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My League Sisters, as we end 2020 and look *forward* to what *can be*, not backward as we long for what *was*, I offer the following from Pope Francis as a focus for moving forward. This is a summary of his message for the *54th World Day of Peace* celebrated on January 1st. His reflections focus on creating a *CULTURE OF CARE AS A PATH TO PEACE*. As you read his key points, you can see these are more than enough for us to spend an entire year to BEGIN to bring them to life. I invite you to take one of these key points and bring it to your council meetings during the year and expand on it whether it be through discussion among your members, and/or through adopting one action that relates to each point. Let us work together to *CREATE A CULTURE OF CARE AS A PATH TO PEACE.*

1. ***God the Creator, the source of our human vocation to care:*** everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationship with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others”.[[4]](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20201208_messaggio-54giornatamondiale-pace2021.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn4%22%20%5Co%20%22)
2. ***God the Creator, a model of care:*** Care for creation was at the heart of the institution of the *Sabbath*, which, in addition to ordering divine worship, aimed at the restoration of the social order and concern for the poor (cf. *Gen* 1:1-3; *Lev* 25:4). The celebration of the Jubilee every seventh sabbatical year provided a respite for the land, for slaves and for those in debt.  In that year of grace, those in greatest need were cared for and given a new chance in life, so that there would be no poor among the people (cf. *Deut* 15:4).

In the prophetic tradition, the biblical understanding of justice found its highest expression in the way a community treats its weakest members. Amos (cf. 2:6-8; 8) and Isaiah (cf. 58), in particular, insistently demand justice for the poor, who, in their vulnerability and powerlessness, cry out and are heard by God, who watches over them (cf. *Ps* 34:7; 113:7-8).

1. ***Care in the ministry of Jesus:***In his compassion, Christ drew near to the sick in body and spirit, and brought them healing; he pardoned sinners and gave them new life. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep (cf. *Jn* 10:11-18; *Ezek* 34:1-31). He is the Good Samaritan who stoops to help the injured man, binds his wounds and cares for him (cf. *Lk* 10:30-37).
2. ***A culture of care in the life of Jesus’ followers****:* The spiritual and corporal works of mercy were at the heart of charity as practised by the early Church.
3. ***The principles of the Church’s social doctrine as the basis for a culture of care:*** commitment to promoting the dignity of each human person, solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, the pursuit of the common good and concern for protection of creation.
4. ***A compass pointing to a common path:***This will enable us to esteem the value and dignity of every person, to act together in solidarity for the common good, and to bring relief to those suffering from poverty, disease, slavery, armed conflicts, and discrimination. I ask everyone to take this compass in hand and to become a prophetic witness of the culture of care, working to overcome the many existing social inequalities. This can only come about through a widespread and meaningful involvement on the part of women, in the family and in every social, political and institutional sphere.
5. ***Educating for a culture of care:***religious *leaders* in particular, can play an indispensable role in handing on to their followers, and to society at large, the values of solidarity, respect for differences, and concern for our brothers and sisters in need.)
6. ***There can be no peace without a culture of care****:* The *culture of care* thus calls for a common, supportive and inclusive commitment to protecting and promoting the dignity and good of all, a willingness to show care and compassion, to work for reconciliation and healing, and to advance mutual respect and acceptance. As such, it represents a privileged path to peace. “In many parts of the world, there is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds. There is also a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter”.[[25]](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20201208_messaggio-54giornatamondiale-pace2021.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn25%22%20%5Co%20%22))

 *From the Vatican, 8 December 2020*

