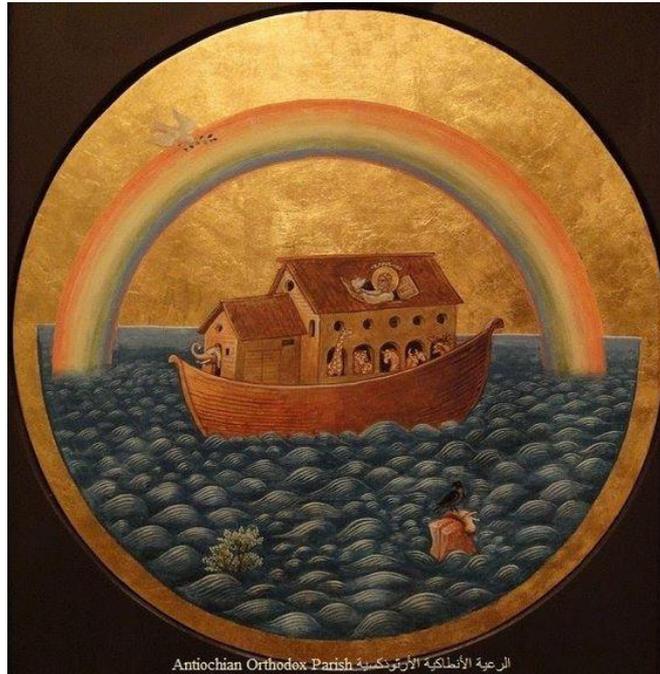


FELLOWSHIP AS AN ARK OF PEACE



A number of important events will take place in September: on the 21st, we will celebrate the International Day of Peace, established on November 30th, 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly, and on the 29th, the 105th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, established by Pope Benedict XV. Also, a summit on climate change will take place in New York on September 23rd.

These are all key topics in our Position Statement. We decided to get ready for these days with some ideas for reflection inspired by three documents by Pope Francis: the Document on “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together”, the Pope’s speech given on February 4th, 2019 at the Founders Memorial in Abu Dhabi, and the message “It is not just about migrants”, written for the 105th World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 2019.

The dove with an olive branch is a symbol of peace. This image recalls the story of the great flood, which is part of multiple religious traditions. According to the biblical account, God asked Noah to enter the ark with his family in order to save humanity from destruction.

Today, in order to preserve peace, we need to enter together, as a single human family, an ark that can cut through the stormy seas of the world: **the ark of fellowship**.

The first step is to recognize that God is the origin of this one and only human family, the Creator of everything and everyone, who wants us to live as brothers and sisters, in the common house of creation.

Here, at the roots of our common humanity, is where fellowship and solidarity start. We all have the same dignity and nobody can be the owner or the slave of anybody else. We are called to preserve the creation and the whole universe, to take care of each other, supporting those who are most in need in particular.

Today, fellowship is ripped apart by policies of fundamentalism and division, by excessive profit systems and ideologies of hate, that manipulate the actions and the destiny of humanity.

HOW CAN WE PROTECT EACH OTHER IN THE ONE AND ONLY HUMAN FAMILY?

Openness to dialogue is the practical way of believing in the human family and protecting it. Dialogue implies that a person is aware of their own identity, which one must not give away just to please someone else. At the same time, it demands the *courage of otherness*, that implies the full acknowledgment of the other and of their freedom, and consequently, that we engage to fight for the recognition of their fundamental rights anytime, anywhere and by anybody.

There is no other option: if we don't build the future together, there won't be any future.

HOW CAN WE NOURISH A TRUE FELLOWSHIP THAT NOURISHES RELATIONSHIPS OF PEACE?

Education/training and justice are the two dimensions that are necessary for peace to inhabit our world.

1. *Education* brings to light the precious personal resources of people by developing relationships with others, it helps us grow by getting to know ourselves and by opening up to the other. The famous ancient saying "*know yourself*" should go together with "*know your brother, know your sister,*" their story, their culture and their faith, because we can't really know ourselves without the other. As brothers and sisters, we should remember to each other that we need to know everything that is human.

It is important for the future that we build open identities, which should be able to win against the temptation of isolating ourselves, of tensing up, not accepting diversity or taking responsibilities. Our modern society has made many steps forward in the fields of science, technology, medicine, industry and wellness, but it has also led to the deterioration of ethics, an increased weakness of spiritual values, of the sense of responsibility and a deep crisis of democracy.

By investing in culture, we can take down hate and help our society and prosperity grow. Education and violence are inversely proportional.

2. *Justice*, which is essential to the development and the maintaining of peace, is now slowly being consumed by the curse of injustice. Therefore, we can't believe in God without trying to experience justice with everyone, according to the golden rule: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Mt 7:12).

Peace and justice are inseparable! Prophet Isaiah said: "The result of righteousness will be peace" (32:17). Peace dies when it separates from justice, but justice becomes false if it is not universal. When justice is limited to one's family, one's compatriots, the believers of the same faith, it is poor justice, it is injustice in disguise!

Serious political crisis, injustice and the unequal distribution of natural resources – that only a rich minority can benefit from, leaving out the majority of the populations in the world – have generated, and continue to generate, a huge amount of ill people, poor people and deaths, causing lethal crisis in different countries, despite the natural treasures and the resourceful young generations that characterize them. Moreover, advanced societies develop within themselves the tendency to accentuate individualism and this, together with a utilitarian mentality and increased by the media, produces the "**globalization of indifference**".

In this scenario, migrants, refugees, displaced people and victims of human trafficking have become the symbol of exclusion because, in addition to the troubles caused by their situation in itself, they are often charged with a negative judgment that considers them as the cause of social issues.

This attitude towards them is a signal that warns us against the moral decline that we'll experience if we keep on fostering the **culture of waste**. As a matter of fact, following this path, every person that doesn't

match the common standards of physical, mental and social health might be a victim of marginalization and exclusion.

Today, the presence of migrants and refugees – as, in general, that of people who have been marginalized – is an invitation to restore some essential dimensions of our Christian existence and our humanity. By caring about them, we also care about ourselves, about everyone; by taking care of them, we all grow; by listening of them, we also give voice to the part of us that we keep hidden because it is not accepted nowadays.

HOW CAN WE ADVANCE THE INCLUSION OF OTHERS RATHER THAN EXCLUSION?

The answer to the challenge of contemporary migrations can be summed up with four verbs: **welcome, protect, promote and integrate**. But these verbs don't only concern migrants and refugees. They also express the mission of the Church towards all the inhabitants of the outskirts of existence, who need to be welcomed, protected, promoted and integrated.

If we put these verbs into practice, we help to build the city of God and of human beings, we promote the full human development of every person and even help the global community to get closer to the sustainable development goals that were set and that would be difficult to meet otherwise.

Migrants, especially the most vulnerable ones, help us read the "sign of times."

Through them, God calls us to conversion, to free ourselves from preferential treatments, indifference and the culture of scrap.

Through them, God invites us to get back our Christian life in its integrity and to contribute, each person according to their own vocation, to build a world that corresponds more and more to the project of God.

Through them, God shows us the way to a true and durable peace.

Let's conclude this moment of reflection and prayer with the **Prayer of St. Francis**:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.

