

## **Abstract**

Five years into his papacy, Pope Francis has proven to be conventional pontiff with regard to questions of war and peace in the sense that he, like his predecessors, has had to maneuver between his roles as head of state and “Vicar of Christ.” In the former role, the pope has foregrounded the tools of nonviolence while he, at the same time, continues to depend on the just war framework. Only in his role as leader of the Church with its eschatological vision does the pope reject all violence. For Francis, the way to abolishing war and winning peace must be guided by charity, the first among the virtues. I argue that his understanding of “fraternity” as the central theme of his World Day of Peace messages derives from the virtue of charity and is grounded in a Thomistic understanding of the virtues.

## **Pope Francis on War and Peace**

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### **Introduction**

In April 2016, the Conference on *Nonviolence and Just Peace: Contributing to the Catholic Understanding of and Commitment to Nonviolence* was held in Rome. Organized by the then Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International the conference’s participants included bishops, priests, religious sisters, theologians as well as lay nonviolence activists. The conference issued a statement which called upon the Catholic Church, instead of continuing to teach just war theory, to turn to the framework of just peace built around the precepts of Gospel nonviolence. Moreover, the statement claimed that such a shift has already been taking place in Catholic social teaching after the Second Vatican Council. This development, the conference hoped, would be advanced by Pope Francis whom it encouraged

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to put forward an encyclical on nonviolence and just peace.<sup>1</sup> Francis himself had sent a warm message that was read at the conference's opening, calling the reemphasis of nonviolence "a needed and positive contribution."<sup>2</sup> After the gathering, the Holy Father gave "very strong recognition"<sup>3</sup> to the conference's findings and chose to reflect on the topic of nonviolence himself in his 2017 message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace.<sup>4</sup> Given all of the above, one might be tempted to conclude that Francis, following up on his immediate predecessors, is willing to take a further step on the Church's ostensible trajectory of abandoning the just war framework. Upon closer investigation, however, it turns out that there is little indication that the current Magisterium has such an intention. Rather, Francis's remarks must be seen before the background of a general historical tension within the Catholic Church between Christian pacifists and advocates of the just war idea, between peace in heaven and peace on earth, between the pope's roles as "Vicar of Christ" and "sovereign authority." Any pontiff, as the leader of the *Catholic* Church, has had to maneuver between these two competing streams. As the result of this delicate balancing task modern popes have foregrounded the tools of nonviolence while, at the same time, their teaching for the temporal realm continues to depend on the just war framework.<sup>5</sup> Only in their role as leader of the Church with its eschatological vision do the popes reject all violence.

In this paper, I point out how Francis's rhetoric of nonviolence is not only a testament to the historical tension between pacifists and advocates of the just war but also to a changed

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<sup>1</sup> Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference, "An Appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence" (public statement, Rome, April 13, 2016); <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/final-statement-an-appeal-to-the-catholic-church-to-re-commit-to-the-centrality-of-gospel-nonviolence/>.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, "Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to Cardinal Peter K. A. Turkson on the Occasion of the Conference on "Nonviolence and Just Peace: Contributing to the Catholic Understanding of and Commitment to Nonviolence", (remarks, Rome, April 6, 2016); [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2016/documents/papa-francesco\\_20160406\\_messaggio-non-violenza-pace-giusta.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20160406_messaggio-non-violenza-pace-giusta.html).

<sup>3</sup> Cardinal Peter Turkson, quoted in Joshua J. McElwee, "Cardinal Turkson: 'We do not stop war by starting another war'," *National Catholic Reporter*, September 20, 2016; <https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/cardinal-turkson-we-do-not-stop-war-starting-another-war>.

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, "Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace," (message, Rome, January 1, 2017); [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20161208\\_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20161208_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html).

<sup>5</sup> I consider the line of modern popes with regard to questions of war and peace to begin with Pius IX in the nineteenth century. In particular, starting with St. John XXIII in the second half of the twentieth century, the popes have elaborated on these earlier beginnings.

role of the modern papacy with regard to the temporal sphere. I argue that modern popes have emphasized their role as spiritual leader speaking in a “prophetic” voice. However, through this tribute to the pacifist stream the popes do not alter the doctrinal status of just war thinking. What they really have done is forcefully stress the tools of nonviolence *within* the just war framework. By analyzing remarks by Pope Francis I demonstrate that the Holy Father follows the path determined by his immediate predecessors. While he thus continues to uphold the just war framework, Francis can concentrate exclusively on the virtue of nonviolence in his role as Vicar of Christ. For the Bishop of Rome, the way to abolishing war and winning peace must be guided by charity, the first among the virtues. I argue that his understanding of “fraternity” as the central theme of his World Day of Peace messages derives from the virtue of charity and is grounded in a Thomistic understanding of the virtues.

### **1. The Church and the Use of Force - Between Pacifism and Just War**

All through its history, the Church has grappled with the ethical justification of the use of force. Building on Jesus’s teachings, the first centuries of Christendom saw the dominance of pacifist thinking. While from the second century onwards a number of Christians served in the Roman military nonviolence was taken to be the general Christian standard vis-à-vis the use of force.<sup>6</sup> This deontological stance, however, came under pressure when Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine. Continuing to reject the use of force under all circumstances would have constituted an existential threat to a state built on military power. Thus, Christian rulers faced a “dilemma” as they had to find a way to “reconcile their beliefs as Christians with their responsibilities as statesmen.”<sup>7</sup> Seeking to overcome this dilemma, starting with St. Augustine in the fifth century, a Christian theory of just war evolved built around what James Turner Johnson has called a “dual theme” of permission and restraint.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ronald G. Musto, *The Catholic Peace Tradition* (New York: Peace Books, 2002), p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> Richard R. Regan, *Just War. Principles and Cases* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> James Turner Johnson, *Can Modern War Be Just?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 2.

While under certain circumstances the use of force could be justified there had to be strict limitations on conduct. The foundation of St. Augustine's argument was the demand of love of neighbor. In order to protect the innocent, the use of force could be a demand of charity.<sup>9</sup> While St. Augustine's reasoning about the ethics of war consisted of ad-hoc remarks in the Middle Ages thinking about just war matured. St. Thomas Aquinas, first and foremost, contributed to its systematization. Aquinas largely developed his theory of just war as the right of an injured state to wage war in order to heal a violation of justice and with the goal of protecting the common good.<sup>10</sup> More specifically, the "Angelic Doctor" synthesized the Christian just war idea and the Aristotelian account of virtue ethics.<sup>11</sup> The rise to dominance of just war thinking, however, did not mean that the pacifist tradition ceased to exist. On the contrary, as the U.S. Catholic bishops confirmed in a widely read pastoral letter, "throughout history there has been a shifting relation between the two streams of the tradition which always remain in tension."<sup>12</sup> From the medieval Peace and Truce of God movements to modern Pax Christi, the Church has always had powerful advocates of nonviolence. In fact, St. Thomas did not entirely abandon Gospel nonviolence either. For Aquinas, just war reasoning and Gospel nonviolence had purchase in their respective spheres, namely those of the *respublicae* and the *ecclesia*.<sup>13</sup>

## **2. The Continuing Role of Just War Doctrine**

It has been important to narrate the development of the just war until the time of Aquinas because, as Gregory M. Reichberg points out, there is no evidence that the Church has ever entirely moved away from the Scholastic foundation set by the "Angel of the Schools." The basis of the impression that the modern Magisterium has done so is that the modern popes have

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> E.B.F. Midgley, *The Natural Law Tradition and the Theory of International Relations* (London: Paul Elek, 1975), p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Darrell Cole, "Thomas Aquinas on Virtuous Warfare," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 27, no. 1 (1999), pp. 57-80; p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace," (public statement, Washington, D.C, November 17, 1993), no. B; <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/the-harvest-of-justice-is-sown-in-peace.cfm>.

