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## The Catholic Church and the Turn of the 20th Century: An Anthropology of Human Flourishing and a Church for Peace

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The Catholic Church and the Turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century:  
An Anthropology of Human Flourishing and a Church for Peace

By: Maria Siebels

A Paper Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology and Seminary of Saint John's  
University, Collegeville, Minnesota,  
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*Kristen Colberg*

The Catholic Church and the Turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century:  
An Anthropology of Human Flourishing and a Church for Peace

Description:

This paper will explore the connections between the 20<sup>th</sup> century's unsurpassed violence and the Catholic Church's adoption of anthropology of human dignity and flourishing, resulting in a call and commission for peace as seen in *Pacem et Terris*, *Gaudium et Spes*, and the Catholic Worker Movement.

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The twentieth century was the bloodiest in modern history. Millions of women, men, and children lost their lives to senseless and malicious violence at the hands of those who denigrated the dignity of the human person. There was a loss of respect for the diversity of human life and the goodness of life itself. This paper will discuss how the Catholic Church's response to the unsurpassed violence of the twentieth century was inspired by an adoption of an anthropology rooted in the dignity and flourishing of the human person, which led the Catholic Church to embrace nonviolence and peace, and ultimately a condemnation of total war. The Church's transition towards the promotion of an anthropology of human flourishing and rejection of violence is seen through Pope John XXIII's Encyclical Letter, *Pacem in Terris*, through the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, and through Spirit's prompting of the Catholic Worker movement in a practical and applicable way.

This century of violence and war was the environment the joyful and charismatic pope, John XXIII, was raised. Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was born and raised in a low-income Italian home and it was here that he witnessed the slaughter from war of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He joined the war as a young man out of a civic sense of duty, but it was out of this experience that he would later come to admonish the act of war. On May 23, 1915, Angelo Roncalli made this entry in his journal "Tomorrow I leave to take up my military service in the medical corps. Where will they send me? To the front perhaps? Shall I ever return to Bergamo, or has the Lord decreed that my last hour shall be on the battlefield? I know nothing: all I want is the will of God in all things and at all times."<sup>1</sup> His biographer, Lawrence Elliot, tells of Roncalli thanking God for his time in the First World War. He quotes him as saying "How much I learned about the human heart during

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<sup>1</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Journal of a Soul*. trans Dorothy White (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc. 1964) 190.

this time, how much experience I gained, what grace I received.”<sup>2</sup> However, Elliot notes that the war burdened Roncalli’s gentleness and kind disposition. He was “sickened by the brutality and waste of war.”<sup>3</sup> Roncalli was discharged after four years serving his country; a service in which he learned valuable lessons as first a non-commissioned officer and also as a chaplain. His diaries suggest that he carried these lessons with him into the rest of his ministry and they propelled his vision forward. He writes in his journal after returning from war:

While we are all re-awakening as if to the light of a new day, those supreme principles of faith and Christian and priestly life which by the grace of God were the nourishment of my youth are once more clear to me and now seem even brighter and firmer than before: the glory of God, the sanctification of my soul, paradise, the Church, the goodness of the souls of men. The contacts with the world during these four years have transformed these principles in me into action, ennobled them and imbued them with a more burning apostolic zeal. I am now of mature years: either I achieve something positive, or I bear a terrible responsibility for having wasted the Lord’s mercy.<sup>4</sup>

As Roncalli’s life progressed, he continued down a life devoted to justice and kindness and it carried him into his papacy.<sup>5</sup> The man made his transition to Patriarch of Venice in 1953 and shortly after, Roncalli took the role of Supreme Pontiff and the name John in 1958. It was here that the “*Pap di passagio*” (the transitional pope) became one of the most influential men in Christian history. Pope John XXIII’s time in the First World War was not lost on him in his papacy. Rather, it was that experience, living through the Second World War, and the sensitivity of the Cold War and looming racism in the United States that inspired his encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris*.

