



## OVERCOME BY **INDIFFERENCE!**

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The theme Pope Francis has chosen for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2016 is: “Overcome Indifference and Win Peace!” It is undeniable that never before have we had such a glut of information, of ‘live’ information of what goes on in the world. Disasters, tragedies, horrors follow one after the other and interspersed with the good news (sadly always less frequent!), like the discoveries made by science, the serious endeavours to protect our planet, the prophetic and encouraging deeds of Pope Francis and just as encouraging and positive deeds of many other religious leaders.

We know more. We know even the details, and yet we are moved always less. In fact, we are not moved at all! We remain indifferent! Lazy and resigned, at times foolishly capricious like those children who neither dance when the flute is played nor mourn when a funeral song is sung (cf. Mt 11, 16-19). The roads to peace, it is true, are scarce and often narrow, unseen paths and discernible only to attentive and patient eyes. However, they do exist. Simply to enumerate the “very grave questions that afflict the human family” is not enough. We cannot resign ourselves to: “fundamentalism and its massacres, religious and ethnic persecution, the violation of freedom, of human rights, the exploitation and enslavement of people, corruption and organised crime, the wars and dra-

mas of refugees and forced migrants.” (Message for the 49th World Day of Peace 2016, of the Pontifical Counsel for Justice and Peace).

The two verbs to ‘overcome’ and to ‘win’ that are used in the title, we could say, define and sum up the theme of the Day of Peace. It seems, in actual fact, like classical war jargon and at first impression, the least suitable to inspire thoughts of peace and concord. However, the intention is to provoke and make us recognise the objective of our battle, our daily commitment and responsibility that no one may renounce or extricate themselves from.

Not everyone can have a podium at the United Nations from which to voice discourses, denunciations or stratagems; not all of us can take part in the numerous meetings, round tables and international conferences. But we all can and must fight and, if we join together in this deadly terrain of indifference, we can overcome every affront, injustice and conflict.

In fact upon this terrain of indifference are found the space and food for those poisonous plants of egoism, ignorance, isolation and last but not least of non-commitment. Working to uproot, inside and outside of ourselves, these infesting weeds, means expanding the space for peace and allowing ourselves to become operators and builders of

peace, not just confused, dead to the world and reluctant spectators of events and not just on the world stage but on the very landings of our apartments and within the walls of our homes.

Since Blessed Paul VI’s first Message given on 8 December 1967 that launched the idea of the World Peace Day, 49 years have gone by!

The many dangers the Pope referred to are unhappily still with us, and some now even more worrying. The idea, however, caught on and Christians have, along with all the true friends of peace, restrained, if nothing more, the winds of war and made mankind more conscious of this priceless and fundamental good that is peace.

We cannot halt, nor even delegate to others with official responsibilities and duties, the making of the right choices and actions.

Indifference has its roots in ordinary everyday life. We are all on the front lines in this, and for every inch that we allow it to advance, we obdurately make weaker the difficult and wearing path to peace.

Let us entrust the New Year to the powerful intercession of our Padre Pio who, made care, consideration and sharing in the many sufferings of his brothers and sisters the foundation of his life and sanctity.

Let us try and ward off indifference! A happy New Year for 2016!