



School Sisters of Notre Dame

Shalom/UN-NGO

January 1, 2020

Dear Sisters,

“Day by day the Holy Spirit prompts us in ways of thinking and speaking that can make us artisans of justice and peace”

Pope Francis' Message for World Day of Peace 2020

We send you greetings at the beginning of this New Year and New Decade!

Pope Francis' message, entitled **Peace as a Journey of Hope: Dialogue, Reconciliation and Ecological Conversion** mirrors so much of what we are striving for as we reflect on our own Directional Statement. We begin this New Year with gratitude for the many ways you have supported Shalom.

We have identified this, our time, as a “critical turning point in the history of creation and humanity.”ⁱ International and internal conflicts have damaged the body and soul of humanity. This often begins with “the inability to accept the diversity of others.”ⁱⁱ We have called ourselves to a better understanding of interculturality and to working to make our communities truly intercultural. This is profoundly countercultural as we see so many withdraw into a “false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust.”ⁱⁱⁱ

“The world does not need empty words but convinced witnesses, peacemakers who are open to dialogue that rejects exclusion or manipulation.”^{iv} Our efforts at authentic community life and our focus on discernment and collaboration call us to that dialogue which can be a great witness to our world. This dialogue is a “journey made together in constant pursuit of the common good, truthfulness and respect for law.”^v

We know that all of this requires ongoing reconciliation. It requires that we “learn to see one another as persons, sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters.”^{vi} We are conscious of our own frailty, our own failures. “We pray that we may be forgiven, that we may change, that we may forgive.”^{vii} When we learn to live in forgiveness, we grow in our capacity to become women of peace.”^{viii}

Of particular concern today is our relationship to all of creation. Often our lack of respect for other persons is mirrored in our lack of respect for the natural world. As Pope Francis points out, “we are in need of an ecological conversion.” The recent Synod on the Amazon was a “renewed call for a peaceful relationship between

communities and the land, between present and past, between experience and hope.”^{ix} Seeing the many indigenous people here in Rome was a reminder that there are whole communities for which the land is life. And they are being oppressed and martyred for their efforts. Can we grow in a deep appreciation of the wonders of God’s creation?

This ecological conversion will lead us to a new way of looking at life, as we consider the generosity of the Creator who has given us the earth and called us to share in joy and moderation. “We deepen our consciousness of who we are in relation with the Triune God, one another and God’s amazing universe.”^x Our encounter with the Trinity will be evident in our relations with the people and world around us.

Pope Francis reminds us that the culture of fraternal (sisterly) encounter can shatter the culture of conflict. Every encounter is a possibility and a gift of God’s generous love. That love leads us out of our narrow horizons into the wonder of the world as God sees it.

Peace is a Journey of Hope; *Shalom* is a Journey of Hope. We have sometimes heard *Shalom* referred to as “projects” or “events” that can become burdensome or even boring. However, *Shalom* was created to be a way that we live, a way that we en flesh our constitution and our charism. Every time we encounter another with love, with openness and with sincere desire to understand, we are experiencing the impulse of the Triune God into the “heart of the world.” In all our ministries, in our communities, in our parishes, walking down the street, day by day, the Holy Spirit is prompting us to be artisans of peace and justice.

We encourage you to share this message with your Sisters in whatever way is appropriate for you.

In Notre Dame,

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ⁱ Love Gives Everything

ⁱⁱ Peace as a Journey of Hope: Dialogue, Reconciliation and Ecological Conversion, Pope Francis

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid*

^{iv} *ibid*

^v *ibid*

^{vi} *ibid*

^{vii} YAS C 37

^{viii} Peace as a Journey of Hope: Dialogue, Reconciliation and Ecological Conversion, Pope Francis

^{ix} *ibid*

^x Love Gives Everything