

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

“If You Want Peace, Cultivate Justice”

The Role of the African Diaspora in Peacebuilding in the Light of Ecclesia in Africa

By

Mr. Ntama Bahati, Senior Policy Analyst
Africa Faith and Justice Network

A Celebration of *Ecclesia in Africa* and “Africa’s Gift to the Church”

Organized by

The African Catholic Association of the Washington Metropolitan Area

September 12, 2026

Washington, D.C.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is a great honor to be with you today as we celebrate Africa’s gift to the universal Church, commemorate the apostolic journeys of Saint John Paul II to Africa, and reflect on the enduring vision of his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*.

We are gathered as African Catholics in the diaspora: people shaped by more than one home; people who carry memories, responsibilities, wounds, hopes, cultures, and faith across borders. Many among us have left countries marked by conflict, poverty, political repression, ethnic division, institutional weakness, and economic uncertainty.

Yet we have not left behind our love for Africa. We continue to pray for Africa, send remittances, support families, build churches, fund schools, contribute to hospitals, assist communities, and advocate for peace.¹

This is a beautiful testimony. But today, I would like to invite us to go deeper.

Our theme is: “If you want peace, cultivate justice.”

¹Sonia Plaza and Dilip Ratha, eds., *Diaspora for Development in Africa* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011).

This is not merely a slogan for governments, international organizations, bishops, politicians, armed groups, or people “back home.” It is a moral command addressed to each of us: to our families, our workplaces, our parish communities, our diaspora organizations, our financial dealings, and our attitudes toward one another.

The question before us is not only: How can Africa have peace?

The question is also: Do we ourselves possess the peace we wish to give?

Because we cannot give peace if we do not cultivate peace within ourselves.

A Celebration—and a Challenge

We have much to celebrate. The Church in Africa has grown remarkably over the past century. From a comparatively small Catholic population in the early twentieth century, Africa has become one of the most dynamic centers of Catholic life in the world. The continent is now home to hundreds of millions of Catholics, growing numbers of priests, religious women and men, seminarians, catechists, missionaries, and lay leaders. Africa is no longer simply a recipient of mission. Africa is a missionary force for the universal Church.²

This growth is a gift. It is a reason for thanksgiving. It is a sign of the vitality of faith, the courage of African Christians, and the deep roots that the Gospel has taken in African soil.

Yet numerical growth alone is not the same thing as transformation.

A church may be full on Sunday and still fail to transform how people live from Monday through Saturday.³ A nation may have a large Catholic population and still suffer from corruption, ethnic violence, political intimidation, poverty, exploitation, and the destruction of human dignity.

This is a painful truth, but it must be stated honestly.

The tragic histories of Rwanda and Burundi, the continuing suffering in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, and many other crises on the continent show us that Christian identity, by itself, does not automatically create peace.⁴ It does not automatically eliminate tribalism. It does not automatically defeat corruption. It does not automatically produce just institutions. It does not automatically protect the vulnerable.

If our churches are full but our families remain divided; if our hymns are beautiful but our words wound others; if we receive Communion but cheat in business; if we call ourselves believers but continue ethnic hatred; if we praise God in church but mistreat the vulnerable at work—then something has not yet been transformed.

Our growth in numbers must become growth in conscience.

Our faith must become a spiritual revolution.

²Pew Research Center, “The Global Catholic Population,” February 13, 2013, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2013/02/13/the-global-catholic-population/>; Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, nos. 33, 38, 56. Pew estimates roughly 1 million Catholics in sub-Saharan Africa in 1910 and about 171 million in 2010.

³John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, nos. 21, 74.

⁴Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Alison Des Forges, “Leave None to Tell the Story”: *Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999); René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide* (Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 1996); Gérard Prunier, *Africa’s World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

The Vision of *Ecclesia in Africa*

In *Ecclesia in Africa*, Saint John Paul II presented one of the most powerful images for the Church on the continent: the Church as the Family of God.⁵

This image is not decorative language. It is a challenge.

A family is not only a group of people who share a name. A true family is held together by mutual responsibility, respect, care, justice, reconciliation, truth, and love.

In a healthy family, the strong do not exploit the weak. The rich do not humiliate the poor. The educated do not despise those without education. One ethnic group does not deny the dignity of another. The elderly are not abandoned. Children are not treated as burdens. Women are not dishonored. The sick are not neglected. The stranger is not seen as an enemy.

If the Church is the Family of God, then every form of tribalism, racism, corruption, exploitation, dishonesty, contempt, and exclusion is a wound in that family.

Saint John Paul II understood that evangelization cannot be separated from the defense of human dignity. The Gospel must shape personal conduct, family life, economic life, political life, and social relationships. In *Ecclesia in Africa*, the Church is called to be a prophetic voice: a voice for justice, peace, human rights, reconciliation, the poor, refugees, displaced people, and those without power.⁶

This is why the theme, “If you want peace, cultivate justice,” is so important.

Peace is not an optional project of the Church. Peace is part of evangelization. Justice is not a political distraction from the Gospel. Justice is one of the ways the Gospel becomes visible in the world.⁷

What Peace Really Means

When we hear the word “peace,” many of us immediately think of war: soldiers, guns, massacres, rebellion, displacement, military coups, armed groups, and refugees. Certainly, these are signs of the absence of peace.

But peace is more than the absence of war.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that peace “is not merely the absence of war” and that it is the fruit of justice.⁸ The Second Vatican Council, in *Gaudium et Spes*, similarly teaches that peace is not simply the absence of armed conflict. Peace is built on justice, respect for human dignity, and right relationships.⁹

The philosopher Baruch Spinoza expressed a related insight when he wrote that peace is not merely the absence of war, but a virtue and a disposition toward benevolence, confidence, and justice.¹⁰

⁵John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 63; Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in Its Social Context* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2000).

⁶John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, nos. 44, 51, 68–70.

⁷Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World* (Rome, November 30, 1971), introduction (describing action on behalf of justice as a “constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel”); Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation (December 8, 1975), nos. 29–31, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html; John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 68.

⁸*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), no. 2304.

⁹Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (December 7, 1965), no. 78, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html; John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Encyclical Letter (December 30, 1987), no. 39, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html.

¹⁰Baruch Spinoza, *A Political Treatise*, in *A Theological-Political Treatise and A Political Treatise*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), chap. 5, sec. 4, which reads in Elwes’s translation: “peace is not mere absence of war, but is a virtue that springs from force of character.”

This distinction is essential.

A country can have no active war and still not have peace.

A family can be quiet and still not have peace.

A workplace can appear orderly and still not have peace.

A church community can have beautiful liturgies and still not have peace.

Why? Because fear is not peace. Silence imposed by intimidation is not peace. A home where people do not speak because they are afraid is not peaceful. A country where citizens remain silent because they fear imprisonment or death is not peaceful. A workplace where employees are humiliated, exploited, or ignored is not peaceful.

This is what peace scholars often call negative peace: the temporary absence of open violence.¹¹

But the peace that the Gospel calls us to is positive peace: the presence of justice, truth, reconciliation, equity, dignity, trust, and human flourishing.

Positive peace means that people are safe not only from bullets, but also from hunger, discrimination, corruption, humiliation, exploitation, and despair.

Positive peace means that a child can grow up with hope.

Positive peace means that a woman can work without fear.

Positive peace means that an elderly person can receive care with dignity.

Positive peace means that a business owner can operate without extortion.

Positive peace means that a citizen can speak truth without fear of disappearance.

Positive peace means that different ethnic communities can live together without carrying hidden hatred into the next generation.

War is therefore not the only opposite of peace. The deeper opposites of peace are injustice, hatred, fear, dishonesty, domination, exclusion, and structural violence.¹²

What Justice Really Means

If peace is more than the absence of war, then justice is more than the absence of crime.

Justice is not merely a legal system. It is not merely punishment. It is not merely a rule imposed by the powerful.