<sup>13</sup> Gregory M. Reichberg, *Aquinas on War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 64-65.

emphasized their role as “minister of peace.”<sup>14</sup> Simply put, the difference is mostly one of style rather than doctrinal difference.<sup>15</sup> Historically, the pacifist tradition was part of the Church’s mission as a spiritual body while the just war doctrine applied to the Church as a sovereign state. The scriptural basis for this sort of division of labor was Jesus’s call to “Pay what belongs to Caesar – and God what belongs to God” (Mk. 12:17). St. Paul elaborated on the Lord’s remark when he declared that

Everyone is to obey the governing authorities, because there is no authority except from God and so whatever authorities exist have been appointed by God.

So anyone who disobeys an authority is rebelling against God’s ordinance; and rebels must expect to receive the condemnation they deserve.

Magistrates bring fear not to those who do good, but to those who do evil. So if you want to live with no fear of authority, live honestly and you will have its approval;

it is there to serve God for you and for your good. But if you do wrong, then you may well be afraid; because it is not for nothing that the symbol of authority is the sword: it is there to serve God, too, as his avenger, to bring retribution to wrongdoers.

You must be obedient, therefore, not only because of his retribution, but also for conscience’s sake. (Rom. 13:1-5)

As long as the Church was both a spiritual body of believers and a sovereign nation state willing to wage war it needed the just war doctrine in order to justify its own military conduct. However, in the middle of the nineteenth century Pope Pius IX triggered an evolutionary process which emphasized the nonviolent spiritual role of the Bishop of Rome. This process accelerated significantly after the loss of the papal territories in 1870 which took away much of the Church’s worldly power.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the destructiveness of modern warfare gave rise to the conviction that the conduct of war could no longer be restrained.<sup>17</sup> Unsurprisingly, as Reichberg notes, the new emphasis of the spiritual role led to a decrease of references to the traditional notion of just war in papal documents. This absence seems to have led to the impression we encountered in the statement of the 2016 Rome conference that the popes have

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<sup>14</sup> Gregory M. Reichberg, “Discontinuity in Catholic Just War Teaching? From Aquinas to the Contemporary Popes,” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 10, no. 4 (2012), pp. 1073-97; p. 1080.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1096.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1080.

<sup>17</sup> James Turner Johnson, “The Broken Tradition,” *The National Interest* 45 (1996), pp. 27-36; p. 30.

moved toward abandoning the just war framework. In actual fact the popes, due to their new role as ministers of peace, have “conflated two lines of discourse and of action” which were taken to be distinct earlier.<sup>18</sup> As we saw with Aquinas the just war had originally been framed as a duty of the sovereign in the temporal sphere. Consequently, it did not apply to the Church as spiritual body. Hence, nonviolence continued to apply to the clergy. From the time of St. Thomas’s systematization until the end of the nineteenth century both traditions existed alongside each other. Simply put, just war and Gospel nonviolence were considered to be “distinct yet compatible doctrines:” “The first related especially to the mode of action proper to the Church, constituted by supernatural bonds of faith and charity, while the second expressed the natural principles of justice and sociability that were proper to the state. In this way he [Aquinas] established a division of labor in our human response to injustice and evil.”<sup>19</sup> Reichberg argues that modern popes have blended the spiritual and temporal spheres so that their teaching as spiritual minister of peace shapes their teaching about the responsibilities of the temporal sphere, the demands of statecraft. As a result, the observer faces the challenging task of disentwining the Church’s understanding of its own role from its comprehension of the function of political leadership.<sup>20</sup>

To fully grasp this development it is worthwhile to consider one particular aspect of the concept of tradition more closely. Anthony F. Lang, building on Alasdair MacIntyre, points out how traditions rely on a telos, a particular endpoint, which those engaging the practice hope to reach.<sup>21</sup> As for Christians that endpoint is the eternal happiness of God’s kingdom, the telos of earthly just war reasoning has to be an approximation of that kingdom imagined as peace on earth. Working towards that goal may at times justify the use of lethal force as the just war doctrine acknowledges. Christians accept the “Augustinian problem,” the conviction that while we must try to establish a *tranquillitas ordinis* during our time on earth, our inherent *libido*

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<sup>18</sup> Reichberg, “Discontinuity in Catholic Just War Teaching?,” p. 1081.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 1081.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony F. Lang, “The Just War Tradition and the Question of Authority,” *Journal of Military Ethics* 8, no. 3 (2009), pp. 202-16; p. 204.

*dominandi* constantly works against us.<sup>22</sup> For example, *Gaudium et Spes* as official statement of the Second Vatican Council concluded that

Certainly, war has not been rooted out of human affairs. As long as the danger of war remains and there is no competent and sufficiently powerful authority at the international level, governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate defense once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted. State authorities and others who share public responsibility have the duty to conduct such grave matters soberly and to protect the welfare of the people entrusted to their care.<sup>23</sup>

However, affirming the necessity of force in the temporal realm must not lead to a forgetfulness about the final goal which is to overcome violence. Peace as *tranquillitas ordinis* is thus related to but distinct from the eternal peace of *shalom*. As George Weigel notes, “As an eschatological reality, *shalom* stands in judgment on the achievements of peace as political community in this world, reminding us that the task of stewarding the creation is never finished. Peace as dynamic, rightly ordered political community is an interim ethic: it offers a goal that can be realistically pursued in this world.”<sup>24</sup> That seems to be the reason why modern popes have opted to emphasize what Lang calls the prophetic use of just war. The just war tradition understood as prophecy is taken to challenge those in the temporal sphere who make decisions about war and peace. “This does not mean necessarily being a pacifist or accepting a presumption against war; rather, it means that one might approach the just war tradition as a tool for forcing policy makers to confront their understandings of justice and violence, confrontations not designed to advocate particular policies but oriented toward an ongoing critical stance.”<sup>25</sup>

Importantly, emphasizing the prophetic function of just war thinking does not deny the possibility that the popes take on other roles as well. In particular, modern popes have also spoken in the political voice. In this mode, the tradition is used as a guide to policy makers.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Peacebuilding: A Practical Strategy of Hope,” *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 11, no. 1 (2014), pp. 47-66; p. 59.

<sup>23</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, no. 79.

<sup>24</sup> George Weigel, *Tranquillitas Ordinis. The Present Failure and Future Promise of American Catholic Thought on War and Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 358.

