The Peace Advocacy of Pope Francis: Jesuit Perspectives

Thomas Massaro, S.J.

Theology Department, Fordham University, Bronx, NY, USA

tmassaro@fordham.edu

Abstract

Among the distinctive features of the papal ministry of Francis is an active dedication to peacemaking that bears noteworthy marks of his Jesuit background. A number of elements within Jesuit spirituality and history contribute to the distinctive stance that Francis assumes toward supporting peace and building the structures and conditions that encourage nonviolent resolution of conflicts worldwide. The pope's dialogic style of diplomacy proceeds through pointed words, timely apostolic visits, and rich symbolic gestures aimed at peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Keywords

Pope Francis – peacemaking – Society of Jesus – Ignatian spirituality – nonviolence – diplomacy

I appeal forcefully to all those who sow violence and death by force of arms: in the person you today see simply as an enemy to be beaten, discover rather your brother or sister, and hold back your hand! Give up the way of arms and go out to meet the other in dialogue, pardon and reconciliation [...]. A conversion of heart is needed is... This is the spirit which inspires many initiatives [...] to promote peace.¹

¹ Pope Francis, Message for World Day of Peace, January 1, 2014, "Fraternity, The Foundation and Pathway to Peace," no. 7, at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20131208_messaggio-xxviii-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014.html

The substance of the passage above might have flowed from the pen of any recent pope. By including this appeal for peace in his very first Message for World Day of Peace, as celebrated on January 1, 2014, Pope Francis did little to distinguish himself from his predecessors. All recent popes, certainly all since Benedict XV (r.1914–22) so publicly lamented the carnage of the First World War (1914–18) as the “needless slaughter” that it was, have advocated for peace in strong terms. Indeed, as a relentless voice for restraint and diplomacy on a global stage that all too often prizes the hard power of military might over the soft power of persuasion and constructive dialogue, the modern papacy has emerged as a premier champion of peace in our age. The consistency of this message proposing alternatives to the use of force is impressive, even if the papal playbook does run the risk of a certain repetitiveness. The passionate appeals of recent popes for peaceful resolution of conflicts and grievances in the international arena often appear interchangeable, *mutatis mutandis*.

But it would not be hard to find in the corpus of Francis’s statements on peace certain themes and motifs that are especially associated with him. Consider the seminal paragraph from his 2020 Message for World Day of Peace that includes a call to “ecological conversion” (a prominent phrase from his 2015 environmental encyclical *Laudato si’*) and a commitment to cease “mistreating nature” through “abusive exploitation of natural resources,” which Francis links to social peace through his trademark rubric of “integral ecology.”² Or consider his recurring rhetorical strategy of denouncing terrorism, human rights violations, and misuse of power as contemporary atrocities that “constitute a real third world war fought piecemeal.”³ Without departing from the substance of his predecessors’ work for peace, Francis is staking out new

(accessed December 2, 2020). The practice of annual Messages for World Day of Peace was started by Paul VI (r.1963–78). While these are the most regular ways that popes signal peace-related priorities, many additional high-profile occasions are worth considering, such as regular addresses and correspondence a pope conducts with international organizations and with members of the papal diplomatic corps, as well as with diplomats accredited to the Holy See.

- 2 Pope Francis, Message for World Day of Peace, January 1, 2020, “Peace as a Journey of Hope: Dialogue, Reconciliation and Ecological Conversion,” no. 4, at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20191208_messaggio-53giornatamondiale-pace2020.html (accessed December 2, 2020). The text mentions prominently the importance of forging “peaceful relationships between communities and the land.”
- 3 Pope Francis, Message for World Day of Peace, January 1, 2016, “Overcome Indifference and Win Peace,” no. 1, at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20151208_messaggio-xlix-giornata-mondiale-pace-2016.html (accessed December 2, 2020).

ways of speaking and thinking about peace and contemporary realities that endanger it.

This essay highlights some distinctive features in the peace witness and advocacy of Pope Francis that go beyond the level of mere rhetorical flourishes and favored tropes. In proposing a certain originality in how Francis wears the mantle of peacemaker and bridge-builder in his role as Universal Pastor (indeed as *pontifex maximus*, an important papal title), the treatment that follows naturally includes analysis of the sources of his concern and characteristic strategies in pursuit of peace. More specifically, an examination of the peacemaking initiatives of Francis—including words spoken and written, noteworthy apostolic visits and rich symbolic gestures—reveals identifiable marks of his Jesuit roots. As we review what Pope Francis has done and said regarding peace in his first seven and one-half years in office, the unmistakable influence of Ignatian spirituality and five centuries of Jesuit experience rise to the surface time and again.

Of course, it would not be prudent to push any single component of this argument too hard. The usual disclaimers about causality and distinctiveness are called for and are worth mentioning at the outset, lest the reader gain the impression that too much is being claimed. First, it would be a fool's errand to portray any recent papacy as embarking on an utterly new trajectory, perhaps especially in any aspect of social teachings, of which peace advocacy is a part. The broad contours of Catholic social doctrine have been quite stable, especially since the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). Any novelty of style or substance on the part of any Holy Father is bound to unfold within a basic continuity of purpose and even of strategy, as successive popes find themselves treading paths that are well trod even as world events present unforeseeable challenges with novel features. Second, arguments about human activity that contain any version of determinism, whether hard or soft in nature, are rarely as untenable as they are when the Society of Jesus and its members are involved. Generalizations about how Jesuits act and what guides their decisions are seldom reliable in the simplest of circumstances, much less as we consider a dynamic figure such as Francis—a leader who, even as an octogenarian, characteristically moves at warp speed through the whirlwind of global politics.

We will not, then, be positing simple schemas of cause and effect or expecting to observe any straight lines connecting Ignatian principles or Jesuit history to contemporary observations. But neither is it prudent to discount the reality of Jesuit influence on the peace agenda of Pope Francis; there is indeed “value added” here well worth noticing and analyzing. Despite that fact that he has not lived in a Jesuit community or worked in an apostolate sponsored

by the Society or answered to a Jesuit superior for decades now, the Society of Jesus has left deep imprints in the approach of Francis to matters of peace and conflict. Whether we speak of his “Jesuit DNA” or “an Ignatian well from which Francis drinks deeply” or even “a Jesuit tributary” that flows into and helps form the wide river of his actions, we are wise to recognize and trace the influences that have shaped the peace agenda of Francis.⁴ There are indeed Ignatian and Jesuit resonances at play in this facet of the papal leadership of Francis, so attention to his Jesuit background will help any observer comprehend and appreciate his many actions on behalf of peace.

The remainder of this essay will examine three aspects of the peace advocacy of Pope Francis: 1) his particular motivation for embarking so assiduously on the path of peacemaking; 2) the actual practices that constitute his peacemaking efforts; and 3) his special attention to the structural dimensions of peacemaking. Each of the three sections to follow will contain descriptions of the words and deeds of Francis regarding peace as well as some consideration of the Jesuit roots of his initiatives to resolve conflict on a peaceful basis.