In the classical tradition, justice means giving to each person what is due to them.¹³ But in the Christian understanding, justice goes deeper: it means recognizing the God-given dignity of every human person.¹⁴

The phrasing “a disposition toward benevolence, confidence, and justice” is a looser paraphrase that circulates in modern anthologies (for example, Thomas Gregor, ed., *A Natural History of Peace* [Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996]); it does not appear in Elwes’s translation of this passage.

¹¹Johan Galtung, “An Editorial,” *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 1 (1964): 1–4; Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167–91.

¹²Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research”; John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, nos. 36–37.

¹³Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), II-II, q. 58, art. 1; *Catechism*, no. 1807.

¹⁴John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 69.

Justice means that every person is treated not as an instrument, not as an obstacle, not as a source of profit, not as a member of the “wrong” ethnic group, but as a child of God.

Justice means truth in our words.

Justice means honesty in our money.

Justice means fairness in our decisions.

Justice means respect in our families.

Justice means care for the poor, the elderly, the sick, the refugee, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger.

Justice means refusing to benefit from another person’s weakness.

Justice means refusing to remain silent when others are being degraded.

Justice means recognizing that my flourishing cannot be built on the humiliation or exclusion of my neighbor.

Spinoza argued that a just society is not held together simply by fear of punishment. Rather, it is held together when people understand that cooperation, reason, fairness, and mutual respect strengthen everyone.¹⁵

The Gospel says something even more profound: we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves.¹⁶

This is why justice is necessary for peace. Where there is injustice, trust collapses. Where trust collapses, fear grows. Where fear grows, people defend themselves through violence, manipulation, ethnic loyalty, corruption, or silence. And when those habits become normal, peace disappears.¹⁷

Africa’s Lack of Peace

When we look at the African continent, we must recognize that the lack of peace is not only a military problem. It is a social, moral, economic, political, psychological, and spiritual problem.

The continent has experienced dictatorships, political repression, ethnic massacres, genocide, civil wars, displacement, corruption, resource exploitation, armed insurgencies, and the weakening of public institutions.

The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda remains one of the most devastating examples of how propaganda, ethnic hatred, state failure, fear, and organized violence can destroy a society.¹⁸ Burundi’s history of recurring ethnic violence and mass killings also shows the long-term consequences of unresolved injustice and political exclusion.¹⁹ The ongoing conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo reveals how historical trauma, regional tensions, armed groups, resource competition, weak institutions, and the proliferation of weapons can sustain suffering for generations.²⁰

¹⁵Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, chap. 5, secs. 4–6.

¹⁶Matt. 22:39; cf. Lev. 19:18.

¹⁷Eric M. Uslaner, *Corruption, Inequality, and the Rule of Law: The Bulging Pocket Makes the Easy Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁸Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*; Scott Straus, “What Is the Relationship between Hate Radio and Violence? Rethinking Rwanda’s ‘Radio Machete,’” *Politics & Society* 35, no. 4 (2007): 609–37.

¹⁹Lemarchand, *Burundi*.

²⁰Prunier, *Africa’s World War*; Séverine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993–2003: Report of the Mapping Exercise Documenting the Most Serious Violations of Human Rights and International*

But even where there is no official war, lack of peace can still be present.

It is present when public money intended for schools, hospitals, roads, and clean water is stolen.

It is present when judges cannot act independently.

It is present when police protect the powerful but demand bribes from the poor.

It is present when young people see no future except migration, militia involvement, or survival in the informal economy.

It is present when women and girls are treated as targets of violence.

It is present when people are displaced from their land.

It is present when communities cannot trust one another because of ethnic manipulation.

It is present when climate stress and competition for land and water fuel conflict between farming and pastoral communities.²¹

It is present when children grow up in refugee camps, surrounded by trauma, loss, and uncertainty.

These are all symptoms of a lack of peace.

The Economic Cost of Violence

Lack of peace is also the mother of underdevelopment.

Violence does not simply interrupt development. It destroys the foundations that make development possible: human capital, infrastructure, institutions, markets, trust, savings, education, health systems, and the confidence necessary for people to invest in the future.²²

When conflict begins, businesses close. Markets become unsafe. Roads become dangerous. Farmers cannot cultivate their land. Children leave school. Health facilities are attacked or abandoned. Families flee. Skilled workers migrate. Investors withdraw. Public resources are redirected toward weapons and emergency security rather than schools, clinics, sanitation, and productive infrastructure.

The economic destruction of conflict is not limited to buildings. It targets people.

In many contexts of genocide, dictatorship, and armed conflict, intellectuals, professionals, business owners, educators, doctors, engineers, religious leaders, traders, and community leaders are threatened, extorted, kidnapped, forced into exile, or killed.²³

This is a form of economic and social decapitation.

When a community loses its teachers, it loses knowledge.

When it loses its doctors, it loses health.

Humanitarian Law Committed within the Territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003 (Geneva: OHCHR, August 2010).

²¹International Crisis Group, "Herders against Farmers: Nigeria's Expanding Deadly Conflict," Africa Report no. 252 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 19, 2017).

²²World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011); Paul Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (Washington, DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2003); Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, Encyclical Letter (March 26, 1967), no. 76, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html.

²³Lemarchand, *Burundi*; Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

When it loses its entrepreneurs, it loses employment.

When it loses its professionals, it loses institutional capacity.

When it loses its honest leaders, it loses trust.

When it loses its businesswomen and businessmen, it loses networks of trade, savings, production, and opportunity.

In the Great Lakes region and elsewhere, armed groups do not only fight soldiers. They often prey on civilians who keep local economies alive: traders, farmers, transporters, cattle owners, small-business operators, and professionals. Extortion, kidnapping, illicit taxation, sexual violence, looting, and forced displacement become part of the economy of war.²⁴

And the recovery is slow.

A country can be damaged in months. A bridge can be destroyed in a day. A business can be looted in an hour. A family can be displaced overnight. But rebuilding trust, restoring institutions, educating a lost generation, rebuilding businesses, healing trauma, and recovering the confidence to invest can take decades. Research cited in the background material notes that many conflict-affected countries remain below their pre-war economic trajectory even decades after the fighting ends.²⁵

That is why peacebuilding is not only about signing ceasefires.

It is about protecting human dignity.

It is about securing livelihoods.

It is about restoring honest institutions.

It is about defending local businesses.

It is about educating children.

It is about healing trauma.

It is about restoring trust between communities.

It is about ensuring that wealth serves people rather than violence.

The Diaspora's Responsibility

This is where our responsibility as Catholics in the diaspora becomes urgent.

We have influence. We have education. We have networks. We have access to institutions. We have professional expertise. We have the freedom to speak in places where many of our brothers and sisters at home cannot speak freely. We send resources home. We support our families. We can advocate. We can organize. We can invest. We can mentor. We can tell the truth. We can refuse to repeat the divisions that have harmed our communities.²⁶

But first, we must ask ourselves a difficult question:

²⁴Autesserre, *Trouble with the Congo*; OHCHR, *Mapping Exercise Report*.

²⁵Valerie Cerra and Sweta Chaman Saxena, "Growth Dynamics: The Myth of Economic Recovery," *American Economic Review* 98, no. 1 (2008): 439–57; World Bank, *World Development Report 2011*.

²⁶Hazel Smith and Paul Stares, eds., *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-Makers or Peace-Wreckers?* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007); Plaza and Ratha, *Diaspora for Development*.

Are we ourselves artisans of peace?²⁷

It is easy to condemn corruption in Africa while being dishonest here.

It is easy to criticize leaders back home while mistreating people in our own homes.

It is easy to speak about justice while exploiting employees, underpaying workers, cheating in business, or manipulating family finances.

It is easy to condemn tribalism in our countries while refusing to associate with people from another ethnic group in the diaspora.

It is easy to fund a peacebuilding project in Africa while spreading gossip, resentment, suspicion, and division in our parish or association.