John XXIII wrote *Pacem et Terris* as positive anthropological encyclical, rooted in the premise of human flourishing, peace, and nonviolence. The term nonviolence has been adopted

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Elliot, *I Will be Called John. A Biography of Pope John XXIII*. (USA: Fourth Printing, 1973) 74.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Elliot, *I Will be Called John. A Biography of Pope John XXIII*. 74

<sup>4</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Journal of a Soul. A Biography of Pope John XXIII*. 191

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Elliot, *I Will be Called John. A Biography of Pope John XXIII*. 205

by many men and women throughout history, and the term gained particular popularity during John's lifetime. It served as the backbone behind Gandhi and his Satyagraha movement, inspired Martin Luther King Jr's work in the Civil Rights movement, and today there are peaceful, nonviolent marches for an end to gun violence, sexual assault, along with many more injustices. Nonviolence, as described by Gene Sharp, is "the personal practice of being harmless to self and others under every condition. It comes from the belief that hurting people, animals or the environment is unnecessary to achieve an outcome and refers to a general philosophy of abstention from violence. This may be based on moral, religious or spiritual principles, or it may be for purely strategic or pragmatic reasons."<sup>6</sup> As seen from the devastation of the previous century, the war in which he fought, and the Cold War looming during his own papacy, violence and the threat of total destruction was rampant in the face of the peaceful pope, and it was in response to this world hurt and the consistent injustice being done to the dignity of the human person that John began *Pacem in Terris*.

*Pacem in Terris* was the first papal encyclical addressed not only to bishops and Catholic faithful, but to "all men of good will." This is critical for multiple reasons. First, because this was the first time the laity was instructed to play a critical role in the matter at hand, peace on earth. Secondly, it set the stage for the way in which the laity would be addressed in the Second Vatican Council and the focus the council would have on human flourishing. Thirdly, it emphasizes the importance that the goodness of the human person will play in the positive anthropology he suggests in his writing.

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<sup>6</sup> Gene Sharp, and Adam Roberts, *Sharp's Dictionary of Power and Struggle: Language of Civil Resistance in Conflicts*. Ed. by April Carter and Bruce Jenkins. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 19

Anthropology, with its willingness to examine the human experience is ideally situated to inform about the nature of peace.<sup>7</sup> The study of peace is inexorably linked to questions of values, policy, rights, advocacy, and ultimately human survival. Thus, the structure of *Pacem in Terris* begins on a micro level, with the imperative dignity and goodness of the human person, then moves outward into societal structures. John's starting point creates consistency between both individual and communal systems and creates a theme that *Gaudium et Spes* and the Catholic Worker alike will embody. Unlike those who might suggest the human person is inherently corrupt, he argues for the praise of God's creation. He emphasizes time and time again the importance of upholding human dignity in all structures from familial to political structures. He titles the first chapter; *Every Man is a Person with Rights and Duties*.<sup>8</sup> He begins his letter acknowledging the goodness within each person. He proclaims,

First of all, it is necessary to speak of the order which should exist between men. Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every human being is a person, that is, man's nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person he has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature. And these rights and obligations are universal and inviolable, so they cannot in any way be surrendered.<sup>9</sup>

It was essential for John XXIII to begin with the human person because it established a foundation of dignity that sins like war and unjust structures violate on individual, communal, and societal levels. When one discredits the humanity that is shared between men and women, when one shatters the frame of right relationship through sin in smaller ways, it becomes simpler to then discredit the dignity within a city one is invading or to discredit the honor the order of

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<sup>7</sup> Leslie Sponsel, Thomas Gregor. *The Anthropology of Peace and Nonviolence*. (Boulder Co: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. 1994). 1

<sup>8</sup> *Encyclical Letter of Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris*. (National Catholic Welfare Conference: Polygot Press: April 11, 1963), 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Pacem in Terris*, 7-8



creation through destructive weapons. John XXIII writes at the outset, “If we look upon the dignity of the human person in the light of divinely revealed truth, we cannot help but esteem it far more highly; for men are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, they are by Christ the children and friends of God and heirs of eternal glory.”<sup>10</sup> John starts his letter acknowledging the humanity in each individual because when a person acknowledges the humanity which they are endowed with, one is lead to recognizing their rights and freedom.

