union, a teacher of civilization” (Apostolic Letter *Pacis nuntius*, 24 October 1964).

“Seek peace, and pursue it” (*Ps 34:14*; Rule of St Benedict [RB], Prol., 17): Saint Benedict warmly recommends these words of the psalm to his monks from the prologue of his Rule. Those who are constantly seeking peace should themselves become messengers of peace through their words and actions.

The Rule of Benedict does not contain a treatise on the theme of peace, but rather can be adopted as an excellent guide for a conscious and practical commitment to promoting peace. The Holy Abbot wrote it with monks in mind, but his message goes far beyond the walls of monasteries. It

shows how human co-existence, with the grace of God, can overcome the dangers of disputes and discord.

Benedict's view is very clear about the differences and inequalities that exist between members of the community. He is aware of the complexity of linguistic, ethnic and cultural imprints, which is both a richness and a potential for conflict. Yet, he has a serene and peaceful outlook, because he is fully convinced of the equal dignity and value of all human beings.

Even *hospites*, outsiders, must be welcomed according to this principle (cf. *RB*, 53, 1). "Proper honour must be shown to all" (*ibid.*, 4, 8) is the foundation of peace in the monastic community, as well as in interpersonal, social and international relations. "They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other" (*ibid.*, 72.4); and this also means knowing how to take the first step in certain difficult situations.

Saint Benedict's vision of peace is not utopian, but is oriented towards a pathway that God's friendship mankind has already marked out and that, nevertheless, must be travelled by each person and the community step by step.

Discord must not turn into a permanent state. "If you have a dispute with someone, make peace with them before the sun goes down" (*ibid.*, 4.73). "Before the sun goes down": this is the measure of the readiness of the desire for peace. Benedict certainly warns against giving "a hollow greeting of peace" (*ibid.* 4:25), hasty and insincere, but the search for peace in justice bears no delay, it must be pursued without hesitation.

I therefore repeat what I stated at the beginning of this year when I addressed the members of the diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See: "Building peace requires pursuing justice. ... It is not a matter of creating coalitions, but of providing opportunities for everyone to be partners in dialogue" ([9 January 2023](#)).

Dear brothers and sisters, let us keep ourselves on the path of peace; let us become messengers and servants of peace where we live and work! But above all, let us pray for peace! At this time, the war in Ukraine has dramatically called us to open our eyes and hearts to the many peoples who suffer because of war, mindful of the words of the Second Vatican Council: "Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation" (Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 80).

Through the intercession of Saint Benedict let us ask the One and Triune God that the world may be freed from the scourge of war and that there may grow "an understanding among peoples which ensures in all the continents, justice and bread, freedom and peace" (C.M. Martini, Prayer for Europe).

Wishing the best fruits for your Symposium, I renew my greetings to all of you, dear brothers and sisters, and thanking you for your prayers, I cordially bless you.

From the Vatican, 24 August 2023

FRANCIS

Holy See Press Office Bulletin, 22 September 2022

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana