



MINES TO VINES: PLANTING THE ROOTS OF PEACE

Reflections of Mater et Magistra

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Your Eminence, Your Excellencies, Archbishops, Bishops, Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,

It is an honor to be graciously invited by His Eminence Cardinal Peter K. Turkson, President of The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* hosted among this international audience.

In the context of this theme, *Mater et Magistra*, our worldwide efforts through Roots of Peace to transform minefields into bountiful vineyards through our *MINES TO VINES* initiative states:

It is not enough to merely formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And, this is particularly true of the Church's social doctrine, the LIGHT of which is TRUTH, JUSTICE its objective and LOVE its driving force. By replacing the scourge of landmines with bountiful agricultural crops, we are literally transforming 'seeds of terror' into 'seeds of hope.'

As a devoted wife, mother of four and teacher (CEO of Roots of Peace), I strive to incorporate this foundation into my everyday living. Mother and Teacher of all nations—such is the Catholic Church in the mind of her Founder, Jesus Christ; to hold the world in an embrace of love, that men and women, in every age, should find in her their own completeness in a higher order of living, and their ultimate salvation. She is “the pillar and bulwark of the truth”. (Tim 3:15)

To her was entrusted by her holy Founder the twofold task of giving life to her children and of teaching them and guiding them—both as individuals and as nations—with maternal care. Great is their dignity, a dignity which she has always guarded most zealously and held in the highest esteem.

Trust in the Lord with all Thy heart and lead not unto Thy own understanding. In all Thy ways, trust in Him, and He shall direct Thy path. (Proverbs 3-5). This path has led me to walk the minefields of the world and give birth to a non-profit organization named Roots of Peace. With a simple toast from the living room of our family home in Marin County, California, with a prayer 'May the world go from MINES TO VINES'—a vision was turned into reality. The epiphany of transforming minefields into vineyards, killing fields into bountiful fields, blood into wine poured through my mind as I lifted my glass to a distinguished audience--silenced by these words.

Today, the dignity to walk the earth in safety is violated in a world where there are an estimated 70 million landmines silently poised in 70 countries. Whether the boot of a soldier or the sandal of a child, landmines often missed their intended victim. And, the seeds of hatred in both the soil/soul continue to scar the land

and the people long after the guns have silenced. Landmines are cheap, indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction in slow motion—costing approximately \$3 to put in the ground and \$1000 to remove.

As a mother of four children, I could only imagine the horror of the screams of your own child who has taken a forbidden pathway. It takes only eight pounds to detonate a landmine, which is the average weight of a newborn child.

The transition from theory to practice is of its very nature difficult; and it is especially so when one tries to reduce to concrete terms a social doctrine such as that of the Church. There are several reasons why this is so; among them we can mention man's deep-rooted selfishness, the materialism in which modern society is steeped, and the difficulty of determining sometimes what precisely the demands of justice are in a given instance. Yet, there is no justice, truth or love of the land when the soils are riddled with landmines on roughly one third of the countries on our planet today.

Therefore, we have a moral obligation to cast light upon the landmine issue on behalf of those who have no voice—farmers toiling in the vineyards, children kicking soccer balls, and women drawing water from their wells. A simple misstep may cause them to be either killed or maimed. Over 10,000 women and children are killed or maimed by landmines each year. As Mothers and Teachers embodying *Mater et Magistra* we must be the voice of those who suffer each day.

The root cause of so much mistrust is the presence of ideological differences between nations. Yet, the planting of landmines holds the land hostage for years to come. Both sides speak of justice and the demands of justice, but these words frequently take on different or opposite meanings according to which side uses them. Ignoring the presence of landmines in countries such as Vietnam, where there remains an estimated 3.5 million landmines and UXO over 35 years after the war has ended is a failure to acknowledge a moral order. Furthermore, in the Holy Land, there are an estimated one million landmines on sacred sites such as the fields of Bethlehem, the Baptismal Site of Jesus, and the Jordan River Valley. The Holy Land is not *holy* when there are landmines in the ground. During this *Arab Spring*, we have a unique moment in history to yield a *Harvest of Hope* by embodying the essence of the *Mater et Magistra* – transforming ideas into reality. By removing a landmine on the banks of Israel/West Bank and planting a seed, the *harvest* will be found.

Whether we are Catholic, Jewish, Muslim or Buddhist, a seed will grow with sunlight, water and the nurturing of a human hand. A landmine is the antithesis of this earthly right. Generational wisdom reminds us that this is now the time to plant the roots of peace on earth.

The parable of the mustard seeds reminds us that the smallest of seeds may grow forth into the kingdom of heaven. For those who live in landmine affected countries, our tiny efforts to remove landmines have produced a heavenly hope for the freedom to walk their mountains and run through the wildflowers without the fear of landmines beneath their feet.

“The Kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed on the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he doesn't know how. For the earth bears fruit: first the blade, then the full grain of the ear. But, when the fruit is ripe, immediately he puts forth the sickle, because the harvest has come.” (Mark 4:26-27) The planting of a landmine cripples societies and the economic impact results in fallow land.

The Mother and Teacher re-echo those of the Psalmist of old words which never fail to raise our fainting spirits and give us courage, “I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me, for he will speak peace unto his

people.” Truth is sprung out of the earth and justice hath looked down from heaven. For the Lord will give goodness and our earth will yield her fruit. Justice shall walk before him; and shall set his steps in the way.

May we all plant the roots of peace on earth by removing deadly landmines from our soil/soul.

In the Inaugural words of His Excellency, Pope Benedict XVI, “I am but a humble servant toiling in the vineyards of The Lord.” Together, may we turn MINES TO VINES--*Mater et Magistra*.

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