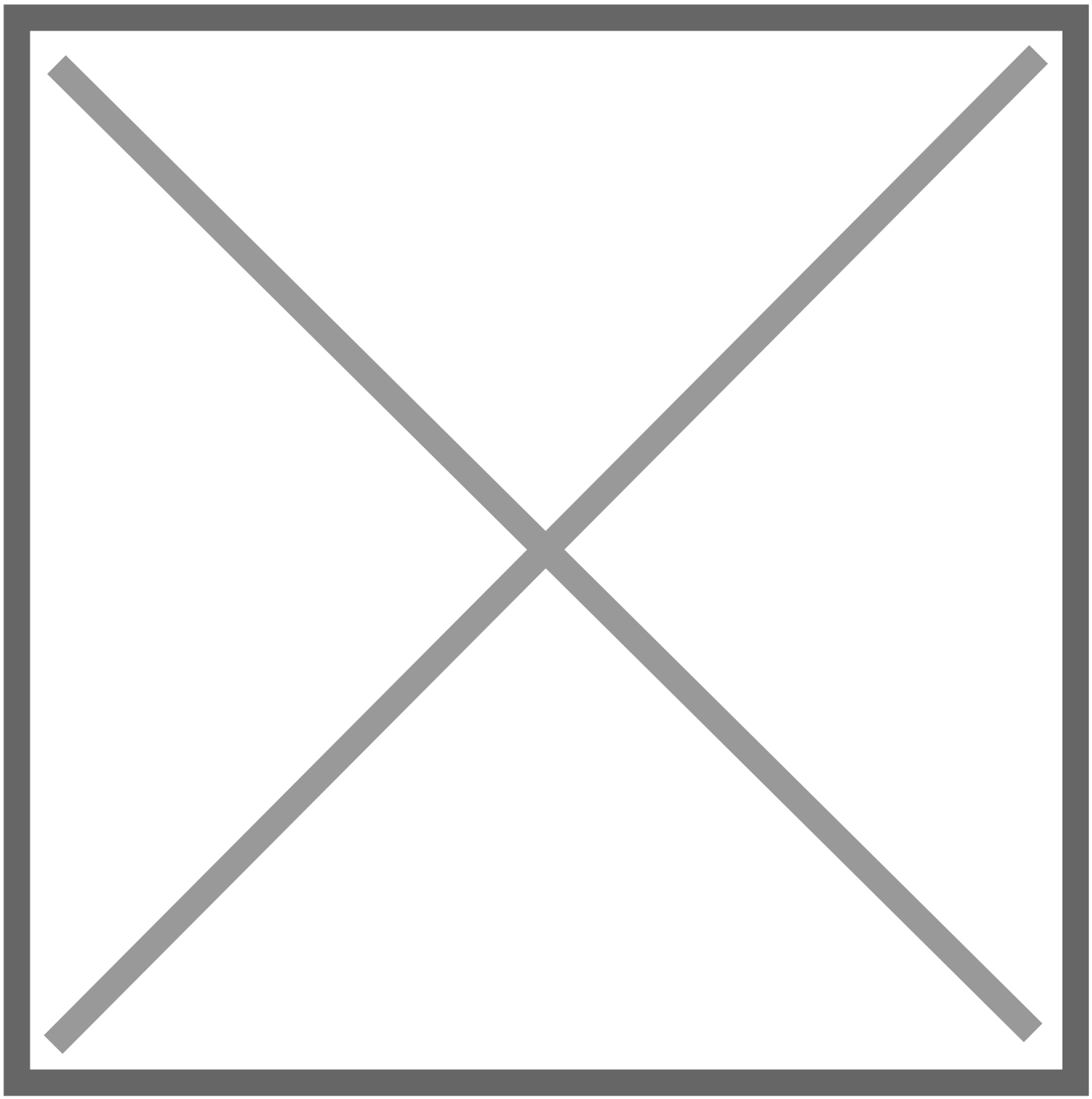
Vatican



Pope Francis poses for a picture during a meeting with children assisted by the Vatican's St. Martha pediatric clinic in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican Dec. 19, 2021. The pope offered Christmas blessings and urged the children to listen to and help people in need. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



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December 21, 2021

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ROME — Pope Francis urged global leaders to spend more money on education and devote fewer resources to weapons in his 2022 World Day of Peace message.

"It is high time, then, that governments develop economic policies aimed at inverting the proportion of public funds spent on education and on weaponry," the pope writes in a message released on Dec. 17.

"The pursuit of a genuine process of international disarmament can only prove beneficial for the development of peoples and nations, freeing up financial resources better used for health care, schools, infrastructure, care of the land and so forth," he continued.

Since 1968, popes have issued a call for peace, which is officially sent out on Jan. 1, dubbed by Pope Paul VI as "The Day of Peace." Pope Francis' 2022 message is titled "Dialogue between generations, education and work: tools for building lasting peace."

In his introduction to the three-page text, the pope laments that despite numerous efforts aimed at fostering the conditions for peace, "the deafening noise of war and conflict is intensifying."

The pope continues by offering a grim assessment of the state of world affairs.

"Diseases of pandemic proportions are spreading, the effects of climate change and environmental degradation are worsening, the tragedy of hunger and thirst is increasing, and an economic model based on individualism rather than on solidary sharing continues to prevail," he writes.

As a solution, Francis proposes greater solidarity and dialogue among different generations, devoting more resources to education and increasing opportunities for dignified work.

Returning to a theme that he has sought to emphasize since his 2013 inauguration homily as pope, Francis called for an intergenerational dialogue to facilitate greater understanding between different generations.

"Although technological and economic development has tended to create a divide between generations, our current crises show the urgent need for an intergenerational partnership," he writes.

"Great social challenges and peace processes necessarily call for dialogue between the keepers of memory — the elderly — and those who move history forward — the young," the pope continues.

Francis goes on to argue that education must be viewed as an investment, rather than an expenditure, which he says is vital for "promoting integral human development."

Such investments, the pope says, "make individuals more free and responsible, and they are essential for the defense and promotion of peace."

Greater educational training, he continues, will help facilitate more "dignified employment opportunities" in the labor market, which he says will also help counter the rise of violence and organized crime around the globe.

In concluding his peace message, Francis acknowledges the myriad of ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted human relationships, economic opportunities and exacerbated inequalities.

Church and world leaders alike, along with all people of goodwill, he pleads, must "walk together with courage and creativity on the path of intergenerational dialogue, education and work."

The annual message is developed in collaboration with the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Cardinal Peter Turkson, who heads the dicastery, presented the message at a press conference on Dec. 21, saying that the document is a call to put the human person "at the center" of all political, social and economic activity.

On Dec. 19, the Ghanian cardinal took to social media to respond to rumors that he would soon be resigning his post, writing that it was up to Francis to decide whether to extend his five-year mandate as head of the office.

When asked whether he would be on hand to present next year's peace message at the Dec. 21 press conference, Turkson demurred, noting that he had reached the end of his five-year term and stating that he had followed usual procedure by presenting his resignation to the pope.

"We must wait for the Holy Father and what he wants to do," Turkson said.

***Editor's note**: This story was updated after initial publication to include reporting from the Dec. 21 press conference on the World Day of Peace message.*

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