After opening the letter with the dignity of the human person, he moves directly into the rights each person is endowed with. Rights such as; the right to life, bodily integrity, food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, etc.<sup>11</sup> Through first acknowledging dignity and rights, one ought to then accept the responsibilities that follow between persons. Inviolable rights lead oneself to fulfilling duties and responsibilities, and when one understands one’s responsibilities it becomes clear that it is humanity’s communal responsibility to seek and acknowledge the dignity in each person. John clearly explains the correlation between rights and duties as he writes, “The natural rights with which we have been dealing are inseparably connected, in the very person who is their subject, with just as many respective duties.”<sup>12</sup> He goes on to say, “the right of every man to life is correlative with the duty to preserve it; his right to a decent standard of living with the duty of living it becomingly; and his right to investigate the truth freely, with the duty of seeking it ever more completely and profoundly.”<sup>13</sup> It is not enough for John to accept one’s rights in life, one must live out one’s duties accordingly. Duties to individual prayer, in the home, duties at work, for one’s church, community, local government, systems, and global

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<sup>10</sup> *Pacem in Terris*, 10

<sup>11</sup> *Pacem in Terris*, 11

<sup>12</sup> *Pacem et Terris*, 28

<sup>13</sup> *Pacem et Terris*, 29

systems. From the beginning of his writing, John is concerned with the world at large. It is also imperative for John that the responsibilities and duties be used for the common good. He writes in the segment titled *An Attitude of Responsibility*, “For any human society that is established on relations of force must be regarded as inhuman.”<sup>14</sup> It is humanity’s duty to act responsibly through God’s created moral order,<sup>15</sup> and to recognize both their rights and obligations toward others, in hopes that a society will be guided by justice, charity, and freedom. Thus, the cycle of awareness and justice and right relationship begins. John’s emphasis on human flourishing and right relationship wove a seamless thread into his position on violence and war. He pushes forward in his encyclical to emphasize the relationship between upholding human dignity, and the abomination of war.

John XXIII makes it clear in his writing that every person has the right to life and a worthy standard of living, to moral and cultural values. In an effort by the papacy to comment on the changing world of the twentieth century, Pope Leo XIII, Pius XI, and John XXIII developed positions in their respective works, *Rerum Novarum*, *Quadragesimo Anno*, and *Mater et Magistra* to illuminate the importance of the common good, worker’s rights, and the upholding of cultural and moral values. Cultural values such as the right to education, to appropriate worker’s compensations, and technical and professional training.<sup>16</sup> John takes it a step farther. He emphasizes that one has the right to worship and honor God according to one’s own conscience, and the right to choose freely one’s state of life.<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that after

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<sup>14</sup> *Pacem et Terris*, 34

<sup>15</sup> *Pacem et Terris*, 37

<sup>16</sup> *Pacem in Terris*, 13; Encyclical Letter of John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*. In *Catholic Social Thought, Encyclicals and Documents from Pope Leo XII to Pope Francis*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 245; Encyclical Letter of Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, In *Catholic Social Thought, Encyclicals and Documents from Pope Leo XII to Pope Francis*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 58; Encyclical Letter of Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, In *Catholic Social Thought, Encyclicals and Documents from Pope Leo XII to Pope Francis*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Pacem in Terris*, 14

years of violence and hatred at the hands of religious and cultural differences, John XXIII makes a revolutionary statement suggesting that each individual has the right to choose their religion for themselves. Two years prior to the Second Vatican Council, two years before *Gaudium et Spes*' and *Dignitatis Humanae*'s publications, John XXIII's was dedicated to protecting religious freedom. The right to religious freedom not only honors the freedom each person is endowed with, it also abolishes a need for violence at the hand of religion at all. If all have the right to seek God with their own conscious, religious violence becomes senseless. He lays a foundation for his later claims in which he questions, "Is there anyone who does not ardently yearn to see dangers of war banished, to see peace preserved and daily more firmly established?"<sup>18</sup> War denies the dignity, freedom, duties, and flourishing of humanity and *Pacem in Terris* admonishes the act of needless killing and violence and promotes communication and negotiation. He hopes "that by meeting and negotiating, men may come to discover better the bonds that unite them together, deriving from the human nature which they have in common...that between them and their respective peoples it is not fear which should reign but love."<sup>19</sup> This hope came to fruition in the Second Vatican Council, when members of the church from across the world came to share in the world church and strive for a world of love.