It is easy to talk about peace abroad while creating fear in our homes.

We cannot give a peace that we do not possess.

We cannot build justice in Africa if we practice injustice in America, Europe, Canada, or wherever God has placed us.

We cannot call for reconciliation between ethnic communities at home if we import ethnic hostility into diaspora communities.²⁸

We cannot speak against dysfunctional systems if we reproduce their habits: favoritism, dishonesty, impunity, contempt for accountability, and disregard for the vulnerable.

Peace Begins in the Family

Ecclesia in Africa calls the Church the Family of God. Therefore, the family is the first place where peace must be learned.²⁹

Our homes must become schools of peace.

We must ask ourselves:

Do we speak respectfully to our spouses?

Do our children learn forgiveness from us?

Do they see honesty in how we handle money?

Do they hear us insult other ethnic communities?

Do they witness unresolved anger, intimidation, silence, and contempt?

Do they see us apologize when we are wrong?

Do they see us treat domestic workers, relatives, and guests with dignity?

Do our homes reflect the Gospel we profess in church?

²⁷Matt. 5:9.

²⁸Smith and Stares, *Diasporas in Conflict*; John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, nos. 49, 63.

²⁹John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, nos. 80, 85; *Catechism*, nos. 2207, 2224.

A peaceful family is not a family without disagreement. Every family has disagreements. A peaceful family is one that learns to resolve conflict without humiliation, violence, manipulation, revenge, or permanent resentment.

Peace in the family is built through truth, patience, fidelity, forgiveness, listening, mutual respect, and shared responsibility.

If we want peaceful nations, we must raise children who understand that strength does not mean domination; that leadership does not mean corruption; that disagreement does not require hatred; and that another person's ethnic identity does not make them an enemy.

Peace in the Workplace

Peacebuilding must also enter our workplaces.

Many members of the diaspora serve in healthcare, eldercare, education, public service, business, transportation, technology, law, social work, hospitality, and many other fields.

Your workplace is not separate from your Christian witness.

If you work in a nursing home, how do you treat the elderly and vulnerable people entrusted to your care?

When you are tired, rushed, frustrated, or unsupervised, do you still protect their dignity?

Do you speak to them with patience?

Do you recognize Christ in the elderly person who is confused, dependent, sick, or unable to defend himself or herself?³⁰

If you work in a hospital, do you treat every patient with equal dignity?

If you are a manager, do you treat employees fairly?

If you are a business owner, do you pay workers honestly?³¹

If you are a public servant, do you use your position to serve or to exploit?

If you are a professional, do you tell the truth even when dishonesty would benefit you?

If you are a student, do you reject cheating and dishonesty?

If you are a caregiver, do you remember that neglect of the vulnerable is not a small matter? It is a failure of justice.

Peacebuilding happens when we refuse to dehumanize others.

It happens when we choose patience instead of contempt.

It happens when we choose fairness instead of favoritism.

It happens when we choose dignity instead of exploitation.

It happens when we choose service instead of selfishness.

³⁰*Catechism*, no. 2208; John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 43; cf. Matt. 25:40.

³¹*Catechism*, nos. 2409, 2434; John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, Encyclical Letter (September 14, 1981), no. 19, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html.

Honesty: The Foundation of Peace

Let us speak directly about honesty.

Honesty is not a minor personal virtue. It is a foundation of peace.

Corruption destroys peace because corruption destroys trust. When people cannot trust public institutions, contracts, leaders, courts, elections, police officers, employers, or even one another, they begin to live defensively. They prepare for betrayal. They depend only on their own group. They seek protection through ethnic loyalty, bribery, informal networks, or violence.

That is how a society loses peace.

The same principle applies in our personal lives.

When a husband cannot trust his wife, or a wife cannot trust her husband, peace disappears.

When children cannot trust their parents, peace disappears.

When employees cannot trust their employer, peace disappears.

When parishioners cannot trust their leaders, peace disappears.

When diaspora organizations lack transparency, peace disappears.

