

MAGNIFICENT HUMANITY (MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS)
POPE LEO'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH
CHAPTER FIVE. NUMBERS: 204 – 228

In Chapter 5, Pope Leo takes an unusual step in that he reverses a teaching of the Church which St. Augustine developed more than 1,600 years ago. He writes that the **Church no longer believes in a “just war theory”** because it has all too often been used to justify any kind of war. The footnote on page 168 quotes from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which explains that this “just war theory” makes it “easy to fall into an overly broad interpretation of this potential right. In this way, some would also wrongly justify even ‘preventive’ attacks or acts of war that can hardly avoid entailing ‘**evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated**’.” Pope Leo also goes on to explain that “When a culture normalizes and justifies conflict, a dangerous pathway opens up, in that what seems unthinkable today may become acceptable tomorrow in the name of utility or security....(also) some leaders may consider armed conflict as an effective way of diverting attention from domestic problems and a cynical tool for managing difficulties.” (No. 208, p.178) When Pope Francis visited the largest military cemetery in Italy some years ago he commented that “the Third World War is being fought piecemeal” and there is certainly evidence to support that view. There is war throughout the Middle East, in Ukraine, Sudan, Myanmar, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo and more silent wars in many other countries. **Cyberspace too has become a battleground.** “Cyberattacks, data manipulation and campaigns of influence, orchestrated with the help of AI, can destabilize entire countries even before open armed conflict erupts.” (No.225, p.189) It is important to recognise the reality of our times but we, who believe in the grace of God and the innate goodness of the human person, know that this reality can be changed. “Even in the darkest nights, the **LORD raises up men and women who refuse to give up**, who persevere in doing good, who protect the vulnerable and open pathways to reconciliation....the oft-forgotten peacemakers, show us that grace does not **magically eliminate conflict**, but instead it inspires active resistance to evil and an astonishing creativity in doing good. Christians see the darkness and acknowledge it for what it is, yet they do not merely gaze upon it passively, for they know the light and understand that the darkness has not overcome it (Jn.1:5).” (No.211, p.179/180) Pope Leo suggests five ways to bring about peace. Say no to words of war and prejudice but instead say words of comfort and support, seek justice for everyone; undertake the task of seeing the perspective of victims; and do not choose facts selectively or distort them. Speaking directly to those who have the honour and duty of government Pope Leo reiterates the words he spoke at the start of his Pontificate, “The peoples of our world desire peace, and to their leaders I appeal with all my heart: Let us meet, let us talk, let us negotiate! War is never inevitable.

Weapons can and must be silenced, for they do not resolve problems but only increase them. Those who make history are the peacemakers, not those who sow seeds of suffering....peace primarily comes from God, **God who loves us all, unconditionally....**Let us never tire of praying for peace and of committing ourselves to achieving it in our relationships and in society.” (Nos.222/228, pgs.187,191)