The Peacemaking Motivations of Pope Francis

It would be hard to dispute the claim that the value each person places on harmonious relations, and beyond that his or her preferences for specific strategies to establish peace, are a function of previous experience from which one draws. This sturdy generalization is certainly true for Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the Argentinian Jesuit who became Pope Francis on March 13, 2013. The full picture of why peace is such an urgent priority in his papal ministry comes into sharpest focus with a consideration of his personal, national, and ecclesial background. His membership in the Society of Jesus emerges as a particularly important component of his high regard for peace; as we shall see in this section and again in the final section of this essay, the pope's Jesuit identity has shaped the strategies by which he has pursued his agenda of conflict resolution in a consistent way.

4 These water-based metaphors guide the description of the spiritual roots of Pope Francis's wider ethical agenda that I offer in “He Drinks from His Own Wells’: The Jesuit Roots of the Ethical Teachings of Pope Francis,” *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 15, no. 2 (2018): 1–21. A slightly updated version of that essay appears as chapter 7 (pp. 81–101) in Barbara E. Wall and Massimo Faggioli, eds., *Pope Francis: A Voice for Mercy, Justice, Love, and Care for the Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019).

Consider a familiar image customarily employed to capture the layers of a given person's experience and memberships: a series of concentric circles extending outward from the individual who is situated at the core. The most proximate circle represents that intimate sphere of one's family. Nuclear and extended families play a vital role in socializing individuals, providing the context for their early experiences and shaping their priorities regarding values such as social harmony. One need not be a psychological determinist to recognize the lasting influence of family background. While there is no public record of specific peace-valuing family practices that are sure to have shaped the future pope in his formative years, we do have access to a disturbing account of sharp and recurring disputes within the Bergoglio family that horrified young Jorge and probably helped kindle his commitment to conflict resolution. Not long after he ascended to the papacy, Francis described this painful childhood memory:

In my family, there was a long history of disagreements and quarrels. Uncles and cousins quarreled and separated. As a child, when one of these fights was discussed or when we could see a new incident was about to take place, I cried a great deal, in secret and sometimes I offered a sacrifice or a penance so that such events might not occur. I was very affected [...]. These events left a deep mark on me in my childhood and created a desire in my heart for people to not fight, to remain united. And if they fight, that they return to better feelings.⁵

This personal revelation paints a picture of the trauma any impressionable child may experience when confronted by particularly fierce family bickering. It is easy to imagine how a young boy in a large family would experience dread and revulsion at the prospect of domestic conflict, and how it might fuel a drive within him to do all he could in his future life to promote amity and harmony. The tears of young Jorge may just have watered the seeds of an eventual ministry dedicated to peacemaking and reconciliation, featuring a keen determination to overcome the human temptation to harbor grudges and indulge belligerent impulses.

Another occasion when the future Pope Francis encountered the scourge of aggressive and violent behavior, and indeed endured considerable pain and suffering himself, relates to another of these concentric circles mentioned

5 Excerpt from a 2013 letter of Pope Francis to Rev. Alexandre Awi, released publicly in 2015 and appearing in Mark K. Shriver, *Pilgrimage: My Search for the Real Pope Francis* (New York: Random House, 2016), 13–14.

above: the broader arena of his membership in the national community of Argentina. That Latin American country endured the infamous Dirty War, a horrifying interlude of brutal military oppression that lasted from 1976 to 1983. This turbulent time of national testing overlapped the six-year term (1973–79) that Father Bergoglio served as the superior provincial of the Argentine Jesuits. His mission to protect the lives and promote the wellbeing of the several hundred Jesuits under his care led to a series of agonizing involvements that embroiled the future pope in sharp disputes with military officials who repeatedly accused certain Jesuits of fomenting subversive activities against the regime. The charges and counter-charges necessitated protracted negotiations and deft behind-the-scenes maneuverings on the part of Jesuit superiors to safeguard lives and prevent further damage to the Jesuit community and its works.⁶ While the details of Bergoglio's conduct in the crucible of the Dirty War remain a matter of some dispute, beyond doubt is that the national crisis exposed the future pope to the deadly consequences of fratricidal conflict, the high stakes associated with successful diplomacy, and the absolute priority of preventing violence through peaceful resolution of grievances.

While the communities of family and nation certainly functioned to expose the future pope to the horrors of conflict, it is his membership in the worldwide community of the Society of Jesus that provides him with especially valuable resources for operationalizing his desire for peace. Jesuit history and Ignatian spirituality contain strong support for nurturing deep commitments to social harmony. By way of disclaimer, to make this claim in no way detracts from a full and enthusiastic recognition of the influence of Franciscan spirituality on the first man to select the papal name Francis. In numerous addresses, homilies, and interviews, the pope has acknowledged his great admiration for Saint Francis of Assisi (c.1181–1226) and the admirable Franciscan tradition of peacemaking (which is often placed alongside the reverence for nature and love of the poor as constituting a praiseworthy triad of distinctive Franciscan values).⁷ Indeed, popular and religious media occasionally call attention to the resonance between the actions of Pope Francis and the inspiring sentiments expressed in the Peace Prayer (featuring the opening “Make me an instrument

6 Accounts of this period in the life of Francis are provided in all the major biographies of the pope; for the most fully researched account, see Austen Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2014), esp. chap. 4.

7 All three of these parallels regarding the religious value priorities motivating the two church reformers named Francis are highlighted in a book written by a prominent Brazilian theologian entirely within six months of the election of Pope Francis in 2013; see Leonardo Boff, *Francis of Rome & Francis of Assisi: A New Spring in the Church*, trans. Dinah Livingstone (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014).

of your peace”) traditionally associated with Saint Francis. Further, media coverage of the 2017 papal trip to Egypt could not resist drawing parallels to the quixotic 1219 voyage of Saint Francis from Italy to Damietta, Egypt to seek an interfaith dialogue with Sultan Malik al-Kamel (r.1218–38) that might end the Fifth Crusade.⁸

But for all these Franciscan elements, the words of Pope Francis himself attest to the Jesuit framework for his papal ministry. In response to an interviewer’s question in July 2013 on the topic of his spiritual influences, especially given his choice of papal name, Francis mused: “I feel I am a Jesuit in my spirituality, in the spirituality of the Exercises, the spirituality that I have in my heart. I have not changed my spirituality, no. Francis, Franciscan, no. I feel Jesuit and I still think like a Jesuit.”⁹ Taking the pope at his word, the task for the remainder of this section is to identify materials within the Jesuit tradition that support the notion that the Jesuit charism includes a mandate to be committed to the pursuit of peace and the nonviolent resolution of conflict. While a thorough review of relevant material from the history of the Society of Jesus exceeds the scope of this study, what follows is a sketch of some of the most important materials, starting with early Jesuit sources.

Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491–1556) began his adult life as a knight and died as a priest and religious founder. According to his own account of pilgrim experiences (as told in the early 1550s to the Portuguese Jesuit Luis Gonçalves da Câmara [c.1519–75]), a pivotal moment in his evolution to a new way of life occurred at the shrine of Our Lady at Montserrat, where Loyola lay down “his sword and his dagger in the church on the altar of Our Lady.”¹⁰ The full import of this single act is of course not immediately transparent; a full comprehension of its significance would require substantial contextualization within the history of Christian pilgrim and conversion narratives as well as contemporaneous Iberian culture. Also to be taken into account are complexities within the text of this account itself, as Ignatius (and Câmara) rather deliberately lead the reader to draw contrasts with the previous behavior and later actions of

8 See Christopher Lamb, “The Pope in Egypt: Pilgrim for Peace,” *The Tablet: The International Catholic Weekly*, May 6, 2017, 4–5; Jason Horowitz, “Pope Francis, in Egypt, Delivers a Blunt Message on Violence and Religion,” *New York Times*, April 29, 2017, A6.

9 Interview cited in Philip Endean, S.J., ed., “Writings on Jesuit Spirituality by Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J.,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 45, no. 3 (Autumn 2013): 2.

10 *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola with Related Documents*, trans. Joseph F. O’Callaghan, ed. John C. Olin (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 31–32.

Ignatius the pilgrim.¹¹ Nevertheless, it is safe to conclude that the Jesuit founder made a stark choice for a way of life that renounced violence. While not every action of a founder constitutes a precedent with binding normative force for later members of a given religious congregation, it is significant for all Jesuits that the conversion of Ignatius included a symbolic gesture associated with the pursuit of peaceful ways. The laying down of the sword (not to mention the simultaneous relinquishing of his sartorial finery, which he gave to a poor beggar as he departed Montserrat for Manresa) is surely a meaningful layer within the conversion narrative of Ignatius.

Since space allows only the briefest consultation of the founding documents of the Society of Jesus, I limit my treatment to one (rather obvious) citation regarding the priority of peacemaking from the *Constitutions* and a single (admittedly far less obvious) citation from the *Spiritual Exercises*. Part 7 of the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* treats the missions and ministries that Jesuits are to undertake, and contains a noteworthy paragraph affording a glimpse of what Ignatius foresaw regarding the apostolic engagements of members of the new company. Number 650 lists, among a diverse range of laudable ministries, “the reconciliation of quarreling parties.”¹² Ignatius evidently promoted this rather specialized ministry as a component of the service that the Society could render to the Christian community of his age, although the *Constitutions* provide no further specification of strategies or means.

In order to appreciate the meaning of this mandate with any precision, it is of course necessary to consider the context of mid-sixteenth-century Europe. While peacemaking in our time customarily conjures up images of international diplomatic negotiations and the workings of global networks of nongovernmental organizations, in the simpler world Ignatius inhabited the agents of peacemaking were rather modest and local in extent. While the sixteenth century witnessed its share of bloodshed resulting from clashing armies arrayed on battlefields, Ignatius appears to have envisioned a constructive role for Jesuits in mediating conflicts, not so much between kingdoms and empires, but between contending factions and rival families in towns and villages. Any

11 By this, I mean not only the habitual behavior of a vainglorious knight, but also an incident related just two paragraphs before the account of what Ignatius did at Montserrat, namely the encounter with a Moor on the road in Catalonia. Ruminating on an evident slight to the honor of the Virgin Mary, Ignatius comes close to striking the perceived offender, spared from committing an act of violence by the sheer chance of his mule's choice at a fork in the road.

12 Number 650 appears on p. 298 of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

reader of Shakespeare's (1564–1616) *Romeo and Juliet* (written in the 1590s) will readily agree that the Capulet and the Montague families of Verona would have benefitted from the ministrations of a neutral mediator, and itinerant priests of a newly founded religious order would be well positioned to play such a role. When John O'Malley investigates the historical record, he finds evidence of significant Jesuit efforts (especially on the Italian and Iberian peninsulas) "to convince villagers to renounce the bloody feuds that had raged for years" and that at least some such interventions "effected reconciliation among warring factions."¹³

While it is easy to perceive the perspectival advantage of being a newcomer to a village racked by vendettas and conflict, not just any outsider dropping into a locality (in sixteenth-century Europe or anywhere today) with an agenda of peacemaking is necessarily well equipped to play a constructive role as mediator. What qualities and mindsets made those Jesuits (both in their role as priest-confessors and as public mediators) promising candidates to negotiate truces and reconcile longstanding rivals? This question cannot be answered without some reference to the *Spiritual Exercises*, which of course shapes the ministerial approach of every Jesuit. Nowhere in the *Spiritual Exercises* are the techniques of formal mediation treated, but very early in the text, Ignatius commends a principle of constructive interaction that is highly relevant to the task of peacemaking. Number 22 is labeled "Presupposition," and ostensibly relates to the conversation between an exercitant and his or her spiritual director. As a basic principle of dialogue, Ignatius urges: "Let it be presupposed that every good Christian is to be more ready to save his neighbor's proposition than to condemn it. If he cannot save it, let him inquire how he means it; and if he means it badly, let him correct him with charity." The paraphrase offered by David Fleming of the literal rendering of this paragraph from the Latin text includes the terms "mutual respect," "favorable interpretation" and "Christian understanding," all of which are in service of developing "a good relationship" between parties in dialogue.¹⁴

13 John W. O'Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 169. Chap. 5 of O'Malley's definitive work on Jesuits in the early decades of the Society of Jesus is titled "Works of Mercy." The three-page section on "Peacemaking" leads off a chapter that describes a wide variety of corporal and spiritual works of mercy, such as ministerial service to the faithful in prisons and hospitals. O'Malley relates several episodes of successful mediation, often with colorful details of the brutal vendettas and the eventual reconciliation of parties, often taking place within the walls of a church in the presence of a priest-confessor.

14 David Fleming, S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978), 20–21.

More colloquial expressions for what Ignatius is recommending here include empathetic listening, assuming good will, and offering the dialogue partner “the benefit of the doubt” regarding sincerity of intent. This type of openness is of course consistent with the overall project of the *Spiritual Exercises*, with its ultimate objective of fostering spiritual freedom and closeness to the God who brings peace to all through the offer of salvation. It is no stretch to apply the words of Ignatius here to the broader context of any dialogue—not just in a session of spiritual direction but even in adversarial situations where social peace is on the line and where the prospect of continued or newly sparked violence is at stake. A Jesuit (or anyone) shaped by this admonition within the *Exercises* will be fully committed to open dialogue, and may be perceived by contending parties as a trustworthy mediator and fair-minded arbitrator, precisely because of the respect with which he treats each side. If it is ever possible to soften the hearts of longtime rivals and to facilitate a process of mutual forgiveness, then striking a nonpartisan stance that models openness and respect for the human dignity of all parties is crucial.

