

Introduction

Dear Friends!

Most people desire peace from the bottom of their hearts. However, tragic and continuous violations of peace between different peoples are all too clear. The task of seeking effective solutions to obtain peace is not easy. There are many obstacles.

This letter suggests some principles which may help to overcome these obstacles and at the same time, offer a foundation on which to build a more solid peace.

The authors of the Letter of Peace purposely headed the document with the word “friends”. Their intention to address all readers and advocates of the Letter of Peace as friends highlights friendship as the common denominator of all human relationships. Friendship, as you will uncover throughout the document, is the foundation on which peace may be built.

The Majority Desires Peace

The Letter of Peace is realistic when it states that most people desire peace, not all.

The majority longs for peace, however they long for it from very deep within them, from where firm determinations emanate. But peace – where justice prevails - is not accessible without the effort and contributions of all. To achieve peace it is not enough just to desire it from deep within, it must be perceived in our daily life regardless of how superficial it may seem. This will require that each and every person modify certain attitudes and behaviors, which will demand constant effort and improvement.

We will have to question how much we truly desire peace, and the type of peace we want. Many times when we talk about peace we understand it as the absence of war. We want peace therefore we mobilize to stop war. Once the war stops, many times so does our desire for peace. We have taken the first, necessary and essential step: to stop war. Yet how far are we willing to go to achieve solid, long lasting peace? It is precisely at war’s end that we may begin to build peace.

Addressed To All

The Letter of Peace is addressed to all persons. No one is exempt from working for peace. The accomplishment of a stable and dignified peace requires the contribution of all people, not just of their leaders.



Boutros Ghali¹ expressed it as follows:

“The Letter of Peace clearly shows that peace is too serious a problem to trust to heads of states. It is only through the mobilization of international public opinion that peace may truly advance in the world. Because peace, above all, is a culture that must be engraved in the heart of men”.

Obstacles Exist

People should not be invited to undertake the task of peace by concealing the difficulties involved or by promising swift and easy results. The content of the Letter of Peace is realistic. Hence, it warns us that the task of finding solutions is not an easy one and that there are many internal and external obstacles to overcome.

Internal Obstacles: We don't want things to change, for we live in developed nations, with plenty of culture and comfort that we are unwilling to relinquish. We are united in support on things that do not affect our lifestyle.

External Obstacles: Injustices, poverty, underdevelopment, and marginalization are structural obstacles that hinder the possibility for peace.

To say that human beings have a certain tendency to dominate, exploit, exclude and even destroy others is not anthropological pessimism; it is a poignant reality, a reality that stems from historical and sociological facts. Human beings are limited and dependant. Right are those who state that the human being is a being capable of wrongdoing. Man is not intrinsically bad yet he can behave unfavorably, even when he doesn't wish to. Regardless of how much good will one has one will never be perfectly just, fair or benevolent. Sometimes unwillingly and others not, man chooses evil.

Working toward peace asks of us to keep our eyes open, to be cautious, and to remain alert. It beckons us to perceive the evil that occurs personally, within the community, as well as in all scopes of life. Being conscientious makes us humbler and less prone to arrogance. It also allows us to manage differently the harm others may cause us. To accept who we truly are is a pivotal step in the edification of peace.

¹ Boutros Ghali's Speech at the presentation of The Letter of Peace Addressed to the United Nations on January 5th, 1995

Peace Doesn't Arrive Alone

Peace does not arrive on its own; peace requires effort, dedication, and work. In this life the only given is the right to exist since no one could ask us our opinion. However, peace is something we must achieve; and it requires the effort of all.

The Letter of Peace appeals to us at different levels: personal, family, ethnic, national, and international. What then implies or supposes that each of these levels desires peace? It is the task of all to reflect on this and to be conscientious of how far we will be willing to contribute to this cause. The Letter of Peace is precisely a contributing factor to this reflection that we are all asked to experience.

Peace is a difficult and complex task that requires much voluntary energy on everyone's part. We can't allow ourselves to be naïve or vulnerable of deceit. The Greek word, "Eirenepoiói" has the following definitions:

Peaceful: People who are peaceful are those who never provoke any type of conflict and never engage in acts of destructive violence.

Pacifist: A person who never provokes conflicts and tries to resolve peacefully any conflicts that may occur.

Builders of Peace: Those who create the necessary conditions to prevent conflicts from arising.

Societies need pacifist agents so they may resolve inherent conflicts to the person with mature and harmonious attitudes.

Be Realistic. Peace Begins With One

Peace emerges from the inside to the outside; it begins within the individual and so reaches society. That is why the Letter of Peace mentions the importance of peace among the different countries of the world, because to have peace we must first achieve peace within our person, our family, and our friends and so on. Furthermore, when peace is lacking among countries and there are wars innumerable innocent victims and major ill fated consequences of the future are provoked. That is why this document hopes to aid in the achievement of personal and interpersonal peace across the board.

Peace does not come from the outside in as an odd element. We are the peace, for within people lies the origin of peace.

The Letter of Peace states its objectives in a sincere and realistic manner: the document does not achieve peace on its own. It simply states that it wishes to point out a few principles and offer some basis to aid in the achievement of peace. From that point on, it is everyone's task to overcome obstacles, and contribute to the shaping of peace.

Although people have worked for peace always, during every era new obstacles arise and oppose its attainment. In fact, due to the continuous attacks against peace, it is continuously cracking and crumbling. That is why we must search for solid foundations on which to construct peace.