<sup>25</sup> Lang, “The Just War Tradition and the Question of Authority,” p. 206.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

For example, the contemporary emphasis on the tools of nonviolent peacebuilding can be seen as engagement of the political mode of the just war tradition. Crucially, however, this novel stress on the means of nonviolence as expressed in the framework of just peace, at least in the popes' interpretation, does not rule out the use of force. Put differently, there is no clear-cut dichotomy between just war and just peace. Rather, the framework of just peace is a "convergence" between strict pacifism and the acceptance that lethal force can at times be justified.<sup>27</sup> The conceptualization of the just peace framework as ruling out the use of force per se would be a departure from the initial comprehension introduced by Glenn H. Stassen in the 1990s.<sup>28</sup> In fact, to depart from this original starting point and exclusively embrace the tools of nonviolence seems to have been the objective of the Rome conference. In contrast, leading contemporary Catholic just peace scholars, while foregrounding nonviolent means, do not adopt a deontological pacifist stance. As Lisa Sowle Cahill argues,

Resembling traditional pacifism, peacebuilding is nonviolent, even though practitioners do not focus on and may not agree about whether violence can ever be justified, for example, in cases of humanitarian intervention. Drawing from the common good and justice goals of just war theory, peacebuilding efforts and strategies do include a place for coercion, if not direct violence, because perpetrators must be constrained and called to account for their actions.<sup>29</sup>

Examples include Maryann Cusimano Love who develops criteria of nonviolent just peace derived from the experiences of Catholic organizations such as Caritas International. Love builds on just war thinking's inherent goal of establishing peace which, as she argues, the just war idea does not sufficiently elaborate.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Eli S. McCarthy pursues a Thomistic virtue ethics approach to just peace which asks "what kinds of people are we becoming?" through particular conduct.<sup>31</sup> Considering nonviolent peacemaking as a virtue which realizes the foremost theological virtue of love, he argues that the recognition of the virtue of

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<sup>27</sup> Cahill, "Peacebuilding: A Practical Strategy of Hope," p. 47.

<sup>28</sup> Glenn H. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking. Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> Cahill, "Peacebuilding: A Practical Strategy of Hope," p. 53.

<sup>30</sup> Maryann Cusimano Love, "Drones: Ethics and Use," (presentation, Washington, D.C., February 4, 2014); <http://www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/catholic-social-ministry-gathering/upload/drones-ethics-and-use-2014-02-04.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> Eli S. McCarthy, "The Virtue Ethic Difference in the Just War Discourse of James Turner Johnson and Catholic Social Teaching," *Political Theology* 12, no. 2 (2011), pp. 275-304.



nonviolence does not deny the fact that violence remains part of the human condition. Rather, it reaffirms that love through nonviolence is a basic component of human flourishing.<sup>32</sup> McCarthy's argument thus underlines the prophetic role taken on by contemporary popes which, for the time being, does not rule out the use of lethal force and thus does not abandon the just war.

### **3. Development Rather Than Deviation**

There are indeed several illustrations of the argument that the undeniable dominance of peace over just war rhetoric in current papal discourse is not necessarily a deviation from just war doctrine. To begin with, the uneasiness of modern pontiffs vis-à-vis the term "war" is the result of a changed perspective which results in the "paradoxical" Church teaching which both condemns and permits the use of force.<sup>33</sup> While during the day of St. Thomas "war" had an agent-centered perspective, early modernity adopted the conceptualization of war as a *state* in which opposing sides fought against each other.<sup>34</sup> Put differently, for Aquinas there were only acts of war, either just or unjust, but no condition of war in which both sides were moral equals. St. Thomas certainly considered the overall condition of war as evil because at least one side had to be unjust. The overall condition of war was both affliction (*malum poenae*) and sinful choice (*malum culpae*). However, condemning the condition of war did not contradict the claim that certain wars could be just. In a war between a just side and an unjust side, for St. Thomas, the overall condition of war was evil, but the just side was justified in its use of force. As Reichberg argues, modern popes in their strict condemnation of "war" have adopted the idea of war as general state of conflict between two or more sides.<sup>35</sup> However, with this move they did not intend to leave behind the just war framework of the Scholastics.<sup>36</sup> The modern

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<sup>32</sup> Eli S. McCarthy, "What Are Drones Doing to Us?," *America*, April 2, 2013; <https://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/what-are-drones-doing-us>.

<sup>33</sup> Lisa Sowle Cahill, "A Church for Peace? Why Just War Theory Isn't Enough," *Commonweal* 143, no. 14 (2016), pp. 9-11; p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> This idea gave rise to the legalistic idea of a "moral equality of combatants" in just war theory which followed the precepts of international law. The prime example of such a reading is Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 2006 [1977]).

<sup>35</sup> Reichberg, "Discontinuity in Catholic Just War Teaching?," p. 1083.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1085.

popes' condemnation of war is no contradiction of the just war framework. The Second Vatican Council, for example, could thus speak of "the horror and perversity of war" while, as cited above, emphasizing states' right of self-defense. Likewise, widely quoted papal outcries against "war" such as Paul VI's "never again war, never again war!,"<sup>37</sup> or St. John Paul II's "Wars should belong to the tragic past, to history; it should find no place on humanity's agenda for the future,"<sup>38</sup> do not deny the justified use of lethal force in the here and now. There is no indication that the current Magisterium has abandoned the conviction that the just side is right in using force against the unjust side if, of course, the criteria of just war doctrine have been met.

Moreover, while modern popes have deemphasized military conflict resolution and have stressed nonviolent methods of peacebuilding they have continued to justify the use of force "out of necessity" in cases when nonviolence fails.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, in this regard the pontiffs do not only acknowledge the legitimacy of justified defensive force but also types of force the Scholastics would have referred to as offensive force. For example, the modern Magisterium goes beyond the endorsement of force in defense as it accepts the use of force within the evolving concept of responsibility to protect.<sup>40</sup> For the Scholastics, defensive force was always a second use of force while first uses of force they would have classified as offensive war.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, related to adopting the novel conception of war as state, modern popes have systematically applied the so-called prudential principles of just war theory such as proportionality, last resort, and reasonable hope of success. In contrast, St. Thomas employed prudential criteria in an ad-hoc manner only, foregrounding instead the deontological criteria

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<sup>37</sup> Pope Paul VI, "Address of the Holy Father Paul VI to the United Nations Organization," (remarks, New York, October 4, 1965); [https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_spe\\_19651004\\_united-nations.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651004_united-nations.html).

<sup>38</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Homily of Pope John Paul II," (homily, Coventry, May 30, 1982); [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1982/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_19820530\\_coventry.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1982/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19820530_coventry.html).

<sup>39</sup> Drew Christiansen, "Whither the Just War," *America* 188, no. 10 (2003), pp. 7-11; p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example: Pope Benedict XVI, "Meeting with the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization," (remarks, Washington, D.C., April 18, 2008); [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20080418\\_un-visit.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080418_un-visit.html).