Respectful encounter with the other is part of what Jesuits refer to as “our way of proceeding.” Whether the encounter takes place in the context of ministry (such as the ministries of reconciliation treated above) or Jesuit governance (between a superior and a subject), a most constructive basis for any conversation is the assumption that one may readily learn from the other, especially when attention is appropriately focused on the contours and requirements of a concrete situation rather than on prejudices or abstractions of any kind.¹⁵ This places a premium on such practices as reserving judgment, avoiding ultimatums and refraining from dictating solutions to complex problems based on preconceived notions that are imposed upon others before their side is respectfully heard and considered. Ignatius himself often peppered his own writings with such phrases as: “whatever is more conducive to the person, place or circumstances.” Regarding the specific ministry of peacemaking, it is clear that any peace settlement that aspires to be sustainable must be based on the kind of trust that is generated when each side is able to acknowledge that it

15 This aspect of the Society’s way of proceeding in governance and apostolic life is reflected in numerous written and spoken words of Pope Francis. For example, one of the recurring tropes in his writings of recent decades is a list of four propositions applicable to pastoral situations. The full list, with significant explication, appears in nos. 217 to 237 of his 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (The joy of the Gospel). The four are: 1) Time is greater than space; 2) Unity prevails over conflict; 3) Realities are more important than ideas; and 4) The whole is greater than the part. Obviously, the third item is most germane to the Jesuit approach under consideration here, but all four propositions display some relevance.

has been listened to thoroughly, so that no perceived grievance is merely swept under the rug, but rather that all legitimate perspectives have been aired and attended to in a respectful way.¹⁶

Those familiar with the peacemaking initiatives of Pope Francis will discover in this description of the broad implications of the Presupposition of Ignatius a mirror of what has come to be called the “Francis Doctrine” in international diplomacy.¹⁷ By no means completely original, the dynamic style by which the pope conducts himself on the global stage places great emphasis on direct person-to-person contacts, engaging interlocutors with deep empathy and the cultivation of warm personal relationships with world leaders. The pope seems intent on providing a manifest case study supporting the diplomatic maxim that peace is the byproduct of many close relationships of trust. In a sense, the congenial way that Francis accompanies world leaders (often hosting them at the Vatican, or visiting them during journeys) correlates well with his repeated use of the words encounter and dialogue in his major writings, such as his first major apostolic letter *Evangelii gaudium* and his environmental encyclical *Laudato si’*.¹⁸ In Francis, we witness a pope sincerely

16 This paragraph owes much to the work of Raymond G. Helmick, S.J. (1931–2016), late professor of conflict resolution within the Theology Department at Boston College. Besides his academic work, Helmick spent decades pioneering the practice of “Track 2 diplomacy,” also known as informal, unofficial or preventive diplomacy. This creative approach to peacemaking emphasizes nontraditional means of conflict transformation, often through direct contacts with local community associations in conflicted areas (for example, in Northern Ireland and Palestine, locations where Helmick long worked to forestall violence). My interpretation of the significance of the Ignatian Presupposition for peacemaking efforts is indebted to Helmick, who (in our personal conversations), often described this insight as the wellspring of his deepest personal and professional aspiration, namely, to overcome barriers to reconciliation stemming from arrogance and a lack of patient effort to communicate respectfully amidst disputes.

17 Respected Vatican watcher John Allen attributes the origin of this phrase to journalist and writer David Gibson. See John L. Allen, Jr., *The Francis Miracle: Inside the Transformation of the Pope and the Church* (New York: Time Books, 2015), 86. Without using the precise phrase the “Francis Doctrine,” former ambassador Charles W. Freeman, Jr. compellingly describes the most admirable qualities of this style of diplomacy as practiced by Pope Francis in an interview published online by America Media. See Victor Gaetan, “A Former Ambassador Finds Much to Like in Pope Francis’ Diplomatic Instincts,” posted April 16, 2019 at: <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2019/04/16/former-ambassador-finds-much-pope-francis-diplomatic-instincts> (accessed December 2, 2020).

18 The five sub-parts of Chap. 5 of *Laudato si’*, for example, all bear section titles that contain the word dialogue. This further signals the pope’s commitment to engaging in a broad exchange of views, communicating his genuine enthusiasm for the prospect of learning

dedicated to the back-and-forth of genuine dialogue, and one whose writings are meant to be conversation starters, not the final word on any given subject.

It is the next section below that will examine the content of what Francis has done for peace, and it is this essay's final section that will comment more substantively on the style by which he conducts his leadership for peace. But the present section rightfully concludes with one further insight relating to the motivation behind these prodigious papal efforts. If Francis will indeed "go anywhere and do anything for the cause of peace" (to cite an appealing shorthand for one plank of the "Francis Doctrine"), what value or key principle best captures his ultimate motivation? We have already glimpsed three layers that contribute to the motivation that Pope Francis displays to be a peacemaker, imagined as an arrangement of concentric circles emanating outward from the person of Francis himself. The most inclusive level, at the outermost ring and even broader in scope than the ambit of his family, his nation, and his religious order, refers to the universal Christian community itself, along with its sacred scriptures and history-spanning traditions. A key motif of any Christian effort at peacemaking is summarized in the biblical notion of reconciliation.

Romans 5:6–11 contains St. Paul's portrayal of salvation history as an act of reconciliation offered and effected by God for the benefit of all sinners.¹⁹ As we receive, so should we give. The aspiration to serve as agents of reconciliation has long characterized the Christian ministry in general, and the practice of sacramental confession and penance in particular. The closely related images of healing of wounds and the overcoming of all alienation or estrangement are central to the very identity and self-understanding of the church. The concept of reconciliation is broad enough to embrace the weighty triad of theological desiderata often cited by Pope Francis: 1) the healing of our relationship with God (tragically sundered by sin); 2) the mending of social order (to establish justice among all of humanity); and 3) the reestablishment of life-serving balance in our frayed relationship with the natural world (all species and ecosystems within God's creation).²⁰

from a variety of interlocutors. Needless to say, this commitment to deep listening has not always been a hallmark of authoritative papal teaching documents.

19 While this passage from Romans 5 is the *locus classicus* of biblical theologies of reconciliation, this theme appears in many other places in Scripture, such as Colossians 1:20. Each of these passages is mentioned by Francis in his 2020 message for World Day of Peace.

20 This three-fold schema appears, among other places in the corpus of Francis, in the Message for World Day of Peace, January 1, 2019, "Good Politics Is at the Service of Peace," no. 6, at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20181208_messaggio-52giornatamondiale-pace2019.html (accessed December 2, 2020).

