Vatican

Pope Francis accepts a rosary during an audience with members of the International Catholic

Pope Francis accepts a rosary during an audience with members of the International Catholic Legislators Network at the Vatican Aug. 25, 2022. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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The world needs lawmakers who are capable, inspired by love and dedicated to serving the most vulnerable, Pope Francis told Catholic and Christian legislators.

"I encourage your ongoing efforts, on the national and international levels, to work for the adoption of policies and laws that seek to address, in a spirit of solidarity, the many situations of inequality and injustice threatening the social fabric and the inherent dignity of all people," the pope said during an audience at the Vatican Aug. 25.

"If we are to heal our world, so sorely tried by rivalries and forms of violence that result from a desire to dominate rather than to serve, we need not only responsible citizens but also capable leaders, inspired by a fraternal love directed especially toward those in the most precarious conditions of life," he said.

Francis was speaking to members and representatives of the International Catholic Legislators Network, who were in Rome for an annual conference. The network is an independent, nonpartisan initiative founded in 2010 "to bring together practicing Catholics and other Christians in elected office on a regular basis for faith formation, education and fellowship," according to its website. It has headquarters in Vienna and an office in Washington, D.C.

Those in attendance included Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna and Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II, both honorary patrons of the network.

The pope told those in attendance that so many people today "cry out for justice, particularly the most vulnerable who often have no voice and who look to civic and political leaders to protect, through effective public policy and legislation, their dignity as children of God and the inviolability of their fundamental human rights."

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Among those who are most vulnerable, he said, are "the poor, migrants and refugees, victims of human trafficking, the sick and elderly and so many other individuals who risk being exploited or discarded by today's 'throwaway' culture."

The challenge facing lawmakers is "working to safeguard and enhance within the public sphere those right relationships that allow each person to be treated with the respect, and indeed the love, that is due to him or her," he said. Jesus offers the best reminder, "Do to others as you would have them do to you," he added.

But, for there to be a just society, "the bond of fraternity" is needed, that is, the "sense of shared responsibility and concern for the integral development and well-being of each member of our human family," the pope said.

Finally, the pope said, "the path to lasting peace calls for cooperation," especially among leaders, with a clear objective of "pursuing goals that benefit everyone."

"Peace results from an enduring commitment to mutual dialogue, a patient search for the truth and the willingness to place the authentic good of the community before personal advantage," he said.

This means their work as lawmakers and political leaders "is more important than ever. For true peace can be achieved only when we strive, through far-sighted

political processes and legislation, to build a social order founded upon universal fraternity and justice for all."