<sup>41</sup> Reichberg, "Discontinuity in Catholic Just War Teaching?," p. 1093.

of sovereign authority, just cause, and right intention.<sup>42</sup> The modern popes have thus started from what Johnson has called a “presumption against violence,” while, contrarily, the historical just war started from a “presumption against injustice.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, the dual theme of permission and restraint which was the starting point of just war reasoning has changed in emphasis. While the traditional just war sought to balance the two elements, modern popes have stressed the element of restraint over the element of permission.<sup>44</sup> In particular, the Second Vatican Council which called for a “new attitude”<sup>45</sup> toward war made the presumption against violence its own.<sup>46</sup> This alteration of the original just war idea has triggered considerable debate. For example, while Johnson considers this innovation unjustified,<sup>47</sup> J. Bryan Hehir welcomes the popes’ new approach as laudable novelty resulting from a changed reality of warfare.<sup>48</sup> A prototypical example of the dominance of prudential criteria can be found in St. John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris* in which he declared:

Men nowadays are becoming more and more convinced that any disputes which may arise between nations must be resolved by negotiation and agreement, and not by recourse to arms.

We acknowledge that this conviction owes its origin chiefly to the terrifying destructive force of modern weapons. It arises from fear of the ghastly and catastrophic consequences of their use. Thus, in this age which boasts of its atomic power, it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice.<sup>49</sup>

In other words, the pope argues that the destructiveness of modern weaponry makes any war necessarily fail the proportionality test and thus unjust, no matter if the other deontological just war criteria have been met or not. This argument, of course, applies particularly to nuclear weapons which is why all popes since St. John have called for the ban of the bomb although the Holy See reluctantly accepted its possession for deterrence purposes during the Cold War.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 1088.

<sup>43</sup> Johnson, “The Broken Tradition,” pp. 30-33.

<sup>44</sup> Reichberg, “Discontinuity in Catholic Just War Teaching?,” p. 1090.

<sup>45</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, no. 80.

<sup>46</sup> Kenneth Himes, “Papal Thinking about Peace Since *Pacem in Terris*: The World Day of Peace Messages, 1967-2013,” *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 11, no. 1 (2014), pp. 9-32; p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Johnson, “The Broken Tradition,” p. 33.

<sup>48</sup> J. Bryan Hehir, “In Defense of Justice,” *Commonweal* 127, no. 5 (2000), pp. 32-33; p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 1963, nos. 126-27.

<sup>50</sup> Bishop Oscar Cantú, “The Pope and the Bomb: New Nuclear Dangers and Moral Dilemmas,” (presentation, Washington, D.C., September 17, 2015); <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and->

One relevant aspect where the modern popes add to the Scholastic just war is the call for a supranational authority which should regulate the employment of offensive force understood as, in U.N. speak, “enforcement action.” Modern popes have put considerable emphasis on the United Nations as arbiter of uses of force which go beyond strict self-defense. However, this novel aspect in the popes’ just war argument is more “a case of organic development, not rupture.”<sup>51</sup> Indeed, as one prominent scholar of St. Thomas argued, the Angelic Doctor’s thought does not rule out a progressive development of international society.<sup>52</sup> As an illustration of the popes’ demand for increased supranational authority let us consider St. John Paul II’s 2000 message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace. After arguing that the use of force in cases of humanitarian intervention may be justified, the pope emphasized the role of the United Nations in such undertakings:

Clearly, when a civilian population risks being overcome by the attacks of an unjust aggressor and political efforts and non-violent defence prove to be of no avail, it is legitimate and even obligatory to take concrete measures to disarm the aggressor. These measures however must be limited in time and precise in their aims. They must be carried out in full respect of international law, guaranteed by an authority that is internationally recognized, and in any event, never left to the outcome of armed intervention alone.

The fullest and the best use must therefore be made of all the provisions of the United Nations Charter, further defining effective instruments and modes of intervention within the framework of international law. In this regard, the United Nations Organization itself must offer all its Member States an equal opportunity to be part of the decision-making process, eliminating privileges and discriminations which weaken its role and its credibility.<sup>53</sup>

As a result, against the impression created by parts of the Catholic peace tradition, the just war tradition is very much alive in the contemporary Magisterium’s reasoning about questions of war and peace. Rather than abandoning the just war framework and exclusively embracing the peace tradition, modern popes have integrated important aspects of the latter

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[action/human-life-and-dignity/war-and-peace/nuclear-weapons/upload/bishop-cantu-presentation-the-pope-and-the-bomb-2015-09-17.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/content/secretariat-of-state/en/press_releases/2015/09/20150917_pope-bomb.html).

<sup>51</sup> Reichberg, “Discontinuity in Catholic Just War Teaching?,” p. 1095.

<sup>52</sup> Midgley, *The Natural Law Tradition and the Theory of International Relations*, p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Peace on Earth to Those Whom God Loves,” (remarks, Rome, January 1, 2000); [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_08121999\\_xxxiii-world-day-for-peace.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121999_xxxiii-world-day-for-peace.html).

tradition into the just war framework. The popes do not adopt the position that the two streams cannot engage each other fruitfully.

#### **4. Pope Francis on War**

The preeminence of peace rhetoric in the modern popes' message while they, at the same time, continue to uphold the just war framework is also characteristic of Pope Francis. Embracing the pope's role as minister of peace, Francis has particularly emphasized the tools of nonviolence. Having said that, however, Francis does not hesitate to acknowledge that the use of force might at times be justified. For example, in his message to the Rome conference, he quotes from *Gaudium et Spes*.

The basic premise is that the ultimate and most deeply worthy goal of human beings and of the human community is the abolition of war. In this vein, we recall that the only explicit condemnation issued by the Second Vatican Council was against war, although the Council recognized that, since war has not been eradicated from the human condition, "governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate defence once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted."<sup>54</sup>

In the same message, Francis welcomes "the renewal of the active witness of non-violence as a "weapon" to achieve peace."<sup>55</sup> It is noteworthy that the pope refers to nonviolence as *a* rather than *the* weapon. He thus does not deny the possibility that in order to achieve peace on earth imagined as *tranquillitas ordinis* the use of force can also be justifiable. Francis makes this point even more succinctly in his 2017 message for the celebration of the world day of peace which, according to Cardinal Turkson,<sup>56</sup> was partly the result of the Rome conference's deliberations: "Peacebuilding through active nonviolence is the natural and necessary complement to the Church's continuing efforts to limit the use of force by the applications of moral norms; she does so by her participation in the work of international institutions and through the competent contribution made by so many Christians to the drafting of legislation at all levels."<sup>57</sup> Nonviolent peacebuilding as a way of addressing the ongoing employment of

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<sup>54</sup> Francis, "Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to Cardinal Peter K. A. Turkson."

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Turkson, quoted in Joshua J. McElwee, "Cardinal Turkson."

