



DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO

Via della Pisana 1111 - 00163 Roma

Il Rettor Maggiore

Prot.:13/0491

MESSAGE ON PEACE TO THE SALESIAN FAMILY

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Salesian Family,

Special greetings to you all with the same affection that Don Bosco had for all his sons and daughters.

The reason for this message of mine to all the Salesian Family is to bring to your attention what the Holy Father communicated at the Angelus on Sunday last, 1st September. He addressed the Church and the world in these words: “Today, dear brothers and sisters, I would like to interpret the cry rising up all over the earth, from every people, from everyone's hearts, from the one great family that is humanity, and with growing anguish: it is the cry for peace! It is a cry that says so strongly: we want a peaceful world, we want to be men and women of peace, we want our society, riven as it is by divisions and conflict, to find peace; war never again! War never again! Peace is too precious a gift and it has to be promoted and safeguarded.”

As you can see this is a heartfelt appeal referring first to the sorrowful situation in Syria which has long been caught up in civil war, and secondly it is an invitation not to forget the many other conflicts tormenting so many regions and populations in the different continents.

To sensitise the Church and all people of good will to this important topic of peace, Pope Francis ended his appeal by saying: “I have decided to proclaim, for the entire Church, the 7th September as a day of fasting for peace in Syria and the world. From 7 in the evening until midnight let us gather in prayer and a spirit of penitence to call on God for this gift. Humankind needs to see gesture of peace. I ask all communities to organise some liturgical act according to this intention. I shall be awaiting you here next Saturday at 7 pm in St Peter's Square”.

My dear brothers and sisters, led by the spirit of our Father Don Bosco, I warmly encourage you to welcome this wish of the Holy Father's and see it as a command to be put into practice with conviction and love. We all believe that peace is an extraordinarily necessary good for the development and progress of national communities and the world community. It is nurtured through respect for basic rights must be guaranteed for peoples and individuals, and at the same time is built up through observance of equally important duties born of these very same rights.

So I wish to invite all groups of the Salesian Family to welcome the Holy Father's encouragement in a concrete way and make 7 September a day of prayer, reflection and fasting to witness to the world that we believe in the great value of peace and to call on this same gift from the "Prince of Peace", the Risen Christ, the one who conquered death!

Concretely, as far as is possible if you live within reach of Rome, I invite you to be physically present in St Peter's Square on this great occasion of prayer and fasting. For those living elsewhere, I invite you to be an active part of the various initiatives that will certainly be promoted by individual local Churches.

Let each community and educational context, as far as possible try to provide leadership in three ways:

- **A time of prayer for peace**, especially through Eucharistic adoration prefaced by fasting; the prayer can be nurtured with biblical passages or texts taken from the documents of the Church on peace.
- **A time for education to peace.** Schools, oratories, other educational contexts can offer young people some gathering based on peace, proposing reflection based on news to do with the question of peace, making use of Pope John XXIII's encyclical "Pacem in terris", other Church documents and significant texts by lay authors. Let us propose to help young people mature in their belief that peace is built on four fundamental values: truth, justice, love and forgiveness.
- **A time for witness to peace.** It may be possible to hold a community celebration of reconciliation inviting lay people and the young, during which we ask God to forgive our divisions and conflicts, small and great. It may also be possible to invite lay people closely connected with us to a meeting of reflection and deeper understanding of the peace theme. We must all see that peace lies at the heart of every group and community in the Salesian Family.

Thank you dear friends! I know that you will accept this invitation of mine generously and with a sense of involvement. I am certain I am expressing the Holy father's thanks and the thanks of our beloved father, Don Bosco!

Greeting to you all, then. May Mary, Queen of Peace and Help of Christians, accompany you along the way.

Rome, 3 September 2013



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