

1963

Encyclical Letter

**Pacem in terris**

*On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity and Liberty*

11 April 1963

**The Right to Emigrate and Immigrate** [21

25. Again, every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own State. When there are just reasons in favor of it, he must be permitted to emigrate to other countries and take up residence there.<sup>22</sup> The fact that he is a citizen of a particular State does not deprive him of membership in the human family, nor of citizenship in that universal society, the common, world-wide fellowship of men. 0]

**In Truth** [21  
1]

86. The first point to be settled is that mutual ties between States must be governed by truth. Truth calls for the elimination of every trace of racial discrimination, and the consequent recognition of the inviolable principle that all States are by nature equal in dignity.

Each of them accordingly has the right to exist, to develop, and to possess the necessary means and accept a primary responsibility for its own development. Each is also legitimately entitled to its good name and to the respect which is its due. [21  
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87. As we know from experience, men frequently differ widely in knowledge, virtue, intelligence and wealth, but that is no valid argument in favor of a system whereby those who are in a position of superiority impose their will arbitrarily on others. On the contrary, such men have a greater share in the common responsibility to help others to reach perfection by their mutual efforts. [21  
3]

88. So, too, on the international level: some nations may have attained to a superior degree of scientific, cultural and economic development. But that does not entitle them to exert unjust political domination over other nations. It means that they have to make a greater contribution to the common cause of social progress. [21  
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89. The fact is that no one can be by nature superior to his fellows, since all men are equally noble in natural dignity. And consequently there are no differences at all between political communities from the point of view of natural dignity. Each State is like a body, the members of which are human beings. And, as we know from experience, nations can be highly sensitive in matters in any way touching their dignity and honor; and with good reason. [21  
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**The Question of Propaganda** [21  
6]

90. Truth further demands an attitude of unruffled impartiality in the use of the many aids to the promotion and spread of mutual understanding between nations which modern scientific progress has made available. This does not mean that people should be prevented from drawing particular attention to the virtues of their own way of life, but it does mean the utter rejection of ways of disseminating information which violate the principles of truth and justice, and injure the reputation of another nation.<sup>55</sup>

### **The Treatment of Minorities**

[21  
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94. A special instance of this clash of interests is furnished by that political trend (which since the nineteenth century has become widespread throughout the world and has gained in strength) as a result of which men of similar ethnic background are anxious for political autonomy and unification into a single nation. For many reasons this cannot always be effected, and consequently minority peoples are often obliged to live within the territories of a nation of a different ethnic origin. This situation gives rise to serious problems.

95. It is quite clear that any attempt to check the vitality and growth of these ethnic minorities is a flagrant violation of justice; the more so if such perverse efforts are aimed at their very extinction. [21  
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96. Indeed, the best interests of justice are served by those public authorities who do all they can to improve the human conditions of the members of these minority groups, especially in what concerns their language, culture, ancient traditions, and their economic activity and enterprise.<sup>57</sup> [21  
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### **A Cautionary Note**

[22  
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97. It is worth noting, however, that these minority groups, in reaction, perhaps, to the enforced hardships of their present situation, or to historical circumstances, frequently tend to magnify unduly characteristics proper to their own people. They even rate them above those human values which are common to all mankind, as though the good of the entire human family should subserve the interests of their own particular groups. A more reasonable attitude for such people to adopt would be to recognize the advantages, too, which accrue to them from their own special situation. They should realize that their constant association with a people steeped in a different civilization from their own has no small part to play in the development of their own particular genius and spirit. Little by little they can absorb into their very being those virtues which characterize the other nation. But for this to happen these minority groups must enter into some kind of association with the people in whose midst they are living, and learn to share their customs and way of life. It will never happen if they sow seeds of disaffection which can only produce a harvest of evils, stifling the political development of nations.

### **The Proper Balance Between Population, Land and Capital**

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101. As everyone is well aware, there are some countries where there is an imbalance between the amount of arable land and the number of inhabitants; others where there is an imbalance between the richness of the resources and the instruments of agriculture available. It is imperative, therefore, that nations enter into collaboration with each other,

and facilitate the circulation of goods, capital and manpower.<sup>58</sup>

102. We advocate in such cases the policy of bringing the work to the workers, wherever possible, rather than bringing workers to the scene of the work. In this way many people will be afforded an opportunity of increasing their resources without being exposed to the painful necessity of uprooting themselves from their own homes, settling in a strange environment, and forming new social contacts. [22 2]

### **The Problem of Political Refugees**

[22 3]

103. The deep feelings of paternal love for all mankind which God has implanted in Our heart makes it impossible for us to view without bitter anguish of spirit the plight of those who for political reasons have been exiled from their own homelands. There are great numbers of such refugees at the present time, and many are the sufferings-the incredible sufferings-to which they are constantly exposed.

104. Here surely is our proof that, in defining the scope of a just freedom within which individual citizens may live lives worthy of their human dignity, the rulers of some nations have been far too restrictive. Sometimes in States of this kind the very right to freedom is called in question, and even flatly denied. We have here a complete reversal of the right order of society, for the whole *raison d'être* of public authority is to safeguard the interests of the community. Its sovereign duty is to recognize the noble realm of freedom and protect its rights. [22 4]

### **The Refugee's Rights**

[22 5]

105. For this reason, it is not irrelevant to draw the attention of the world to the fact that these refugees are persons and all their rights as persons must be recognized. Refugees cannot lose these rights simply because they are deprived of citizenship of their own States.

106. And among man's personal rights we must include his right to enter a country in which he hopes to be able to provide more fittingly for himself and his dependents. It is therefore the duty of State officials to accept such immigrants and-so far as the good of their own community, rightly understood, permits-to further the aims of those who may wish to become members of a new society. [22 6]

### **Commendable Efforts**

[22 7]

107. We therefore take this opportunity of giving Our public approval and commendation to every undertaking, founded on the principles of human solidarity or of Christian charity, which aims at relieving the distress of those who are compelled to emigrate from their own country to another.

108. And we must indeed single out for the praise of all right-minded men those international agencies which devote all their energies to this most important work. [22 8]

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Pius XII's broadcast message, Christmas 1952, AAS 45 (1953)36-46

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Pius XII's broadcast message, Christmas 1940, AAS 33 (1941) 5-14

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Pius XII's broadcast message, Christmas 1941, AAS 34 (1942) 10-21

<sup>58</sup> Cf. John XIII's encyclical letter Mater et Magistra, AAS 53 (1961) 439.

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Source: Excerpts from the Encyclical “Pacem in Terris” (John XXIII). Available from Vatican’s website:[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jxxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jxxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html).

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