<sup>57</sup> Francis, "Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace," no. 6.

force around the world, although arguably the preferred option, is a “complement;” at times, the use of force may become necessary. However, acknowledging the justifiability of force comes with the conviction that force must be duly constrained. We thus reencounter the “dual theme of permission and restraint” of just war doctrine which Francis seems to refer to when he speaks of “the Church’s continuing efforts to limit the use of force by the application of moral norms.” As a practical example, let us consider the following remarks Francis made during an inflight news conference when he addressed the use of force against the so-called Islamic State. When asked about the justifiability of U.S. airstrikes, the pope answered:

In these cases where there is unjust aggression, I can only say that it is licit to stop the unjust aggressor. I underscore the verb ‘stop’; I don’t say bomb, make war – stop him. The means by which he may be stopped should be evaluated. To stop the unjust aggressor is licit, but we nevertheless need to remember how many times, using this excuse of stopping an unjust aggressor, the powerful nations have dominated other peoples, made a real war of conquest. A single nation cannot judge how to stop this, how to stop an unjust aggressor. After the Second World War, there arose the idea of the United Nations. That is where we should discuss: ‘Is there an unjust aggressor? It seems there is. How do we stop him?’ But only that, nothing more.<sup>58</sup>

This quote, in essence, captures the modern papal idea about the justified use of force. Building upon the Scholastics, Francis acknowledges that while the overall condition of war is evil, particular wars, like the one against ISIS, can be justified. This justification, however, comes with strict limitations. Although absent in this particular quotation, in line with the prudential just war principle of last resort, violent means should only be considered after all reasonable nonviolent tools have failed. And even when the use of force is justified, it is subject to the so-called *jus in bello* principles of proportionality and discrimination. Unsurprisingly, due to the inherently indiscriminate destructiveness of nuclear weapons, Francis has continued to call for a ban of the bomb: ““A world without nuclear weapons” is a goal shared by all nations and echoed by world leaders, as well as the aspiration of millions of men and women. The future and the survival of the human family hinges on moving beyond this ideal and ensuring that it

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<sup>58</sup> Pope Francis, quoted in Francis X. Rocca, “Pope talks airstrikes in Iraq, his health, possible US visit,” *National Catholic Reporter*, August 18, 2014; <https://www.ncronline.org/print/news/world/pope-talks-airstrikes-iraq-his-health-possible-us-visit>.

becomes a reality.”<sup>59</sup> The call for disarmament, moreover, goes beyond the most destructive of weapons: “Also with regard to conventional weapons, we need to acknowledge that easy access to the sale of arms, including those of small calibre, not only aggravates various conflicts, but also generates a widespread sense of insecurity and fear.”<sup>60</sup>

In addition, the pope emphasizes the modern development in papal thinking which foregrounds the role of international solutions over unilateral approaches. While doing this Francis, like his predecessors, supports the use of offensive force imagined as responsibility to protect. Writing to the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, the pope urged the United Nations to act in order to protect innocent people from the violence of ISIS.

... I write to you, Mr Secretary-General, and place before you the tears, the suffering and the heartfelt cries of despair of Christians and other religious minorities of the beloved land of Iraq. In renewing my urgent appeal to the international community to take action to end the humanitarian tragedy now underway, I encourage all the competent organs of the United Nations, in particular those responsible for security, peace, humanitarian law and assistance to refugees, to continue their efforts in accordance with the Preamble and relevant Articles of the United Nations Charter.

The violent attacks that are sweeping across Northern Iraq cannot but awaken the consciences of all men and women of goodwill to concrete acts of solidarity by protecting those affected or threatened by violence and assuring the necessary and urgent assistance for the many displaced people as well as their safe return to their cities and their homes. The tragic experiences of the Twentieth Century, and the most basic understanding of human dignity, compels the international community, particularly through the norms and mechanisms of international law, to do all it can to stop and to prevent further systematic violence against ethnic and religious minorities.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Pope Francis, “Message of His Holiness Pope Francis on the Occasion of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons,” (message, Rome, December 7, 2014); [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141207\\_messaggio-conferenza-vienna-nucleare.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20141207_messaggio-conferenza-vienna-nucleare.html).

<sup>60</sup> Pope Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See for the Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings,” (message, Rome, January 9, 2017); [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/january/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170109\\_corpo-diplomatico.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/january/documents/papa-francesco_20170109_corpo-diplomatico.html).

<sup>61</sup> Pope Francis, “Letter of the Holy Father to the Secretary General of the United Nations Organization Concerning the Situation in Northern Iraq,” (letter, Rome, August 9, 2014); [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140809\\_lettera-ban-ki-moon-iraq.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140809_lettera-ban-ki-moon-iraq.html).

Acknowledging the justifiability of particular wars, as we saw above, does not contradict the conviction that the overall condition of war is indeed an evil. Like his predecessors, Francis condemns the nature of war. During commemorations of the outbreak of the First World War at the Italian military memorial in Redipuglia, the pope, in powerful words, spoke out against war as a state which necessarily entails the shedding of blood of the innocent.

After experiencing the beauty of travelling throughout this region, where men and women work and raise their families, where children play and the elderly dream... I now find myself here, in this place, near this cemetery, able to say only one thing: War is madness.

Whereas God carries forward the work of creation, and we men and women are called to participate in his work, war destroys. It also ruins the most beautiful work of his hands: human beings. War ruins everything, even the bonds between brothers. War is irrational; its only plan is to bring destruction: it seeks to grow by destroying.<sup>62</sup>

Given the contemporary spread of small-scale acts of violence on a global basis such as terrorist attacks Francis, on the same occasion, made a controversial comparison when he suggested that such acts might constitute a third world war, albeit fought differently: “Even today, after the second failure of another world war, perhaps one can speak of a third war, one fought piecemeal, with crimes, massacres, destruction....”<sup>63</sup> Francis has continued to use the image of a third world war on numerous occasions.<sup>64</sup> In his 2017 message for the celebration of the world day of peace Francis made clear that he has a broad understanding of what constitutes and leads to “war:”

While the last century knew the devastation of two deadly World Wars, the threat of nuclear war and a great number of other conflicts, today, sadly, we find ourselves engaged in a horrifying *world war fought piecemeal*. It is not easy to know if our world is presently more or less violent than in the past, or to know whether modern means of communications and greater mobility have made us more aware of violence, or, on the other hand, increasingly inured to it.

In any case, we know that this “piecemeal” violence, of different kinds and levels, causes great suffering: wars in different countries and continents; terrorism, organized crime and unforeseen

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<sup>62</sup> Pope Francis, “Homily of his Holiness Pope Francis,” (homily, Redipuglia, September 13, 2014); [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140913\\_omelia-sacrario-militare-redipuglia.pdf](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140913_omelia-sacrario-militare-redipuglia.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> For a fairly comprehensive list of occasions when the pope has spoken of a “third world war fought piecemeal” see: NCR Staff, “World at War is a Common View for Francis,” *National Catholic Reporter*, July 28, 2016; <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/world-war-common-view-francis>.



acts of violence; the abuses suffered by migrants and victims of human trafficking; and the devastation of the environment.<sup>65</sup>

Francis's understanding of war is broad in the sense that he goes beyond the use of force most often associated with war. In particular, he stresses the conditions that cause war in the first place, as well as the aftermath of war. That is why, for example, he has been outspoken about humanity's responsibility toward our planet<sup>66</sup> as well as the duty of affluent states to help in the current migration and refugee crisis.<sup>67</sup> Closely related but on a more general level the pope has been critical of the injustice of the contemporary world economy which, for Francis, is also a form of violence.<sup>68</sup>

## 5. St. Thomas and the Virtues

Francis's understanding of ecclesiastical peace must be appreciated before the background of Thomistic virtue ethics. As touched upon above, virtue ethics is teleological. In other words, it insists that there is a purpose to human life. This purpose, for Aristotle, is to live according to reason which leads to happiness defined as human flourishing. St. Thomas, adding the Christian aspect, holds that the human telos is happiness defined as unity with God.<sup>69</sup> In order to accomplish this telos, the individual requires the habitual practice of moral and intellectual excellences or virtues. Moral virtues constitute an excellence of character while intellectual virtues lead to a preference for truth over falsehood. Working in unison, both types of virtue form reason, the key to achieving happiness. In other words, character and perception mutually shape one another.<sup>70</sup> The virtues constitute the key to St. Thomas's moral philosophy. In order to be good, any human action must be duly ordered by the virtues. Put differently, human beings can reach their telos only if they freely choose to lead a life that is in accordance

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<sup>65</sup> Francis, "Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace," no. 2.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example: Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 2015.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example: Pope Francis, "Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 104<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2017," (remarks, Rome, August 15, 2017); [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170815\\_world-migrants-day-2018.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20170815_world-migrants-day-2018.html).

