

Reinhard Cardinal Marx, Archbishop of Munich and Freising:

Greeting at the symposium "Challenges of Russia's War against Ukraine and the Ethics Principle of Sustainable Peace in Europe"

Munich, LMU, February 12, 2024

Spoken word applies!

Dear Bishop Bohdan Dzyurakh,
dear experts from the Universities of Lviv, Notre Dame and Munich,

This symposium is taking place in the context of the traditional Munich Security Conference, which has been held annually in Munich since 1963 and is considered one of the most important think tanks for the increasingly explosive issues of international security and peace. The Munich Security Conference is the world's largest meeting on foreign, security and defense policy. Its aim is not to make decisions, but to facilitate trusting discussions and better mutual understanding. It has been chaired by Ambassador Christoph Heusgen since 2022 and will take place this year from February 16 to 18.

It is an innovation that in advance of the Security Conference representatives from the fields of theology and ethics as well as experts associated with the church meet in this side event to discuss opportunities and obstacles to peace from an interdisciplinary Christian perspective. I'm impressed by how many experts from the three participating universities - the Catholic University of Lviv, the Catholic University of Notre Dame and the Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich -, have come together here. I am confident, hope and wish that it will be a Catholic think tank for sustainable peace.

In view of the almost hopeless spiral of increasing escalation of violence in which the world community is entangled, the voice of the Christian faith, which calls for peace, reconciliation, reason and overcoming violence, but also recognizes the right to self-defence and the international responsibility to protect, is perhaps more necessary than ever. Christian peace ethics is not naïve! From the very beginning, it reckons with man's tendency towards violence and even fratricide, as the story of Cain and Abel (cf. Genesis 4) shows. At the same time,

however, it believes that people and nations always have the power to reconcile and overcome hostility.

Even if peace cannot be achieved, but is a gracious gift from God, the task remains to constantly strive for it: "Seek peace and pursue it!" (Ps 34:15). Or as Pope Benedict XV put it in 1920 in the title of the Catholic Church's first encyclical on peace: "Pacem, Dei munus pulcherrimum" – "Peace, the beautiful gift of God". Peace is both: a gift and the most important goal of Christian ethics.

In 1917, as the devastation of the First World War became ever clearer, Pope Benedict XV made an urgent appeal for peace, which became an impetus for the founding of the Peace Federation of German Catholics. The Archbishop of Munich, Cardinal Michael Faulhaber, was at that time a committed supporter and protector. Perhaps a new international Catholic Peace League is needed today, whereby in our days ecumenical dialog with the Orthodox sisters and brothers in faith and dialog with the various representatives of Islam could play a key role. The importance of religion in the Russian-Ukrainian war and the attempt by President Putin and Patriarch Cyril to legitimize it as a defence of Orthodox values should not be underestimated. The use of religion to justify enmities and war requires contestation at all levels. We cannot accept this instrumentalization of God in any religion, not even in Christianity!

Despite all contestation, it also needs dialog at all levels. At present, however, we seem to be infinitely far from this goal. In his most recent encyclical "Fratelli tutti", which was published in 2020 and is essentially an encyclical on peace, Pope Francis speaks of a "third world war in stages" (FT 25 and 259).

Particularly since the escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict, which was triggered by the Hamas massacre and terror attack on October 7, there has been a seemingly unstoppable international expansion of warlike violence, threats, enemy stereotypes and alienation processes. The world has come apart at the seams. Conflicts are mutually reinforcing each other. In order to counter this, it depends on the right mix of determination and prudence: determination to effectively defend the values of human dignity, freedom and democracy and to stand together in solidarity, as prudence and diplomatic wisdom, in order to avoid collective hostility and escalation.

Decisive for the profile of Catholic peace ethics is not the ideal of unconditional non-violence, but that of overcoming violence through law and dialog. According to Immanuel Kant, the very idea of law implies the power to coerce and thus a state monopoly on the use of force, which is inconceivable without police or military power. The guiding principle of the peace encyclical *Pacem in terris* published by John XXIII in 1963 is to transfer the state's monopoly on the use of force established at national level to the international level under the leadership of the UN. Unfortunately, the UN Security Council has been and continues to be increasingly abused by the veto powers for their particular interests and has therefore lost credibility.

According to Pope Francis' assessment in *Fratelli tutti*, the end of the Cold War has not been used sufficiently to create lasting and sustainable peace and to advance the architecture of a new world order, including through UN reforms. The guiding principle for the Pope - as it was for John Paul II - is the principle of the human family, which commits to cross-border fraternity, relativizes the category of nation and is to be secured through the defence of universal human rights (cf. FT 26, 100, 127, 141, 205). A culture of dialog and genuine human encounter is addressed as a "craft of peace" (FT 228-235). For the understanding the message of the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, it seems groundbreaking to me that Pope Francis emphasizes the question of peacekeeping as the central ethical challenge of the present epoch.

For a long time, Christian peace ethics were discussed under the heading of "just war" coined by St. Augustine. For a good twenty years now, the term "just peace" has established itself as a guiding principle. This is not simply a pacifist counter-model, but rather a broadening of horizons with regard to the complex prerequisites for peace and the need to strive for it at all levels. "Just Peace" focuses on the diversity and interconnectedness of military, diplomatic and civil society aspects in the struggle for peace, freedom and security.

The conflict in Afghanistan was an example of how the Western powers are heavily equipped with weapons, but there is a significant lack of professionalization in civil society conflict management to ensure lasting peace. Weapons alone can win a war, but never lasting and sustainable peace. This also applies to Ukraine: international solidarity, the active participation of civil society, opinion-forming in the digital media and the cultural struggle for national and religious identity are an indispensable dimension of the defense of Ukraine.

“Just peace” relies on the attentive and early naming of violence and human rights violations. It implies education for resistance against ideologies, repressive forms of politics and exclusion. An acute challenge in this context (also in Germany) is the manipulation of public opinion in the digital media, in the shadow of which nationalist-aggressive thought patterns

are spreading. The actors of “Just Peace” confront generalizing images of the enemy and constantly seek the power of reconciliation across the borders of nations, cultures, religions and social classes. They see international understanding as a challenge that today increasingly includes development, climate and migration policy. The concept of “Just Peace” is integral and can also be described as "sustainable peace". The German bishops will shortly be publishing a statement on peace that emphasizes precisely these connections. In all of this, peace is not defined as the absence of violence, but is understood as a primary category, as a spiritual power working towards the humanization of conditions.

I hope that this symposium will become a source of inspiration for this spiritual power of prudent and resolute defense of freedom and peace from Christian origins. May this symposium leave traces of peace!