

Salvatore Fari CM

"Hands for peace"  
For an unarmed heart



**Congregazione della Missione**  
Ufficio di Comunicazione



Towards the Jubilee 3/2025

On the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, December 8, 2024, Pope Francis addressed the entire Church with a profound message for the 58th World Day of Peace, to be celebrated on January 1, 2025, titled "*Forgive Us Our Debts, Grant Us Your Peace.*"

The theme resonates deeply with the biblical and ecclesial significance of the Jubilee Year, drawing inspiration particularly from the encyclicals *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli tutti*, and emphasizing the concepts of Hope and Forgiveness, which lie at the heart of the Jubilee. It is a call to conversion—not for condemnation but for reconciliation and peace.

In 2025, the Catholic Church celebrates the Jubilee, a time to fill hearts with hope. Instead of the trumpet blast that traditionally marks the beginning of the Year of Grace, the Pope invites us to hear the “desperate cry for help” rising from so many parts of the world (cf. Gn 4:10), a cry that God never fails to hear.

Pope Francis urges us to confront the current conditions of injustice and inequality through cultural and structural change, recognizing ourselves as children of the same Father—debtors to one another and essential to each other.

In the “Our Father,” Jesus leaves us with the challenging petition: “as we forgive our debtors,” after asking the Father to forgive our debts (cf. Mt 6:12). To forgive others’ debts and give them hope, our lives must be filled with the same hope that flows from God’s mercy (*n. 10*).

The Pope outlines three concrete actions on the path of hope to restore dignity to the lives of entire peoples and guide them back toward peace:

- Reduction or complete cancellation of international debt.
- Respect for the dignity of human life, from conception to natural death.
- Creation of a Global Fund to permanently eradicate hunger.

Only through these measures can we draw closer to the goal of peace. The message concludes with this aspiration:

“May 2025 be a year when peace grows. A true and lasting peace that is not confined to the technicalities of contracts or human negotiations. Let us seek the true peace that God grants to a disarmed heart: a heart that does not insist on calculating what is mine and what is yours; a heart that dissolves selfishness in the willingness to meet others; a heart that does not hesitate to acknowledge itself as indebted to God and, therefore, is ready to forgive the debts that burden others; a heart that overcomes discouragement about the future with the hope that every person is a resource for this world” (*n. 13*).

### **Hands for peace**

The 400th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission is not only a celebration for the Vincentian Missionaries but also an invitation to the entire Church and all believers to embrace peace, to disarm their hearts, and to have hands for peace.

In this reflection, as we approach the major celebrations of the Congregation’s fourth centenary, I invite you to contemplate the painting *Mother with Child* (2024) by Bosnian artist Safet Zec, who fled Sarajevo during the Balkan War in the 1990s.

The painting portrays a fleeing woman carrying her child in her arms. Her dark brown hair is painted almost hastily, with essential brushstrokes, while her downward gaze dramatically observes the small child wrapped in a cloth. The colors are few and fundamental, reflecting the urgency of escape: the ochre of the woman's skin and cloak, the white of the child's garments and wrappings, and the red staining her wrists and clothing, seeping into the ground. Only the blue of the child's shoe, peeking out from the wrappings, evokes the vitality and carefree spirit every child should have. The sanctity of life is concentrated in the large hands cradling the small, wrapped body—hands that defend to the last breath, hands that bleed for a life continually violated by the brutality of war.

### **We are tired of war! We need peace!**

Currently, there are 56 active conflicts worldwide—the highest number recorded since the end of World War II, according to the Global Peace Index 2024.

Peace is the horizon where humanity is called to live in fraternal communion and relationship with God and His Envoy, the “Prince of Peace” (Is 9:5). It is the central message of the messianic hope proclaimed by the prophets, who envisioned its fulfillment in the original harmony between humanity and creation:

“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb... the calf and the lion shall graze together, and a little child shall lead them” (Is 11:6-9; cf. Is 65:25).

It is also reflected in the transformation of instruments of war into tools of progress and peaceful coexistence:

“They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks... they shall learn war no more” (Is 2:4).

All this is fulfilled with the coming of Jesus of Nazareth, whose birth marks the dawn and triumph of peace:

“Peace on earth to those whom the Lord loves” (Lk 2:14).

### **We desire peace born of forgiveness**

Let us remember that “mercy is the summary word of the Gospel; we can say it is the ‘face’ of Christ, the face He showed when meeting everyone, healing the sick, dining with sinners, and, above all, forgiving from the cross: there we see the face of divine mercy.”

It is essential to rediscover ourselves as forgiven by God in Christ, for this transforms the act of forgiving: it is no longer merely an effort of the will but an openness to the gift of God's grace.

We desire a peace that is not only the silence of arms but also the deep harmony realized in individuals, relationships, and social groups when they follow the laws of Life and remain in tune with God's action.

Peace cannot merely be wished for—it must be proclaimed, built, and lived.

### **Vincent de Paul: messenger with “beautiful feet”**

*“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace!” (Is 52:7).*

I like to imagine Vincent de Paul as a man with “beautiful feet,” taking good steps. His feet, worn from travel and perhaps aching, were the instruments that allowed him to announce peace. For this, they are beautiful and precious. Thanks to them, the longing for peace and liberation is fulfilled and brings forth joy.

Thus: *beautiful the feet* of Vincent who went to the bedside of the dying in Folleville, *beautiful the feet* of Vincent who went to the home of the needy family in Châtillon, *beautiful the feet* of Vincent who visited the prisoners in Paris, *beautiful the feet* of Vincent who went to Cardinal Richelieu and said: “Give us peace, have mercy on us, give peace to our land”; *beautiful the feet* of Vincent who cared for the abandoned children, *beautiful the feet* of Vincent on the paths of mission and charity; *beautiful his feet!*

Vincent, a messenger of peace, always sought to alleviate personal discord and family conflicts; he worked to calm disputes between ecclesiastics and heretics; in social conflicts, he defended justice against any abuse and always condemned the use of violence; he lived the Gospel of charity starting with the “feet,” that is, as a nomad and pilgrim in 17th-century France, and continues today through our “feet” around the world.

May the Lord grant us the grace to be artisans of peace, ready to initiate processes of healing and reconciliation with creativity and courage (*Fratelli tutti*, 225).

Rome, December 10, 2024

Liturgical memorial of Blessed Marc Antonio Durando