<sup>68</sup> See, for example: Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, nos. 53-60.

<sup>69</sup> Cole, "Thomas Aquinas on Virtuous Warfare," p. 59.

<sup>70</sup> McCarthy, "The Virtue Ethic Difference," p. 277.

with the virtues.<sup>71</sup> For St. Thomas, true moral action is the result of a harmoniously ordered soul which unites reason, will, and desire in pursuit of the good.<sup>72</sup> If rightly ordered, one's desires and actions will automatically advance the common good. In the *Secunda-secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*, the section known as the "treatise on the virtues," Aquinas investigates the theological (faith, hope, charity) and cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance) all of which are necessary to achieve the telos of one's life. The most basic distinction between the cardinal and theological virtues is that the former provide the necessary foundation for earthly human action while the latter orient man to his supernatural end of beatitude. Happiness, for Aquinas, is two-fold. The cardinal virtues constitute the part that is accessible to human beings according to natural principles while the supernatural happiness or beatitude can be obtained only with God's assistance. Aquinas thus distinguishes between imperfect happiness on earth and perfect happiness in heaven.<sup>73</sup> In consequence, the theological virtues "transcend" the cardinal virtues because they lead human beings to their final end which is union with God.<sup>74</sup> While this final end is the basis of all individual acts, there can also be proximate ends which indirectly only lead to the final goal. St. Thomas's theology is based on the conviction that God is both the source and the end of human existence and thus human progress becomes possible through a process of grace during which we become more like God who created mankind in his image.<sup>75</sup> Through His grace, God "exerts pressure on the human will" to choose to work toward the final goal. Crucially, in order for the inward movement by grace to succeed the human will must freely consent to this infusion which consists of the three theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ryan R. Gorman, "War and the Virtues: The Moral Basis of Thomistic Just War Theory," PhD diss., University of Dallas, Dallas, 2010, p. 24.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>73</sup> Eberhard Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity," in Stephen J. Pope, ed., *The Ethics of Aquinas*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), pp. 244-58; p. 244.

<sup>74</sup> Ryan R. Gorman, "War and the Virtues in Aquinas's Ethical Thought," *Journal of Military Ethics* 9, no. 3 (2010), pp. 245-61; p. 255.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen J. Pope, "Overview of the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas," in Stephen J. Pope, ed., *The Ethics of Aquinas*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), pp. 30-53; p. 50.

<sup>76</sup> Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity," p. 245.

Based on 1 Cor. 13:13, the virtue of charity takes precedence over the virtues of faith and hope. Through charity, people accomplish their telos; it is the only theological virtue which continues to exist in heaven.<sup>77</sup> St. Thomas describes the relationship between the human being and God as one of “friendship,” which includes the three elements of benevolence, mutuality, and communication in a shared good.<sup>78</sup> Aquinas argues that the theological virtue of charity is included in the concept of friendship and because of their love of God human beings love all that God loves and are thus each other’s fellows.<sup>79</sup> Importantly, despite their distinct acts and objects, St. Thomas considers love of God and love of neighbor “as one specifically identical virtue.” Due to the fact that charity is aimed at God who created humankind to seek his friendship the foremost virtue includes the neighbor as “its concrete object” because he or she shares the same telos.<sup>80</sup> This love of neighbor, for Aquinas, includes Jesus’s demand of love of enemies (Mt. 5:44). The enemy as human being destined toward unity with God must be loved while one must still object to his or her sin.

As far as the relationship between charity and the other virtues is concerned, St. Thomas considers charity as the “form of all the virtues.”<sup>81</sup> Charity serves as the “necessary lodestar”<sup>82</sup> of human action and is thus present in all of the other virtues.

Just as revelation does not extinguish natural reason, and grace does not destroy human freedom, so charity is effective *in* justice and *through* justice, *in* courage and *through* courage, and *in* the tactful conduct of prudence and *through* the tactful conduct of prudence. Where charity is effective as an inner form of the moral virtues, their acts to some extent shape the concrete form in which they accomplish their proper work.<sup>83</sup>

The distinction between theological and cardinal virtues is of direct relevance for papal teaching on nonviolence. It relates to the distinction between *respublicae* and *ecclesia* which was introduced by Jesus, systematized by St. Thomas vis-à-vis the legitimate use of force and arguably, in Reichberg’s terms, “blended” by the modern popes. In the same way the “Angelic

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<sup>77</sup> Pope, “Overview of the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas,” p. 38.

<sup>78</sup> ST, IIa IIae, q. 23, a. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Pope, “Overview of the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas,” p. 39.

<sup>80</sup> Schockenhoff, “The Theological Virtue of Charity,” p. 252.

<sup>81</sup> ST, IIa IIae, q. 23, a. 8.

<sup>82</sup> Gorman, “War and the Virtues,” p. 61.

<sup>83</sup> Schockenhoff, “The Theological Virtue of Charity,” p. 251.

Doctor,” following the Lord, distinguishes between the duties owed to Caesar and to God, the popes have emphasized the difference between temporal and eternal peace. Given this distinction, it is thus no contradiction that, as Himes notes, all popes since St. John XXIII have insisted that genuine peace can be established on earth.<sup>84</sup> Resorting to a just war can be a means of approaching such peace on earth which should be modelled on, but necessarily falls short of, the peace in heaven.<sup>85</sup> Complete peace as one of the noble effects of charity consists of peace both within oneself and others. Achieving both, however, is possible only in God and thus not in this world.<sup>86</sup> As pointed out above, in their prophetic role as ministers of peace, the modern popes have spoken for the *ecclesia* and have thus addressed the perfect eternal and nonviolent, rather than the imperfect temporal peace.

## 6. Pope Francis on Peace

A close reading of Francis’s messages for the celebration of the world day of peace reveals that the pope has embraced a Thomistic virtue ethics account in his prophetic role as minister of peace. While his teaching on war accepts that the use of force may, alas, be necessary in the temporal realm, he takes the vision of eternal peace built around Jesus’s example of love and nonviolence as the North Star which should guide our earthly conduct. Francis thus challenges decision-makers presiding over the use of force to eventually overcome the reliance on violent means. After all, accepting the impossibility of obtaining unity with God in our earthly lives does not contradict the necessity of working toward it. In his virtue ethics account of peace Francis thus asks ““who are we becoming, who ought we to become, and how do we get there?”” which, in turn, has an impact on the way we understand, develop and apply the just war tradition.<sup>87</sup> Francis’s use of St. Thomas is in line with a general “re-appropriation” of Thomistic

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<sup>84</sup> Himes, “Papal Thinking about Peace,” p. 21.