*Pacem in Terris* was Pope John's final encyclical. It has been widely applauded as one of the most important documents to come out of his papacy. As theologian Massimo Faggioli writes. "*Pacem in Terris* was truly the crown of Pope John's pontificate. It summarized what John had worked to bring about. It summarized Christian thought on the question of peace."<sup>20</sup> His love of the other was exemplified in his relationships, his kindness, and his efforts for peace.

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<sup>18</sup> *Pacem in Terris*, 116

<sup>19</sup> *Pacem in Terris*, 129

<sup>20</sup> Massimo Faggioli, *John XXIII: The Medicine of Mercy*. (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2014) 130.

Even those outside of the theological landscape applauded this encyclical. According to an editorial in the New York Times, it was one of the “most profound and all-embracing formulations of the road toward peace that has ever been written.”<sup>21</sup> If John’s actions in his waning months spoke loudly of a new relationship between the Vatican the world, his final encyclical *Pacem in Terris* interpreted those actions.<sup>22</sup> It was within this breath that the Second Vatican Council was commissioned by the joyful pope. He wanted so desperately to engage with the world, to embrace the need for change, and to create a council for the people of God.

*Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, is one of the most cited documents to come out of Vatican II because it is the most relational and engaging document to date. It follows the spirit of *Pacem in Terris* in its enthusiasm for an anthropology of human flourishing. In its introductory remarks, the document reads “It is the human person that is to be saved, human society which must be renewed. It is the human person therefore, which is the key to this discussion, each individual human person in her or his totality, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will.”<sup>23</sup> The body is good, it is worthy of Christ’s saving, and it is there in the human person that the conversation between the Church and the world begins. This document embodied the spirit of Vatican II in its style, language, and content entering into the modern world and dialoguing with it rather than condemning its differences. While it is unlike any of the other council documents because it did not originate out of the original preparatory schema, *Gaudium et Spes*, like *Pacem in Terris*, fostered the call for an

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<sup>21</sup> Lawrence Elliot, *I Will be Called John. A Biography of Pope John XXIII.* 311

<sup>22</sup> Bernard R. Bonnot, *Pope John XXIII: Model and Mentor for Leaders.* (New York: Society of St. Paul, 2003), 259.

<sup>23</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, in *The Documents of Vatican II: The Basic Sixteen Documents.* (Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Company, April 1996), 3.

*aggiornamento*, a change or updating, which was enlivened by the Spirit's presence in both the council and the world and with the church's relationship to the human person and the world.<sup>24</sup>

“*Aggiornamento*,” as pointed out by theologian Walter Kasper, “consisted in the fact that it moved into the foreground the mystery of the church, which can only be grasped in faith, over against the one-sided concentration on the visible and hierarchical form of the church, which held sway during the previous three centuries.”<sup>25</sup> While it was passed after his death, *Gaudium et Spes* like no other Vatican II document captured the spirit and vision of John XXIII. It modeled has an anthropological starting point after *Pacem et Terris* rather than a Christological or Trinitarian starting point because the agenda for the document is centered around the Church's relationship with humanity and human structures. This document begins by saying that this council has “probed more profoundly” and thus, is addressing itself without hesitation “not only to the children of the church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity.”<sup>26</sup> This is a document of the world church, and the world is good. Weaving another overwhelmingly positive anthropological tapestry for its time, this document follows the course of *Pacem in Terris* and upholds the goodness and dignity of the human person, for the human person was created in the image of God.<sup>27</sup>

Maureen Sullivan highlights in her work *The Road to Vatican II*, the world prior *Gaudium et Spes* was a world where dualism had “crept” into our theological and social language.<sup>28</sup> Within the time prior to the calling of the Second Vatican Council, she writes “We would talk about the sacred versus the secular; the eternal versus the temporal; the supernatural

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<sup>24</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Kasper, *Theology and Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 151.

