



DICASTERY FOR EVANGELIZATION

SECTION FOR FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS
REGARDING EVANGELIZATION IN THE WORLD

MESSAGE

45th WORLD TOURISM DAY

“Tourism and peace”

September 27, 2024

“Tourism and Peace”, it is with these two words that the United Nations World Tourism Organization plans to celebrate the traditional World Day of Tourism this year on September 27th. In a period as troubled as our own, no better choice of theme could be made to offer those who are travelling an opportunity to pause for reflection and reflect on their personal commitment. Cultural exchange between peoples of different nationalities, which can be experienced in a special way through tourism, can also be transformed into a concrete commitment to peace.

Where there are outbreaks of war it is clear that tourism suffers, because even basic security is lacking. The resulting lack of tourists creates further poverty among the host population who experience a drop in the income they need to live with due dignity. War brings with it a series of consequences which we are often not fully aware of, but which have a major impact on people's lives. Where there is violence and war everyone is affected, without exception.

The Dicastery for Evangelization, which is responsible for religious tourism, in responding to the theme, aims to offer its own contribution so that the message of peace may reach those who work in the tourism sector, so as to help establish through them a chain of genuine peacemakers. What emerges, first of all, is the great pastoral ministry carried out by many priests and lay people who dedicate their lives to making tourism and pilgrimages effective and fruitful. A word of gratitude must go to all of them. We understand the difficulties that arise in this sector from the restrictions sometimes imposed due to the lack of security, yet despite this, they are invited to open up new options, keeping alive the possibility that pilgrimages will soon be able to be resumed in the countries

that traditionally preserve the richness of our faith and history.

The desire to travel which millions of tourists experience can easily be combined with a commitment to brotherhood, so as to create a network of "messengers of peace" who speak to the whole world calling for an end to wars and the reopening of areas of history, culture and faith. The path of beauty that characterizes these destinations cannot, and must not, be obscured by the ugliness of destruction and the piles of rubble that replace sites which previous generations had built as markers of peace and sharing.

The beauty of the earth's landscapes has the power to make us feel truly alive and restore our joy in living. Tourism can also have a significant impact on rebuilding interpersonal relationships – something which we all long for.

In a period like ours, marked by the massive presence of technology which can limit direct interpersonal relationships between individuals, it is good that a renewed commitment to a culture of encounter, so strongly supported by Pope Francis, should be nourished and supported. It needs to be placed at the center of our pastoral commitment in tourism.

Personal encounter is a tool for dialogue and mutual knowledge; it is a source of respect and recognition of the dignity of others; it is an indispensable requirement for building lasting bonds. Religious tourism cannot ignore this insight and is called upon to be a credible promoter of these links. May the call for prayer and peace in the world, and at the same time for healing in interpersonal relationships never be lacking in our lives. Both are profoundly united and are the premise for true lasting peace. It is an illusion to think that war is only an event that affects some nations. Peace begins when charity, which forges respect for others, and a true sense of our common human fraternity, is firmly established in everyone's heart. Being peacebuilders is not only possible but is asked of all who undertake a journey.

Pope Francis in the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti* urges us to live an "adequate and authentic openness to the world... with the ability to open up to our neighbors, in a family of nations" (n. 151). This is a resolution to include in our luggage when we leave to enjoy a well-deserved break or to find rest to contemplate the beauty of creation.

This year will be characterized by the beginning of the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025. On 24 December, the Pope will open the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican, allowing millions of pilgrims to come to the city of Rome and obtain the Jubilee indulgence. In the Bull of Indiction, *Spes non confundit*, Pope Francis wrote: "Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring." (n. 1). This is something that is very familiar to anyone who sets off on a journey, because the hope of experiencing moments of serenity and joy is a desire that cannot be suppressed.

Tourism, when it is characterized by hope, can also become a concrete and tangible sign for building peace. Pope Francis expresses this when he writes: "Heedless of the horrors of the past,

humanity is confronting yet another ordeal, as many peoples are prey to brutality and violence. What does the future hold for those peoples, who have already endured so much? How is it possible that their desperate plea for help is not motivating world leaders to resolve the numerous regional conflicts in view of their possible consequences at the global level? Is it too much to dream that arms can fall silent and cease to rain down destruction and death? May the Jubilee remind us that those who are peacemakers will be called “children of God” (Mt 5:9). The need for peace challenges us all, and demands that concrete steps be taken. (Spes non confundit 8).

May tourism and peace – united with hope - become the key message, on this World Tourism Day of 2024, for those who work in tourism and for those who undertake journeys with a desire for serenity and harmony.

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✠ Rino Fisichella

Pro-Prefect

This translation into English is not an official document; the Italian text is the official reference.