<sup>85</sup> Writing in this journal, Lisa Sowle Cahill has claimed that St. Thomas’s “ethics of war is an ethics of justice, not an ethics of love.” See her article “Can Christ Transform Culture? War and Peace as a Test Case,” *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 14, no. 2 (2017), pp. 259-74; p. 267. For Aquinas, however, the issue is more complex than that. In accordance with the doctrine of the unity of virtues, he would hold that while justice is the prime virtue of warfare, for the true disciple of Christ, this cardinal virtue must still respect the demands of divine charity. See James Turner Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War. A Moral and Historical Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 72.

<sup>86</sup> Schockenhoff, “The Theological Virtue of Charity,” p. 256.

<sup>87</sup> McCarthy, “The Virtue Ethic Difference,” p. 299.

virtue ethics in Catholic social teaching in the last century and particularly after the Second Vatican Council. Most particularly, the extension of the call to holiness to include the laity and the stress on the scriptural witness for Catholic ethics have made a contribution to the Church's embrace of the presumption against war as a jumping-off point of analysis. Through confirming that the call to holiness goes beyond the clergy, Vatican II extended Aquinas's conceptualization that the councils of perfection and non-soldiering would only apply to the religious.<sup>88</sup> Calling upon every person of good will to follow the councils of perfection is a testament to the "blending" of spiritual and temporal spheres Reichberg has detected.

Francis's Thomistic theology of peace shows in his use of the concept of "fraternity" as the central theme of his messages for the celebration of the World Day of Peace and which he derives from the theological virtue of charity. Francis considers fraternity as "the foundation and pathway to peace."<sup>89</sup> Fraternity is "an essential human quality" because all human beings are related to each other and the "awareness of our relatedness helps us look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother; without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace."<sup>90</sup> Importantly, true fraternal relations, require reference to God as the ultimate foundation. Through God as common Father "each person becomes a "neighbour" who cares for others."<sup>91</sup> We encounter here the idea of love of neighbor which, for St. Thomas, derives from humanity's common love of God. Francis's grounds his account in the biblical story of Adam and Eve as humanity's common parents whom God created in his image and likeness. The couple's children, Cain and Abel, had the vocation to "*be brothers*"<sup>92</sup> but Cain, through murdering Abel, rejected this vocation.<sup>93</sup> In line with Aquinas's theology according to which God through his grace infuses the theological virtues, but they can only

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>89</sup> Pope Francis, "Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace," (message, Rome, January 1, 2014); [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131208\\_messaggio-xlvi-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20131208_messaggio-xlvi-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014.html).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., no. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., no. 1.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., no. 2.

<sup>93</sup> Here, in fact, Francis adds a novel aspect to modern papal teaching. As Philip J. Rossi noted in this journal in 2014, the Cain and Abel narrative had not been employed as scriptural context for dealing with the ethics of war and peace in the last sixty years. See his article "Where is Abel thy Brother? Reframing the Theological Horizons for Catholic Theories of Just War," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 11, no. 1 (2014), pp. 229-240, p. 235.

function if they are “willed” by the individual human person, the pope argues that living fraternally depends on choice:

The story of Cain and Abel teaches that we have an inherent calling to fraternity, but also the tragic capacity to betray that calling. This is witnessed by our daily acts of selfishness, which are at the root of so many wars and so much injustice: many men and women die at the hands of their brothers and sisters who are incapable of seeing themselves as such, that is, as beings made for reciprocity, for communion and self-giving.<sup>94</sup>

Accepting God’s fatherhood as the basis of fraternity is the key toward establishing a just society and a lasting peace on earth: “It is a fatherhood, then, which effectively generates fraternity, because the love of God, once welcomed, becomes the most formidable means of transforming our lives and relationships with others, opening us to solidarity and to genuine sharing.”<sup>95</sup> So that human beings can become brothers and sisters again, Jesus reaffirmed God’s plan that humankind should love each other as they love Himself. Through his act of unselfish love on the Cross Jesus called on humankind “to regard ourselves in him as brothers and sisters, inasmuch as we are *children* of the same Father.”<sup>96</sup> In order to affirm Jesus’s act of redemption, the pope calls upon humanity to follow his fraternal example as “pathway to peace:”

All who accept the life of Christ and live in him acknowledge God as Father and give themselves completely to him, loving him above all things. The reconciled person sees in God the Father of all, and, as a consequence, is spurred on to live a life of fraternity open to all. In Christ, the other is welcomed and loved as a son or daughter of God, as a brother or sister, not as a stranger, much less as a rival or even an enemy. In God’s family, where all are sons and daughters of the same Father, and because they are grafted to Christ, *sons and daughters in the son*, there are no “disposable lives.” All men and women enjoy an equal and inviolable dignity. All are loved by God. All have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, who died on the Cross and rose for all. This is the reason why no one can remain indifferent before the lot of our brothers and sisters.<sup>97</sup>

With regard to the use of force Francis calls upon the followers of Jesus to embrace his teaching about nonviolence. The roots of a politics of nonviolence, for Francis, lies in the family from which “the joy of love spills out into the world and radiates to the whole society.”<sup>98</sup> Relying

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., no. 2.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., no. 3.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., no. 3.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., no. 3.

<sup>98</sup> Francis, “Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace,” no. 5.

on his predecessor Benedict XVI who regarded love of enemy as the “nucleus of the “Christian revolution,””<sup>99</sup> Francis asks Christians to embrace the virtuous example of Jesus.

Jesus himself lived in violent times. Yet he taught that the true battlefield, where violence and peace meet, is the human heart: for “it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come” (*Mk* 7:21). But Christ’s message in this regard offers a radically positive approach. He unfailingly preached God’s unconditional love, which welcomes and forgives. He taught his disciples to love their enemies (cf. *Mt* 5:44) and to turn the other cheek (cf. *Mt* 5:39). When he stopped her accusers from stoning the women caught in adultery (cf. *Jn* 8: 1-11), and when, on the night before he died, he told Peter to put away his sword (cf. *Mt* 26:52), Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence. He walked the path to the very end, to the cross, whereby he became our peace and put an end to hostility (cf. *Eph* 2: 14-16). Whoever accepts the Good News of Jesus is able to acknowledge the violence within and be healed by God’s mercy, becoming in turn an instrument of reconciliation. In the words of Saint Francis of Assisi: “As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that you have greater peace in your hearts.”<sup>100</sup>

Francis goes on to provide a list of contemporary exemplars of the virtue of nonviolence. He mentions St. Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Martin Luther King, Leymah Gbowee, and St. John Paul II.<sup>101</sup> As a practical “manual” for nonviolent peacemaking Francis suggests the eight Beatitudes (*Mt*. 5: 3-10).<sup>102</sup>

Furthermore, in the same way that the spirit of fraternity should guide the individual human being, Francis, referring to Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, emphasizes that fraternity should also direct the members of the “Family of Nations,” particularly the most privileged ones.<sup>103</sup> Francis makes clear how his vision of charity through fraternity applies to all spheres of life:

May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals, within in society and in international life. When victims of violence are able to resist the temptation to retaliate, they become the most credible promoters of nonviolent peacemaking. In the most local and

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<sup>99</sup> Benedict XVI, “Angelus,” (prayer, Rome, February 18, 2007); [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2007/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_ang\\_20070218.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20070218.html).