<sup>26</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 2

<sup>27</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 12

<sup>28</sup> Maureen Sullivan, *The Road to Vatican II*. (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press), 38.

versus the natural...using them as we did for so many years allowed a kind of dualism that clearly contributed to the church's disdain for the world. We were far more concerned about the 'next' world (heaven) than we were about 'this' world (earth)."<sup>29</sup> Sullivan's points underscore the disdain the Catholic Church held at times for the world and temporal beings in its history. This dualism allows for a thinking in which violence and war can be condoned because it is, like Sullivan suggested, "of this world" rather than the next. However, with this changing viewpoint of the human person's goodness and dignity in both body and soul, earthly and spiritually, a door opens for the language of the council to be more positive in its anthropology and discussion of the world.

The twentieth-century offered possibility to the modern age. Whereas previous popes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were in an ongoing battle with the Enlightenment era, John XXIII opened this council in wake of no panic or crisis. Rather, he opened it as an opportunity for dialogue and renewal. As Sullivan writes "It expressed the most profound change from being a church in conflict with the world to being a church in dialogue with the world."<sup>30</sup> Even the language theologians use to speak about the shift made by this document is one of peace and nonviolence. The church moved from conflict to dialogue, from fear to progress.

*Gaudium et Spes* is split between in two parts. Part I deals with the dignity of the human person, the human community, human activity, and the relationship between the church and the world. Part II focuses on the problems of special urgency: marriage and the family, human progress, life in its economic, social and political dimensions, and the bonds between the family of nations. Following almost an identical structure of *Pacem in Terris*.

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<sup>29</sup> Maureen Sullivan, *The Road to Vatican II*, 38

<sup>30</sup> Maureen Sullivan, *The Road to Vatican II*. 40

*Gaudium et Spes*, loudly points to an anthropology of flourishing, of the human person's goodness and worthiness in its earliest chapters, and it is because of these chapters that the council is able to offer their argument against war and violence. *Gaudium et Spes*, like *Pacem in Terris* begins the section on war by naming the atrocities from within the generation. "Humanity" writes the bishops, "will not succeed in accomplishing the task awaiting it, that is, the establishment of a truly human world for all over the entire earth, unless all devote themselves to the cause of true peace with renewed vigor."<sup>31</sup> A truly human world means acknowledging that each person is a child of God and worth protecting.<sup>32</sup> In order to fully embrace an anthropology of flourishing, one centered on the gospel message of love, it is crucial to embrace the spirit of brother and sisterhood which unites us. One must understand the nature of peace if they are to truly adopt a spirit of love. A position against violence suggests that the dignity and goodness within each person is worth safeguarding and protecting—regardless of nationality, race, gender, socioeconomic status, or religious affiliation. The writers of this document are fervently calling for an end to war. It is not enough just to avoid war however, peace is not just the balance and cooperation between countries. Peace is the "fruit of that right ordering of things with which the divine founder has invested human society and which must be brought about by humanity in its thirst for an ever more perfect reign of justice."<sup>33</sup> The end to war alone will not bring about the reign of justice, rightly ordered communities, just structures which promote the goodness and dignity of the human person, and love of neighbor built up over time will bring about a spirit of peace.

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<sup>31</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 77

<sup>32</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 77

<sup>33</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 78

The earlier chapters of *Gaudium et Spes* address the many offenses that do not honor the dignity of the human person, nor Christ as seen in the neighbor. Offenses against life such as murder, genocide, abortion, mutilation, physical and mental torture. They move onto more social topics such as offences against the human dignity such as, “subhuman living conditions, slavery, prostitution, and any time the human person is treated as a mere tool for profit, rather than free and responsible persons; all these and the like are criminal: they poison civilization.”<sup>34</sup> Sin, as described by the council fathers, is when a person chooses creation over their creator, when they “become out of harmony with themselves, with others, and with all created things.”<sup>35</sup> When humanity loses its order with one another, the atrocities mentioned previously, never intended by God, creep into the human experience.