When people use community funds without accountability, peace disappears.

When we make promises we do not intend to keep, peace disappears.³²

Honesty is therefore an act of peacebuilding.

To tell the truth when it costs us something is peacebuilding.

To return what does not belong to us is peacebuilding.

To refuse fraud is peacebuilding.

To admit our mistakes is peacebuilding.

To use community resources transparently is peacebuilding.

To conduct business fairly is peacebuilding.

To reject gossip and false accusations is peacebuilding.³³

To speak truthfully about another ethnic group is peacebuilding.

Honesty creates trust. Trust creates cooperation. Cooperation creates community. And community makes peace possible.

Confronting Inherited Divisions

Brothers and sisters, we must also be honest about the baggage we carry from our countries of origin.

³²*Catechism*, no. 2410.

³³*Catechism*, no. 2477.

Many of us inherited ethnic wounds, political fears, habits of suspicion, favoritism, and narratives of victimhood from societies damaged by bad governance, conflict, colonial legacies, exclusion, and violence.³⁴

These wounds are real. They should not be minimized.

But we must not allow them to control us.

We must not bring the conflicts of our countries into our parishes, our homes, our associations, and our children's lives.

We must not use ethnic identity as a test of who deserves friendship, leadership, employment, marriage, or dignity.

We must not create diaspora associations that mirror the divisions we condemn in Africa.

We must not teach our children to inherit our hatred.

We must not allow political disagreements from home to turn fellow Christians into enemies.

We must reject the idea that accountability is an attack, that truth is betrayal, or that favoritism is loyalty.

The Church as the Family of God must be stronger than tribalism.

The Cross of Christ must be stronger than ethnic hatred.³⁵

The Gospel must be stronger than political manipulation.

Our baptismal identity must be stronger than every identity that seeks to divide us.³⁶

A Call to Become Artisans of Peace

The task before us is demanding, but it is not impossible.

We are not being asked merely to donate money, attend conferences, or make speeches. Those things can be valuable. But the deeper call is to become artisans of peace.

An artisan works patiently. An artisan pays attention to detail. An artisan understands that beautiful work is made slowly, carefully, faithfully, and skillfully.

Peace is built in the same way.

It is built one honest decision at a time.

One apology at a time.

One act of forgiveness at a time.

One fair business transaction at a time.

One child taught to reject hatred at a time.

One elderly person treated with dignity at a time.

One ethnic prejudice confronted at a time.

³⁴John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 49; Smith and Stares, *Diasporas in Conflict*.

³⁵Eph. 2:14–16; see also John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 79.

³⁶Gal. 3:27–28; *Catechism*, no. 1267.

One transparent community project at a time.

One family reconciled at a time.

One workplace made more humane at a time.

One courageous truth spoken at a time.

This is the spiritual revolution to which we are called.

Saint John Paul II did not give Africa *Ecclesia in Africa* merely so that we could admire it as a historic document. He gave it as a missionary mandate. The Synod may have ended, but the work of transformation had only begun.³⁷

Today, that work continues in us.

Let us celebrate Africa's growing Church—but let us also ask whether we are growing in justice.

Let us celebrate our parishes—but let us also ask whether our families are places of peace.

Let us celebrate our diaspora achievements—but let us also ask whether we treat the vulnerable with dignity.

Let us support development projects—but let us also reject dishonesty, corruption, ethnic prejudice, and exploitation in our own lives.

Let us pray for peace in Africa—but let us first become people of peace.

For if we want peace, we must cultivate justice.

And if we want justice, we must begin with ourselves.

May the Lord make us artisans of peace in our homes, our workplaces, our parishes, our diaspora communities, and our beloved African continent.

Thank you, and may God bless you.

³⁷John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 86; for the later development of these themes, see Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (Ouidah, Benin, November 19, 2011), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html.

Bibliography

Church and Magisterial Documents

Benedict XVI. *Africae Munus*. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. Ouidah, Benin, November 19, 2011. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html.

Catechism of the Catholic Church. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000.