<sup>100</sup> Francis, “Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace,” no. 3.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 4.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 6.

<sup>103</sup> Francis, “Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace,” no.4.

ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms.<sup>104</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Francis puts particular emphasis on addressing the root causes of violence such as poverty which are closely connected to the contemporary state of the world economy whose morality the pope questions. The pope condemns the “culture of enslavement” which he sees as the result of a forgetfulness of humankind’s fraternal bonds. The pope laments that while slavery has officially been abolished it continues to exist in today’s world when people “are deprived of freedom and are forced to live in conditions akin to slavery.”<sup>105</sup> For Francis, what is needed is a return to “our fundamental vocation of fraternity”<sup>106</sup> which helps to overcome the various “kinds of indifference” plaguing the world today: “The first kind of indifference in human society is indifference to God, which then leads to indifference to one’s neighbour and to the environment.”<sup>107</sup> As a result, Francis sees a dual task for religious and political leaders to confront what he refers to as spiritual and social poverty:

The former are charged with transmitting those religious values which do not separate fear of God from love of neighbour. The latter are charged with guaranteeing in the public forum the right to religious freedom, while acknowledging religion’s positive and constructive contribution to the building of a civil society that sees no opposition between social belonging, sanctioned by the principle of citizenship, and the spiritual dimension of life. Government leaders are also responsible for ensuring that conditions do not exist that can serve as fertile terrain for the spread of forms of fundamentalism. This calls for suitable social policies aimed at combating poverty; such policies cannot prescind from a clear appreciation of the importance of the family as the privileged place for growth in human maturity, and from a major investment in the areas of education and culture.<sup>108</sup>

Most importantly, the pope claims that “fraternity extinguishes war.”<sup>109</sup> In order to move closer to accomplishing an end to all war Francis sees a special role for the Church.

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<sup>104</sup> Francis, “Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace,” no. 1.

<sup>105</sup> Pope Francis, “No Longer Slaves, But Brothers and Sisters,” (message, Rome, January 1, 2015), no. 3; [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141208\\_messaggio-xlvi-giornata-mondiale-pace-2015.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20141208_messaggio-xlvi-giornata-mondiale-pace-2015.html).

<sup>106</sup> Pope Francis, “Overcome Indifference and Win Peace,” (message, Rome, January 1, 2016), no. 2; [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151208\\_messaggio-xlix-giornata-mondiale-pace-2016.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20151208_messaggio-xlix-giornata-mondiale-pace-2016.html).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., no. 3.

<sup>108</sup> Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps.”

<sup>109</sup> Francis, “Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace,” no. 7.



Speaking in the prophetic voice as minister of peace Francis defines the mission of the Church as

to bring Christ's love to the defenceless victims of forgotten wars through her prayers for peace, her service to the wounded, the starving, refugees, the displaced and all those who live in fear. The Church also speaks out in order to make leaders hear the cry of pain of the suffering and to put an end to every form of hostility, abuse and the violation of fundamental human rights.

For this reason, I appeal forcefully to all those who sow violence and death by force of arms: in the person you today see simply as an enemy to be beaten, discover rather your brother or sister, and hold back your hand! Give up the way of arms and go out to meet the other in dialogue, pardon and reconciliation, in order to rebuild justice, trust, and hope around you!<sup>110</sup>

In his 2016 peace message the pope quoted from his bull of indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy when he declared that “The Church's first truth is the love of Christ. The Church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of oneself.”<sup>111</sup> For Francis, a “conversion of our hearts” is needed so that compassion, love, mercy and solidarity become “a true way of life, a rule of conduct in our relationships with one another.”<sup>112</sup> This conceptualization of the Church as mediator of God's love has led to an active Vatican peace diplomacy during Francis's papacy. As the pope put it himself:

It [peace] generates the desire for dialogue and cooperation which finds an essential instrument in diplomacy. Mercy and solidarity inspire the convinced efforts of the Holy See and the Catholic Church to avert conflicts and to accompany processes of peace, reconciliation and the search for negotiated solutions. It is heartening that some of these attempts have met with the good will of many people who, from a number of quarters, have actively and fruitfully worked for peace. I think of the efforts made in the last two years for rapprochement between Cuba and the United States. I think also of the persevering efforts made, albeit not without difficulty, to end years of conflict in Colombia.<sup>113</sup>

To summarize Francis's teaching on peace, the pope, like his predecessors, connects peace, development, and solidarity as the “overarching framework for Catholic thought on

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Pope Francis, “*Misericordiae Vultus*. Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy,” (bull, Rome, April 11, 2015), no. 12; [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html).

<sup>112</sup> Francis, “Overcome Indifference and Win Peace,” no. 5.

<sup>113</sup> Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps.”

peace in the contemporary period.”<sup>114</sup> Francis’s basis for this linkage is the concept of fraternity which should define human interaction and which derives from God’s love.

## **Conclusion**

Almost five years into his papacy it turns out that Francis has been a conventional pope in the sense that he follows the path set by his immediate predecessors. With regard to the temporal sphere, the pope has emphasized the presumption against violence adopted by modern popes and he has foregrounded the utility of nonviolent means in establishing what the Scholastics referred to as *tranquillitas ordinis*. In his role as Vicar of Christ who teaches the vision of eternal peace Francis has employed a Thomistic virtue ethics perspective. In the model of fraternity which is the central theme of his peace messages the pope has provided an interpretation of the theological virtue of charity which humankind must willingly adopt if it is to accomplish its final telos, namely unity with God. However, this nonviolent vision of beatitude entails that, although humankind should approach it, it will necessarily fail in obtaining it during its time on earth. Consequently, the use of force remains a regrettable but necessary option of earthly conduct.

Having said that, however, it cannot be denied that the rhetoric of nonviolence has been preeminent in modern papal discourse of war and peace. The reason for this change has been the popes’ “blending” of their roles as head of state and Vicar of Christ. Is thus the wish of the 2016 Rome conference that Francis will lead the Church toward the abolishment of just war theory about to come true? Given the trajectory of the popes’ delicate balancing task it seems implausible that Francis will abandon the just war doctrine as the centerpiece of Catholic teaching on war and peace. Rather, if we assess papal teaching through the tool of a spectrum which has deontological pacifism and just war as its outer limitations Church teaching is, although it has slightly moved toward the pacifist end, still very much within the confines of the just war. Given what we have heard from Francis it seems unlikely that he is willing to

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<sup>114</sup> Himes, “Papal Thinking about Peace,” p. 14.

undertake the rather dramatic push toward the pacifist side which would be necessary in order to actually shift the balance.