Pope Francis develops this existing tradition of reflection on the theme of reconciliation and advances it in his own fashion, adding a distinctive sense of urgency to his activism on behalf of peace.²¹ His advocacy for peace and reconciliation is by no means a matter of mere personal preference or idiosyncratic wishful thinking, but rather the outgrowth of a long tradition of Christians seeking and valuing peace, ardently following the mandate of a Messiah who proclaimed “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). While the five hundred years of Jesuit history constitute only a fraction of the life of the church, the contribution of the Society of Jesus to action and reflection on reconciliation is impressive.²² A recent essay describing the rich spirituality undergirding the Jesuit ministry of reconciliation persuasively advances these twin claims: first, that “the founding documents of the Society of Jesus reflect the increasing understanding of reconciliation as proper to the Jesuit charism,”²³ and second, that “the contemporary Society similarly recognizes and reaffirms the centrality of reconciliation as a ministry central to the Jesuit charism.”²⁴ Though the Society of Jesus enjoys no monopoly on the ministry of reconciliation, it has surely provided Pope Francis with resources and context to conduct his peace advocacy, which so evidently coheres with Ignatian spirituality and longstanding Jesuit practice. Francis thus takes his place in the long line of Jesuits who sought to broker peace in the settings of royal courts and international agencies, as well as conflicted locales and regions—from Northern Ireland to the Middle East to Southern Africa and beyond.²⁵

21 Interestingly, Francis waited until his 2020 Message for World Day of Peace (his seventh) before including the word reconciliation in the title of any of these annual messages. Previous messages of Francis in this series tend to use circumlocutions, alternate expressions, and invocations of closely related concepts (such as overcoming indifference or building solidarity) in their titles as well as within the text in order to communicate the message that might be contained in an explicit appeal to the value of reconciliation. To view Francis's most substantial invocation of reconciliation itself, see nos. 2, 3 and 5 of Message for World Day of Peace, January 1, 2020, “Peace as a Journey of Hope: Dialogue, Reconciliation and Ecological Conversion,” at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20191208_messaggio-53giornatamondiale-pace2020.html (accessed December 2, 2020).

22 The most recent manifestation of this point is the writing and adoption of an entire document on the theme of reconciliation by the Society's 36th General Congregation, held in 2017. See “Decree 1: Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice,” available at https://jesuits.eu/images/docs/GC_36_Documents.pdf (accessed December 2, 2020).

23 William C. Woody, S.J., “So We Are Ambassadors of Christ: The Jesuit Ministry of Reconciliation,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 1–41, at 15.

24 Woody, “So We Are Ambassadors of Christ,” 20.

25 It is beyond the scope of this essay to provide even a brief panorama of Jesuit activities for peace along these lines. Ray Helmick, S.J., whose work in N. Ireland and the Near East was

Pursuing Peace through Words and Deeds

As of this writing, Pope Francis has published no major document (such as a papal encyclical or apostolic exhortation) exclusively treating peacemaking. Chapter 7 (“Paths of Renewed Encounter”) of *Fratelli tutti*, treating the roles of forgiveness and memory in social conflict, is indeed creative but far from comprehensive. We have already had occasion to cite his annual messages for World Day of Peace, which are in a genre of relatively brief but often still substantial engagements with matters of global conflict and peacemaking efforts. There are a variety of further regular occasions when popes enjoy opportunities to advocate for peace through the medium of written and spoken words. For example, built into the papal schedule are frequent meetings with leaders of global institutions and NGOs, visiting heads of state, individual ambassadors or entire assemblies of the diplomatic corps (both those assigned by 190 nations to the Vatican, or the pope’s own nuncios and support staff who fan out throughout the world). The pope often offers substantial remarks regarding peace and conflict on these occasions, and the texts of many of his prepared remarks are made available on the website of the Holy See or are covered through Vatican News.²⁶ The *Urbi et orbi* (literally, “to the city (of Rome) and to the world”) addresses, typically delivered at Saint Peter’s Square at Christmas and Easter, are occasions when matters of peace and global order often receive treatment.²⁷ Pope Francis has taken advantage of these semi-annual opportunities to call attention to acute security crises (e.g., responses to recent acts of terrorism or oppression targeting ethnic minorities) as well as ongoing concerns (e.g., the need for enhanced arms controls). In short, Francis displays a keen desire to leverage the impressive bully pulpit of the papacy into a means

mentioned in n. 16 above, emerges as just one recent exemplar of influential Jesuit efforts to promote peace. For example, in Zimbabwe, Rev. Fidelis Mukonori, S.J., is reportedly responsible in part for persuading strongman Robert Mugabe (1924–2019) to step down peacefully from the presidency of his country late in 2017, likely averting a ruinous civil war. See Bronwen Dachs, “A Priest Is Mediating between Zimbabwe’s President Mugabe and the Generals Who Seized Power,” posted November 16, 2017 on the website of *America Magazine*, at <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2017/11/16/priest-mediating-between-zimbabwes-president-mugabe-generals-who-seized> (accessed December 2, 2020).

26 See <http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html> and <https://www.vaticannews.va/en.html> (accessed December 2, 2020).

27 To cite one recent example, the 2020 Easter *Urbi et orbi* address, delivered amidst the highly unusual circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, included a call for a worldwide ceasefire and truce in conflicted regions. Francis introduced his long paragraph calling for an Easter season of peace with the reminder, “This is not a time for division.” See “*Urbi et orbi* Message for Easter 2020,” April 12, 2020, at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/urbi/documents/papa-francesco_20200412_urbi-et-orbi-pasqua.html (accessed December 2, 2020).

for advocating for peace, and has directed millions of written and spoken words to communicate the urgent priority of peacemaking.

But of course, there are other useful items in the papal toolbox of peace advocacy besides documents and speeches. The remainder of this section will treat these three: 1) papal visits; 2) specific diplomatic initiatives; and 3) longer-term projects of peacemaking. While only a small sample of the activities of Francis in each category will be cited, the items selected shine the most revealing light on the agenda Francis has pursued through the first seven and one-half years of his papacy.

First, up to the start of the Covid-19 pandemic that in early 2020 curtailed most global travel, Pope Francis had completed 32 trips outside Italy, making stops in some 50 nations. In fact, 2019 witnessed the peak of his itinerancy, when he visited 11 countries on 4 continents in the course of 7 voyages. Interestingly, these numbers equal the most traveled year (1982) of John Paul II, who holds the papal record for the 129 countries he visited over 27 years in office and who practically invented the franchise of what are formally called “International Apostolic Journeys.” Nowadays each papal trip is branded with a theme or motto, often captured in an appealing visual logo revealed with eager anticipation months before the pope boards the jet airplane. While the simple-living Francis on occasion bristles with impatience regarding these trappings of papal travel that he inherited (he has insisted on carrying his own battered briefcase in transit), he continues to display great enthusiasm for the pastoral and peacebuilding opportunities afforded by such travel.

These two functions are intricately related. Wherever a pope visits, the local Roman Catholic community, especially when it holds minority status in its region, is buoyed up by the attendant global attention (even though covering the costs of even a brief papal stay tends to strain the finances of hosting dioceses). Regular occasions for papal travel include appearances at World Youth Day and the World Meeting of Families, which afford the pope an opportunity to highlight social concerns associated with these two key constituencies of the faithful. The proclivity of Francis to schedule pastoral visits to humble communities and hard-pressed sectors within a region has been effective in calling attention to particular needs, and is intended to foster solidarity, mutual understanding and good will in a general way towards neglected people such as prisoners and refugees, whose dwellings Francis has frequented. Signaling his high regard for the dignity and protection of suffering persons “on the periphery of society” (a favorite phrase of Francis) builds the conditions for peace just as effectively as the high-profile gestures on display when the pope meets with heads of state and legislators to conduct dialogue regarding human rights, environmental concerns and conflict resolution.

