

## Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to the delegation of “Leaders pour la paix”

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> December, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the non-governmental organization “Leaders pour la Paix”, to whom he addressed the following words of greeting:*

*Ladies and gentlemen!*

I am pleased to meet with you at this time, members of “Leaders pour la Paix”, and thank you for the presence and work of your “Travelling School for Freedom”, which is being held in these days at the Pontifical Lateran University.

Being a *Leader for Freedom* in the moment we are going through is a great responsibility, and not only a commitment. We have realized that the human family, threatened by war, runs a more dangerous risk: the lack of *will* to build peace, the lack of *will* to build peace.

Your experience teaches us that, faced with war, to silence weapons is the first step to be taken, but then it will be necessary to rebuild the present and future of co-existence, institutions, structures and services. Peace requires forms of reconciliation, shared values and – an indispensable item – pathways of education and formation.

Building peace requires us to be creative, to overcome, if necessary, the habitual mindsets of international relations, and at the same time to counter those who entrust to war the task of resolving disputes between States and within States, or who even think to attain by force the conditions of justice necessary for the coexistence of peoples. We cannot forget that the sacri-

fice of human lives, the suffering of the population, the indiscriminate destruction of civil structures, and the violation of the principle of humanity are not “side effects” of war, they are international crimes: we must say this, repeat it.

Using weapons to resolve conflicts is a sign of weakness and fragility. Negotiation, proceeding in mediation, and conciliation require courage. The courage not to feel superior to others; the courage to face the causes of conflict, abandoning interests and plans for hegemony; the courage to overcome the category of the enemy, to become builders of universal fraternity, which finds strength in diversity and unity as aspirations common to every person.

Even more courage is required to work together to face the *challenge of the last* who demand not a theoretical peace, who demand the hope of life. Building peace thus means undertaking and sustaining processes of development to eliminate poverty, to defeat hunger, to guarantee health and care, to safeguard the common home, to promote fundamental rights and to overcome discrimination determined by human mobility. Only then will peace become a synonym for dignity for every one of our brothers and sisters.

I invoke every grace of God on you and your work, and I ask you not to forget to pray for me. And if anyone does not pray, because they do not know how or cannot, at least please send me good waves, which I need for this job! Thank you.

Source: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2022/12/02/221202d.html>,  
2 December 2022