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'Pacem in Terris' focus of two Washington conferences

Jerry Filteau | Apr. 10, 2013
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The first of two major Washington observances of the 50th anniversary of *Pacem in Terris* *[1]* ("Peace on Earth"), Pope John XXIII's encyclical on peace and justice in an increasingly global society, opened Tuesday at The Catholic University of America.

The encyclical's premise that "peace must be based on the protection and promotion of human rights" was "revolutionary" when it came out in 1963, said Maryann Cusimano Love, an associate professor of international politics at the university who is an adviser to the U.S. bishops and to the U.S. State Department on foreign policy issues.

Love and other speakers on the first day of the conference, sponsored by the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, argued that Pope John's positive vision of peace as based on justice and human rights has had enormous effect on international political discourse and relations, global development policy, just war thought, and many other areas in the last five decades.

Pacem in Terris told Catholics that "peacemaking is an essential dimension of our faith," said Marie Dennis, the first lay president of Pax Christi International, a church-recognized international Catholic organization devoted to peace.

The two-day conference, held Tuesday and Wednesday, is to be followed by a similar conference Friday on the 50th anniversary of *Pacem in Terris* across town at Jesuit-run Georgetown University. The second conference will feature several of the same speakers as those appearing at Catholic University.

More about what the conferences say about *Pacem in Terris* and its impact over the last half-century on the worlds of church and global political thought will appear in the next issue of *NCR*.

[Jerry Filteau is *NCR* Washington correspondent.]

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