Beyond these general peace-promoting features of the travels of Francis, certain of his visits illustrate his agenda of peacemaking in especially pointed ways, presenting exceptional opportunities to communicate the urgency of his message. For example, his visit to Japan in November 2019 featured emotional visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the two cities devastated by atomic bombs in August 1945. Calling attention to the immorality of nuclear warfare and the pressing need for further negotiations to limit nuclear armaments on the very spots where many thousands died from atomic blasts was an extremely poignant way to publicize this urgent message. It certainly added enhanced vividness to Francis's prior address, just weeks earlier, to delegates at a Vatican-sponsored conference on nuclear weapons reduction, where the pope issued another of his repeated calls for the prohibition of nuclear weapons.²⁸

An equally moving visit of Francis to the Central African Republic marks the first time that any modern pope deliberately waded into an active war zone. The ongoing internecine conflict between Muslim and Christian factions was mercifully placed on hold by a ceasefire during the bold visit of Francis in November 2015. It was nevertheless a tense scene that prevailed in Bangui, the capital of that landlocked and extremely poor nation. Brushing aside stern warnings from security officials who strongly recommended that the pope cancel or curtail his visit due to severe safety concerns, Francis forged ahead and used his time in the embattled country to plead for peace and a permanent negotiated peace settlement. With stunning disregard for his own personal safety, the pope kept all his plans to visit Muslim neighborhoods and even the city's central mosque to extend the hand of dialogue on behalf of all Christians.²⁹

Security was also a major concern during Francis's visit to Egypt in April 2017, as he arrived in that Muslim-majority nation shortly after a Palm Sunday bombing of a Coptic Christian church by Islamist terrorists had killed nearly fifty worshipers. His bravery in carrying out his full itinerary afforded Francis the opportunity to share joint public appearances with Coptic Orthodox Pope Tawadros II as well as Sheik Ahmad al-Tayyeb, the grand imam of Al-Azhar mosque, the highest seat of learning for Sunni Muslims. While Francis shared warm and affectionate embraces with each of those religious figures, and with numerous fellow delegates at a major Cairo conference on opposing extremist

28 For details of these developments and substantive analysis of the novelties in this papal stance, see Michael C. Desch and Gerald F. Powers, "No More Nukes?: An Exchange," *Commonweal*, February 23, 2018, 12–17.

29 This paragraph contains some details found in Chris Stein and Somini Sengupta, "In Africa, Pope Makes First Visit to a War Zone," *New York Times*, November 30, 2015, A6.

violence meeting those very days in the heart of the Islamic world, observers detected a somewhat more frosty reception when Francis met with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. The tension resulted from the refusal of Francis to ignore the hypocrisy of the Egyptian strongman (who had come to power in a 2013 military coup) regarding civil liberties and human rights. Still, Francis agreed to appear jointly with Sisi, perhaps because the dire security needs of Egypt's Christians, repeatedly victimized by terrorists, absolutely depend upon the maintenance of goodwill between the government and such religious minorities. Though brief, the visit to Egypt achieved important pastoral and diplomatic objectives, bringing encouragement to the local Christian community and extending numerous gestures of peaceful cooperation to the Muslim hosts. It was on this occasion that a prominent journalist described the diplomatic style of Francis in this memorable way: "The pope [...] [has] repeatedly made the case that he will meet anyone, anywhere to establish dialogue and deliver his inclusive message."³⁰

A second category of peacemaking activities consists of specific diplomatic initiatives of Pope Francis. One excellent example concerns the nation of Colombia on the pope's native continent of South America, where behind-the-scenes papal diplomacy over years culminated in a first-hand personal encounter. The six-day visit of Francis to Colombia in September 2017 included expressions of fervent papal support for a set of peace accords between the government and the FARC guerilla opposition that had been initially approved nine months earlier. The peace process, designed to halt the massive violence perpetuated by both sides in the course of the five-decades-long insurgency, had subsequently stalled, so Francis took up the mantle of advocating for all parties within that deeply conflicted country to recommit to settling their lingering grievances. In a series of masses, public ceremonies, and other encounters in four Colombian cities, Francis repeatedly emphasized the power of forgiveness, a political necessity closely associated with the Christian virtue of reconciliation.³¹ One journalistic account of the landmark visit emphasized the huge challenge facing the pope in his "attempt to use the moral authority of the Vatican to temper lingering resentment."³² The trip itself was the culmination

30 Jason Horowitz, "Pope Francis, in Egypt, Delivers a Blunt Message on Violence and Religion," *New York Times*, April 29, 2017, A6.

31 For details of these events and the prominence of forgiveness and reconciliation, see Nicole Winfield and Alba Tobella, "Pope Seeing to Heal Long War's Wounds," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 9, 2017, A2.

32 Susan Abad and Nicholas Casey, "Francis Honors 2 Clerics Slain in Colombian Civil War," *New York Times*, September 9, 2017, A7. See also Abad and Casey, "Pope Urges Colombians to Accept Peace Accord," *New York Times*, September 8, 2017, A6.

of a much longer process of papal mediation to nudge all Colombian parties toward accepting the peace accords and laying down their weapons. The full details of Francis's prolonged efforts, as he and church officials worked with both sides for years, necessarily remain shrouded in secrecy.

Cuba represents a similar diplomatic initiative of Pope Francis to effect a reconciliation that is long overdue. Like Colombia, Cuba presents an opportunity for a Latin American pope to leverage his regional popularity, serve as a backchannel for negotiations, and offer diplomatic good offices to break a stalemate that had persisted for over half a century. In this case, the tensions requiring resolution involved another nation, the United States, which has imposed a damaging embargo upon the island nation since the communist Fidel Castro's (1926–2016) ascension to power.³³ This vestige of Cold War antagonism had festered like an open wound in the Caribbean until a partial breakthrough that unfolded in the course of 2014, Francis's first full year as pope. While the full story may never be revealed, Francis evidently played a key role in the historic warming of diplomatic relations, and was publicly thanked by both Barack Obama (in office 2009–17) and Raúl Castro (in office 2008–18) for his pivotal efforts. Evidently, it was personal correspondence from Francis that helped break the longstanding logjam of five decades of enmity and mutual recriminations across the Straits of Florida, although the process that could have led to full normalization of political and commercial relations was never completed. Though the Trump administration (2017–21) undid much of the Barak Obama opening to Cuba, this episode nevertheless illustrates the dedication of Pope Francis to his agenda of conflict resolution and reconciliation.³⁴

A final example involves one of the most dramatic diplomatic gestures ever performed by a pope. Since its independence in 2011, the impoverished nation of South Sudan has been mired in ethnic and religious conflict, including periods of full-scale civil war. In April 2019, Francis invited to an overnight Vatican retreat the rival Muslim and Christian political leaders of South Sudan, hoping to encourage a diplomatic solution in that fiercely divided country. When the negotiations reached a particularly unsatisfying juncture, Francis intervened in an unprecedented way to break the stalemate. The pope literally got down on his hands and knees at the feet of the bickering leaders, kissed their shoes

33 Of course, the backchannel diplomacy described here recalls the role played by Pope John XXIII (1958–63) in the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962.