The order of right relationships and peace are essential to the human person according to *Gaudium et Spes* because they reflect the love of humanity’s creator. Divinity took on flesh in the human person of Jesus of Nazareth, and he perfectly showed humanity how to love. It is through this example that humans are called to love one another. Jesus’ death on earth is the perfect example of a refusal of violence. Rather than picking up the sword, fighting back, or blaming his persecutors, Christ refuses to retaliate. Instead, he forgives his killers, he restores another on the cross to relationship with God, and he breaks the chains of death and violence through his resurrection. The document beautifully writes “Peace on earth, which flows from love of one’s neighbor, symbolizes and has its origin in the peace of Christ who proceeds from God the Father...therefore, all Christians are urged to speak the truth in love and join with all peace loving people in the pleading for peace and trying to achieve it.”<sup>36</sup> Peace is humanity’s

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<sup>34</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 28

<sup>35</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 13

<sup>36</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 78



very composition as the reflection, the *imago dei*, the image, of God in the Trinity. Humanity is commissioned to live in Christ's love and to embody the gospel message.

Violence ought to go against the very heart of the Christian. However, it is important to note that the council fathers suggest there is a difference between wars of self-defense and wars that seek to conquer or decimate another country.<sup>37</sup> While this seems to be a juxtaposition of their original claim about nonviolence and peace, the focus of this document is on war that is unjust and morally condemnable. It is here in a spirit of *aggiornamento* the council fathers make their condemnation of war and violence while citing *Pacem in Terris*. They write:

All these factors force us to undertake a completely fresh appraisal of war.<sup>38</sup> People of the present generation should realize that they will have to render an account of their warlike behavior, the destiny of generations to come depends largely on the decisions they make today. With these conditions in mind, the council, endorsing the condemnations of total warfare issued by recent popes, declares: Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and humanity, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnations.<sup>39</sup>

The bishops condemn every act of war directed at the decimation of peoples as against God and humanity. While certain bishops did not like the "pacifist tendencies" the document was suggesting, because of the implications it would have in their home countries, others were at the forefront calling for a condemnation of modern war in all circumstances.<sup>40</sup> The document met in the middle by criticizing the destruction of total welfare while still expressing a desire that all wars be condemned for the sake of peace.<sup>41</sup> However, this is just a hope for the future unless

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<sup>37</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 79

<sup>38</sup> See John XXIII, Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963) p. 291.

"Therefore in this age of ours, which prides itself on its atomic power, it is irrational to think that war is a proper way to obtain justice for violated rights."

<sup>39</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 80

<sup>40</sup> Edward P. Hahnenberg. *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*. (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press. 2007), 68

<sup>41</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 82

world leaders act responsibly and with the good of the people the govern in mind. This calling out of sin, the condemnation of the act of war, and the critique of those who use war for their own ends is the only time in the document when the council fathers condemn any action outright.

*Gaudium et Spes*, while condemning the sin of total warfare, has been critiqued, however, for not making a serious enough claim against sin in the modern world as a whole. Joseph Ratzinger, a significant member of the Second Vatican Council, along with other likeminded theologians, suggests that the positive anthropology of Vatican II, while accurate and a reflection of human dignity, does not offer a realistic explanation of sin in the modern world. In his reading of the document, he said “instead of setting up an ideal construct of Church-State cooperation, it seemed better to present the Gospel principle of nonviolence with all its consequences.”<sup>42</sup> While this document is highly praised for leading the church into the modern world, it is also highly criticized for not genuinely engaging in the difficulties of the modern times adequately. It was critical for the Church fathers, in the spirit of Vatican II to pay attention, and listen to the signs of the times when writing these documents. A sign of the time that certainly caught their attention was the movement coming out of the United States nearly thirty years before the commissioning of the Second Vatican Council.

In respects to engaging with the difficulties of the modern world, few Catholic leaders in this time understood these problems better than the founders of the Catholic Worker Movement, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. The spirit of Vatican II was not restricted to within the walls of the Vatican during the proceedings and negotiations of the council, it was also alive in the spirit of every day Catholics. While the Church was still in the transformation process amidst and after

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<sup>42</sup> Cardinal Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), 155.

Vatican II, movements promoting human flourishing, right relationships, and nonviolence across the globe were springing up as war and unjust structures continued to decimate countries and lives. In 1930 the Spirit had prompted a movement in the United States of America in the heart of New York City. The Catholic Worker Movement was (and still is today) evidence of this desire for an anthropology of human flourishing and a promotion of nonviolence that would be adopted by Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council.

