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Pope: All, not some or most, are redeemed by Christ

by Joshua J. McElwee

The Francis Chronicles

Pope Francis has used his message for the annual World Day of Peace, released Thursday, to call for better treatment of the poor and suffering based on the Christian message that all people are brothers and sisters.

Mentioning over and over the relationship of God as a parent to humanity, the pope states: "All men and women enjoy an equal and inviolable dignity. All are loved by God."

"All have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, who died on the Cross and rose for all," the pope continues. "This is the reason why no one can remain indifferent before the lot of our brothers and sisters."

The pope's nearly 5,000-word message, entitled "Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace," was released by the Vatican Thursday in preparation for the World Day of Peace Jan. 1.

First observed in 1968, the annual day for peace was begun by Pope Paul VI under inspiration from Pope John XXIII's 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris* ("Peace on Earth").

Francis takes the opportunity of his first message for the occasion to appeal to the world to tackle several social justice issues, including: the "tragic phenomenon" of human trafficking, the continuing violence around the world, and the rising income gap between the world's wealthiest and poorest.

Address the latter issue, the pope at one point even calls into question the absolute right for people to own private property. Quoting the 13th-century theologian St. Thomas Aquinas, the pope states that people possess property "as not just their own, but common to others as well, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as themselves."

The pope also calls on Christians to consider choosing a more simple lifestyle, similar to those chosen by members or religious congregations.

"It is the detachment of those who choose to live a sober and essential lifestyle, of those who, by sharing their own wealth, thus manage to experience fraternal communion with others," he states. "This is fundamental for following Jesus Christ and being truly Christian."

"It is not only the case of consecrated persons who profess the vow of poverty, but also of the many families and responsible citizens who firmly believe that it is their fraternal relationship with their neighbors which constitutes their most precious good," he continues.

At another point in the text, the pope issues a personal call for cessation of violence.

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"I appeal forcefully to all those who sow violence and death by force of arms: in the person you today see simply as an enemy to be beaten, discover rather your brother or sister, and hold back your hand!" he states. "Give up the way of arms and go out to meet the other in dialogue, pardon and reconciliation, in order to rebuild justice, trust, and hope around you!"

The pope also calls attention to those suffering from hunger, saying there are left by the world's economic system to be "content with the crumbs."

"We need ... to find ways by which all may benefit from the fruits of the earth, not only to avoid the widening gap between those who have more and those who must be content with the crumbs, but above all because it is a question of justice, equality and respect for every human being," he states.

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