

Resolutions To Action

LCWR Global Concerns Committee

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World Day of Peace Message

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EXPERIENCE

As we said goodbye to 2018 and welcomed in 2019, we faced the ongoing repercussions of increasingly uncivil discourse and a broken-down body politic. Migrant families continued to suffer from the chaos at the border, while social service agencies and volunteers, including many Catholic sisters, struggled to provide enough shelter and support to those released by immigration authorities.

Two children, Jakelin Caal Maquin and Felipe Alonso-Gomez, lost their lives in federal custody after their parents had requested refuge and asylum. Other families, who had been forcibly separated months earlier, continued to be kept apart from loved ones over the holidays, not sure when they would be reunited. Those children finally returned to their parents faced the recurring trauma of the experience of detention and separation.

Meanwhile, the federal government was shut down over funding for a

physical barrier separating us from our southern neighbor. Active members of the military were deployed to the border instead of preparing for their upcoming assignments overseas. The long line of immigrants awaiting their day in court grew longer, as even the backlogged immigration courts were shut down. Some government workers deemed essential, including immigration officials, were required to continue to report to work, without pay, not even sure if they would receive back-pay after the shutdown.

All the while negative political rhetoric continued to fly, on cable news, in presidential tweets, and on the airwaves. This party blamed that party. Others blamed the desperate families themselves, all but ignoring the long-term impact of US foreign and economic policy on the migrants' home countries and economies. Constructive peaceful dialogue and collaborative work by policy makers for the common good appeared to be in short supply.

In the midst of this political drama—which even if resolved quickly will no doubt be replaced by a new narrative of gridlock—Pope Francis released his

message for the 52nd World Day of Peace, *Good politics is at the service of peace*. Let us turn to the words of Pope Francis and apply them to our current moment in civic life.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

“Politics is an essential means of building human community and institutions, but when political life is not seen as a form of service to society as a whole, it can become a means of oppression, marginalization, and even destruction.” (2)

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"This is a programme on which all politicians, whatever their culture or religion, can agree, if they wish to work together for the good of the human family and to practice those human virtues that sustain all sound political activity: justice, equality, mutual respect, sincerity, honesty, fidelity." (3)

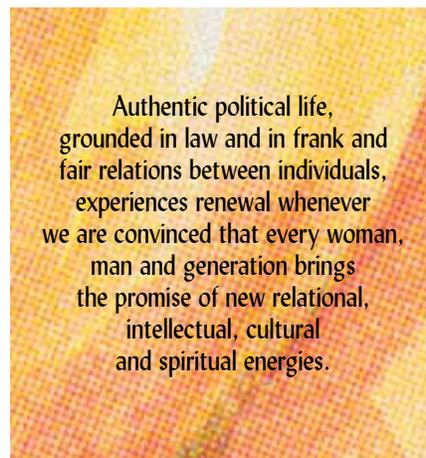
"Sadly, together with its virtues, politics also has its share of vices, whether due to personal incompetence or to flaws in the system and its institutions. Clearly, these vices detract from the credibility of political life overall, as well as the authority, decisions, and actions of those engaged in it. These vices, which undermine the ideal of an authentic democracy, bring disgrace to public life and threaten social harmony. We think of corruption in its varied forms: the misappropriation of public resources, the exploitation of individuals, the denial of rights, the flouting of community rules, dishonest gain, the justification of power by force or the arbitrary appeal to *raison d'état*, the refusal to relinquish power. To which we can add xenophobia, racism, lack of concern for the natural environment, the plundering of natural resources for the sake of quick profit and contempt for those forced into exile." (4)

REFLECTION

"If exercised with basic respect for life, freedom and dignity of persons, political life can indeed become an outstanding form of charity." (2)

"Every election and re-election, and every stage of public life, is an opportunity to return to the original points of reference that inspire justice and law. One thing is certain: good politics is at the service of peace. It respects and promotes fundamental human rights, which are at the same time mutual obligations, enabling a bond of trust and gratitude to be forged between present and future generations." (3)

"Everyone can contribute his or her stone to help build the common home. Authentic political life, grounded in law and in frank and fair relations between individuals, experiences renewal whenever we are convinced that every woman, man and generation brings the promise of new relational, intellectual, cultural and spiritual energies. That kind of trust is never easy to achieve, because human relations are complex, especially in our own times, marked by a climate of mistrust rooted in fear of others or of strangers, or anxiety about one's personal security. Sadly, it is also seen at the political level, in attitudes of rejection or forms of nationalism that call into question the fraternity of which our globalized world has such great need." (5)



ACTION

"Today more than ever, our societies need 'artisans of peace' who can be messengers and authentic witnesses of God the Father, who wills the good and the happiness of the human family." (5)

"Political addresses that tend to blame every evil on migrants and to deprive the poor of hope are unacceptable. Rather, there is a need to reaffirm that peace is based on respect for each person, whatever his or her background, on respect for the law and the common good, on respect for the environment entrusted to our care and for the richness of the moral tradition inherited from past generations." (6)

"Peace, in effect, is the fruit of a great political project grounded in the mutual responsibility and interdependence of human beings. But it is also a challenge that demands to be taken up ever anew ...

- peace with oneself, rejecting inflexibility, anger and impatience ...
- peace with others: family members, friends, strangers, the poor and the suffering, being unafraid to encounter them and listen to what they have to say;
- peace with all creation, rediscovering the grandeur of God's gift and our individual and shared responsibility as inhabitants of this world, citizens and builders of the future." (7)