34 One insightful recent lament at the missed opportunity is Raúl Rodríguez Rodríguez, "Sanctioned Cruelty: Trump-administration Policies Are Meant to Punish the People of Cuba," *Commonweal*, May 2020, 21–23. It is worth noting that Pope Francis made a three-day visit to Cuba (September 19–22, 2015) on his way to the US.

and implored them to continue the dialogue until it yielded more promising results.³⁵

This dramatic gesture, probably a first in papal history, illustrates the length to which Francis eagerly goes in pursuit of peace. Such rich gestures illustrate the depth of the “Francis Doctrine”—a truly “artisanal” approach to peacemaking that relies upon the building up of trust over repeated frank encounters with fellow world leaders. By conducting such skillful communication, Francis has embodied the diplomatic motto attesting that “peace is the byproduct of many personal relations.” He relies on a personal rapport with world leaders and the soft power of popular and faith-based support for diplomatic solutions, parlaying these into real results. Francis’s approach to peacemaking is more than just refreshing; it represents a qualitative intensification of the work of previous popes in the world of diplomacy. As the accumulation of examples demonstrates, there are no limits to what Francis will do to keep alive the flame of hope for peaceful resolution of differences among parties. The direct style of his personal witness and his evident investment in the ways of peace add a salutary sense of urgency to his advocacy for alternatives to violence. The pope who customarily praises the cultures of dialogue, of encounter, and of accompaniment practices what he preaches when he enacts his agenda of advancing peace.

The third category of Francis’s peace efforts involves those divisions and security concerns that are so complex and profound in nature that no simple pastoral visit or discrete initiative could imaginably resolve the conflicts at stake, at least in the immediate future. These are cases in which Francis must be satisfied to plant seeds for a future harvest of peace, requiring patience for the full flowering of eventual results in the long run. Regrettably, the world teems with a wide variety of such conflicts. In some cases, they consist of enduring (and often violent) political rivalries between peoples. A chief example is the Middle East, where Pope Francis has long attempted to contribute to an eventual and sustainable rapprochement by building up trust between Israelis and the Palestinians. To this constructive end, Francis proposed and hosted a June

35 See two revealing and complementary accounts of this incident: Jason Horowitz, “Pope Kisses Leaders’ Feet as He Begg for Peace,” *New York Times*, April 12, 2019, A12; Cindy Wooden, “Pope Literally Begg for Peace at Retreat for South Sudan Leaders,” posted April 11, 2019, at <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/04/11/pope-francis-literally-begg-peace-retreat-south-sudan-leaders> (accessed December 2, 2020). An unsigned Catholic News Service story eight months after this incident suggests that the papal gesture yielded much fruit: “Rome-brokered Peace Deal Increases Chances of Papal Visit to South Sudan,” January 16, 2020, at <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2020/01/16/rome-brokered-peace-deal-increases-chances-papal-visit-south-sudan> (accessed December 2, 2020).

8, 2014 joint day of prayer in the Vatican Gardens attended by Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli president Shimon Peres (1923–2016)—an event designed to build momentum toward a negotiated regional settlement.

In other cases, protracted civil wars within a single nation have attracted the special attention of Francis and moved him to publicize tragic situations in spectacular ways. Syria emerges as the prime example; Francis rarely misses an opportunity (in such public venues as his monthly prayer intentions) to lament the enormous suffering within that embattled nation and to advocate for the plight of millions of refugees displaced by the fighting there. His summer 2013 appeals to the several combatants for restraint to prevent further civilian casualties inspired an enduring Twitter hashtag (#PrayForPeace) which the Vatican inaugurated in coordination with an impressive (and globally televised) five-hour prayer vigil hosted personally by Francis on September 7, 2013 in Saint Peter's Square.³⁶

If these intractable political conflicts will surely outlast the papacy of Francis, so undoubtedly will religious tensions, both interreligious animosity and rivalries within Christianity itself. On numerous occasions, Francis has reached out to leaders of other religious communities throughout the world in high-profile ways, continuing the interfaith and ecumenical efforts of recent popes and of his own previous ministry in Argentina. Space limitations do not permit even a listing of his legendary overtures to Protestant, Evangelical and Orthodox Christians, much less his engagement with leaders of other world religions. Further, for every symbolic event that occurs during a high profile papal visit, there is another routine administrative development by which the Vatican under Francis advances peaceful relations within and between religions.³⁷

Perhaps the most spectacular initiative has been his enhanced dialogue with Islam, culminating in the February 4, 2019 joint signing (with Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar) of "A Document on Human Fraternity

36 Francis's skillful use of social media is described in Martin J. O'Loughlin, *The Tweetable Pope: A Spiritual Revolution in 140 Characters* (New York: Harper/Collins Publishers, 2015).

37 An outstanding example of routine administrative efforts to promote a peaceful future in faith communities involves the delicate negotiations that Francis has conducted to resolve a seventy-year impasse within the Catholic community itself in China. There, rival factions (including an underground church which harbors great mistrust for the "Patriotic Association" of Catholic congregations officially recognized by the government of China) have long disputed such matters as the rightful jurisdiction over the appointment of bishops. For analysis of recent Vatican actions, including the breakthrough 2018 provisional agreement between the Holy See and the Chinese government, see Paul P. Mariani, S.J., "The Extremely High Stakes of the China-Vatican Deal," *America Magazine*, December 7, 2018, at <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2018/12/07/extremely-high-stakes-china-vatican-deal> (accessed December 2, 2020).

for World Peace and Living Together.”³⁸ Signed during an historic papal visit to the United Arab Emirates, the document subjected Francis to much criticism by conservative Catholics, but there is no evidence that the pope harbors any reservations about the lasting value of this overture.³⁹ By cooperating with leaders of other faiths, Francis gladly lends his own credibility and political capital to the project of overcoming longstanding hostility and making a down payment on a more peaceful future. The media savvy pope’s forthright witness to Christian unity and interfaith harmony greatly benefits from the highly deliberate publicity strategies we have glimpsed throughout this survey of his peace initiatives. Once again, Francis combines style and substance in advancing the conditions for global peace.

Special Attention to the Structural Dimensions of Peacemaking

No examination of this topic would be complete without considering a key dimension of peacemaking that at once characterizes the approach of Francis and of the Society of Jesus in recent decades as it seeks to promote “the faith that does justice”—a trademark of Jesuit social ministry and educational apostolates since at least General Congregation 32 (1974–75). I refer to the *structural dimensions* present in any complex issue relating to peace and social justice. For Francis, peacemaking is not simply a matter of “putting out fires” across the globe, but rather of preventing hotspots in the first place. Similarly for the Society of Jesus, the pursuit of justice must involve preventing great inequities from developing due to skewed political and social systems and economic structures that generate massive inequality and maldistribution. Both Francis and his fellow Jesuits display a “structural eye” when they identify the role of large social institutions in the struggle for a just social order. Once again, the first Jesuit pope reflects the DNA of his spiritual heritage, as the work of the Society of Jesus has for decades reflected structuralist perspectives in its analysis of global realities and its adoption of pastoral planning efforts to support urgent reform in light of gospel values.⁴⁰

38 The full text appears at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2019/2/4/fratellanza-umana.html> (accessed December 2, 2020).