The founders Day and Maurin did more than write about their beliefs, they acted and embodied the Corporeal Works of Mercy<sup>43</sup> in their passion for serving the poor and in their public displays of protest against unjust structures of power. They issued a magazine, in which Day and Maurin expressed their political and religious views, wrote about poverty, the workings of the Catholic Worker and how vehemently Dorothy opposed war. In 1942, Dorothy wrote in the Catholic Worker Newspaper:

We are still pacifists. Our manifesto is the Sermon on the mount, which names that we will try to be peacemakers. Speaking for many of our conscientious objectors, we will not participate in armed warfare or in making munitions, or by buying government bonds to prosecute the war...we recognize that while in the order of intention we have tried to stand for peace, for love of our brother, in the order of exception we have failed as Americans in living up to our principles.<sup>44</sup>

Day was a pacifist and an active speaker against nuclear developments. Prior to *Pacem et Terris* and *Gaudium et Spes*, Day and Maurin were advocating for a church of the people. During a time when the Catholic Church had still remained relatively quiet on the issue, Dorothy and the Worker were just the opposite. Throwing herself into the gospel message, she entered the dirty, the broken, and the hurt. She not only offered works of charity, she also spoke for justice. The

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<sup>43</sup> Fritz Eichenberg, and Robert Ellsberg. *Works of Mercy*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> Dorothy Day, *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day*. Ed. By Robert Ellsberg. (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University, 2008) 64-65.

Catholic Worker often featured articles she had written in which she maintained the dignity of life and condemned war and violence. In 1955, just four years before Vatican II was commissioned, Dorothy and a group of Catholic Workers led others in a protest against New York City's civil defense. On the flyers given out that that day, she wrote:

We make this demonstration, not only to voice our opposition to war, not only to refuse to participate in psychological warfare, which this air raid drill is, but also as an act of public penance for having been the first people in the world to drop the atom bomb, to make a hydrogen bomb. We are engaging ourselves in this action, not the Church. We are acting as individual Catholics. We are turning towards men, to speak and act among them, on the temporal plane because, by our faith, by our baptism, by our confirmation, tiny as we are, we have the vocation of infusing into the world, wheresoever we are, the sap and savor of Christianity!<sup>45</sup>

Day and Maurin's work in the Catholic Worker was evidence for the world's need of peace and for the Church to be a voice in that need. They accepted their role in violence because of their shared humanity, yet, they called humanity to something greater. While men and women were dying in wars, Day and her supporters were being jailed for criticizing it. And while the voice for the Catholic Church was still working on a response to the needless violence, the seeds for peace were being sown in the larger church, in the States, and throughout the world. This spirit of action and Christian fellowship was the foundation for the Catholic Worker and gave light to changing church, the need to adhere to the signs of the times, and to embrace the nature of *aggiornamento*.

While the twentieth century will forever be regarded as one of the bloodiest in modern history, it will also be seen as a turning point in human thought because of the revolutionary steps taken in the respect and dignity of human life. It was the spirit of people like Day and Maurin, and the millions of others that helped usher in the Second Vatican Council's new stance

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<sup>45</sup> Dorothy Day, *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day*, 201-202.

on peace and war that condemned all practices which limited the scope of human flourishing. An anthropology which embraced the dignity of the human person and encouraged human flourishing, as commissioned by John XXIII, endorsed by *Gaudium et Spes*, and lived out through the efforts and actions of the Catholic Worker allowed for a peaceful and nonviolent method to be taken by the Catholic Church. Love for the other is the hinge of hope that the Council called for in its closing remarks for the modern world when Paul VI said “This is our hope at the conclusion of this Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and at the beginning of the human and religious renewal which the council proposed to study and promote; this is our hope for you, brothers and Fathers of the council; this is our hope for the whole of humankind which here we have learned to love more and to serve better.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Pope Paul VI, *The Address of Pope Paul VI During the Last General Meeting of the Second Vatican Council*. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana (December 6, 1965).

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