John Paul II. “Apostolic Journey to Kenya: Eucharistic Concelebration at Uhuru Park in Nairobi.” Homily, Nairobi, September 19, 1995. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19950919_nairobi.html.

———. *Ecclesia in Africa*. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa and Its Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000. Yaoundé, September 14, 1995. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html.

———. *Laborem Exercens*. Encyclical Letter on Human Work. September 14, 1981. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html.

———. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. Encyclical Letter on the Twentieth Anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*. December 30, 1987. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html.

Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World. December 8, 1975. https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

———. “If You Want Peace, Work for Justice.” Message for the Fifth World Day of Peace, December 8, 1971. https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_p-vi_mes_19711208_v-world-day-for-peace.html.

———. *Populorum Progressio*. Encyclical Letter on the Development of Peoples. March 26, 1967. https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html.

Second Vatican Council. *Gaudium et Spes*. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. December 7, 1965. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

Synod of Bishops. *Justice in the World*. Rome, November 30, 1971. Also in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 63 (1971): 923–42.

Books, Articles, and Reports

Agenzia Fides. “First Official Document Promulgated outside the Vatican: John Paul II Signed the Post Synodal Exhortation during His 11th Pastoral Visit to Africa.” Fides News Service. Accessed

- September 24, 2026.
http://www.fides.org/en/news/4558-First_official_document_promulgated_outside_the_Vatican_John_Paul_II_signed_the_post_synodal_exhortation_during_his_11th_pastoral_visit_to_Africa.
- . “Vatican—Lights and Shadows of Africa Emerging from Special Synod for Africa Called by Pope John Paul II: Apostolic Exhortation ‘Ecclesia in Africa.’” Fides News Service. Accessed September 24, 2026.
https://www.fides.org/en/news/4556-VATICAN_LIGHTS_AND_SHADOWS_OF_AFRICA_EMERGING_FROM_SPECIAL_SYNOD_FOR_AFRICA_CALLED_BY_POPE_JOHN_PAUL_II_Apostolic_Exhortation_Ecclesia_in_Africa.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiae*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947.
- Autesserre, Séverine. *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Cerra, Valerie, and Sweta Chaman Saxena. “Growth Dynamics: The Myth of Economic Recovery.” *American Economic Review* 98, no. 1 (2008): 439–57.
- Collier, Paul, V. L. Elliott, Håvard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis. *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*. Washington, DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Des Forges, Alison. *“Leave None to Tell the Story”: Genocide in Rwanda*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999.
- Galtung, Johan. “An Editorial.” *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 1 (1964): 1–4.
- . “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research.” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167–91.
- Gregor, Thomas, ed. *A Natural History of Peace*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996.
- International Crisis Group. “Herders against Farmers: Nigeria’s Expanding Deadly Conflict.” Africa Report no. 252. Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 19, 2017.
- Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Lemarchand, René. *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Longman, Timothy. *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993–2003: Report of the Mapping Exercise Documenting the Most Serious Violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Committed within the Territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003*. Geneva: OHCHR, August 2010.
- Orobator, Agbonkhianmeghe E. *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in Its Social Context*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2000.
- Pew Research Center. “The Global Catholic Population.” February 13, 2013.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2013/02/13/the-global-catholic-population/>.
- Plaza, Sonia, and Dilip Ratha, eds. *Diaspora for Development in Africa*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011.

- Prunier, Gérard. *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Smith, Hazel, and Paul Stares, eds. *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-Makers or Peace-Wreckers?* Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007.
- Spinoza, Baruch. *A Theological-Political Treatise and A Political Treatise*. Translated by R. H. M. Elwes. New York: Dover, 1951.
- Straus, Scott. "What Is the Relationship between Hate Radio and Violence? Rethinking Rwanda's 'Radio Machete.'" *Politics & Society* 35, no. 4 (2007): 609–37.
- Uslaner, Eric M. *Corruption, Inequality, and the Rule of Law: The Bulging Pocket Makes the Easy Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- World Bank. *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011.