39 Indeed, Francis inserted into the text (see no. 136 *inter alia*, as well as nos. 112, 119, 189, 264, 281 and 284) of his October 3, 2020 encyclical *Fratelli tutti* ample treatment of this document and larger initiative. See http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html (accessed December 2, 2020).

40 The work of Jesuit-sponsored social centers around the world has long operated according to a methodology of social analysis that reflects these insights. On the universal level, for

Calling attention to the structural lens employed by Francis in his peace-making activities is fitting tribute to a pope well acquainted with the process of digging below the surface of social problems for cogent analysis and potential solutions. Across the full range of social ethics topics, his diagnoses regarding obstacles to a just social order reflect a keen awareness of structural causes behind the symptoms. Poverty will be alleviated only through ample attention to labor injustices that contribute to structures fostering inequality. Environmental degradation can only be addressed by profound transformations of our entire system of excessive consumption and energy usage. The promotion of healthy family life absolutely depends on the simultaneous reform of numerous social institutions. The refugee crisis is a function of structures of violence and exclusion that displace millions each year from their homes in search of a better life. In each case, the method employed by Francis includes close scrutiny of root causes of palpable social problems, to identify causal factors and peel back the many layers that contribute to human suffering.

The premier example of a recent papal indictment of a structural barrier to peace surfaced in the course of the historic addresses of Francis to the General Assembly of the United Nations and a Joint Session of the US Congress during his visit to the US in September 2015.⁴¹ In each of these inspiring addresses, the pope highlighted the single reform that he is convinced will foster peace like no other: the abolition of the global arms trade, which he refers to as a practice “drenched in blood, often innocent blood.” The death-dealing proliferation of weapons, manufactured and sold across borders at great profit, often to clients of dubious reputation, feeds terrorism and fuels simmering internecine conflicts around the world.⁴² By so dramatically exposing this particular global structure of evil, Francis is emphasizing a systemic approach to the causes of violence—in this case, the very existence of a global arms bazaar that practically guarantees that deadly weapons will fall into the wrong hands and kill

evidence of structuralist principles at work in official Jesuit analysis, see an important recent document from the Rome-based Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat of the Society of Jesus: Task Force on the Economy, “Special Report on Justice in the Global Economy: Building Sustainable and Inclusive Communities,” *Promotio iustitiae* 121 (2016): 1–35.

41 See “Address of the Holy Father to the Joint Session of the U.S. Congress,” September 24, 2015,” at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150924_usa-us-congress.html (accessed December 2, 2020) and “Address to the General Assembly of the U.N., 25 Sept. 2015,” at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150925_onu-visita.html (accessed December 2, 2020). The latter was only the fifth occasion when a pope addressed this body.

42 One chilling account of the deadly effects of recent U.S. arms sales is Michael LaForgia and Walt Bogdanich, “Why U.S. Arms Take Grim Toll in Yemen War,” *New York Times*, May 17, 2020, 1, 18–20.

unwitting civilians caught in the crossfire. The pope's facility at structural analysis is of a piece with his parallel insights into the causes of other social scourges mentioned in these addresses to a worldwide audience, including human trafficking, global climate change, and growing levels of inequality that disadvantage the vulnerable.

Further, the pope's diagnosis regarding the root cause of so much carnage illustrates the sterling explanatory power of the word *peacebuilding*, which has (along with the attendant phrase *conflict transformation*) gradually become a term of preference in the scholarship of peace advocacy.⁴³ We actively build peace through opposition to arms sales; such bold action helps create the very conditions for peace. Reform measures currently before the UN and bills introduced into the US Congress to curb arms sales abroad possess the capacity to tear down structures of violence and build up structures of peaceful cooperation worldwide, as Francis explained in 2015 and has continued to advocate in the years since.⁴⁴ Once again, a structural lens reveals the importance of developing the necessary preconditions for peace and promoting progress towards a harmony that is sustainable over the long term.

When future historians review the Francis papacy, major advances in peacebuilding should be among the most prominent achievements they highlight. Francis has boldly advocated for a recovery of Gospel-based nonviolence as a core Christian value, notably devoting a remarkable section of *Fratelli tutti* to a call for reconciliation that comes closer than any previous pope to a repudiation of the oft-abused just war approach.⁴⁵ Further, Francis has emerged as

43 Witness the recent prominence of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, which owes much to contributions from other faith traditions, such as the work of the late Protestant ethicist Glenn Stassen and his "just peace" paradigm which emphasizes the connection between just conditions and peaceful outcomes.

44 Francis has long advocated for progress towards universal ratification and full implementation of the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty which was adopted in 2013 and entered into force in 2014, but is yet to be ratified by dozens of key nation.

45 *Fratelli tutti*, nos. 256–62. This commendation of nonviolence expands on what Francis said in his Message for World Day of Peace, January 1, 2017, "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace," at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20161208_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html (accessed December 2, 2020). It also reflects deliberations at two consultations convened by the Holy See in Rome, April 2016 and April 2019, and co-sponsored with Pax Christi International. The first conference was titled "Nonviolence and Just Peace," and described in Philippa Hitchen, "Building a Just Peace," *The Tablet*, April 23, 2016, 12. Regarding the second, see Joshua McElwee, "Vatican's Second Conference on Nonviolence Renews Hope for Encyclical," *National Catholic Reporter*, posted April 23, 2019, at <https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/vaticans-second-conference-nonviolence-renews-hope-encyclical> (accessed December 2, 2020).

a premier leader in the movement to ban nuclear weapons entirely, actively supporting treaties to prohibit even the possession of nuclear arms.⁴⁶ While his Jesuit background clearly contributes to his ardent desire to champion peacemaking, Francis has proven to be a highly innovative pioneer in the ways of peace; perhaps the Society of Jesus itself may learn valuable lessons from him in its own discernments regarding how to follow the Prince of Peace with fidelity. For example, Jesuit-sponsored institutions grapple these days with such disputed questions as the advisability of promoting military-training programs; Jesuit provinces may have reached a propitious moment to reconsider the wisdom of providing chaplains to armed forces. In such decisions facing Jesuits and their colleagues, the holy desires displayed by Pope Francis for a more peaceful world may provide precisely the invaluable guidance and inspiration required to embrace peace as definitively as did the former knight Ignatius in his legendary renunciation of arms in his own time.

46 For details, see Drew Christiansen and Carole Sargent, eds., *A World Free from Nuclear Weapons: The Vatican Conference on Disarmament* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2020).