



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

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To Whom It May Concern

I am writing in support of the remarkable initiative of the Wanchena family, and their associates, especially in the light of the much-desired possible future developments of *Pacem in Terris*.

I was a resident at *Pacem in Terris* in early May of 2002. After an exhausting academic year, I was greatly blessed to spend time in the surroundings and the profound focus upon what really matters in this outstanding center for Christian prayer and reflection. At the moment, *Pacem* is unique in its offering the possibilities of silence and reflection so that those who frequent this facility may come to a clearer and deeper appreciation of the reality of the divine in their lives. All believers, Catholic and Protestant, have an ever-deepening need for such a facility as the pressures of daily life and an ethos of achievement impinge so strongly.

The ecumenical nature of the center is quite surprising. Deeply rooted in the Franciscan tradition, and reaching further back to the experience of the founders of a more contemplative experience, already present in the desert fathers of the third and fourth Christian centuries, *Pacem* touches something that is central to Christianity, not only Catholicism. The easy interaction of Catholic and Protestant within this facility generates a level of ecumenical prayer and reflection that is far more important than the theoretical discussions that often highlight our ecumenical activity. Such discussions are necessary, but all too often they are not accompanied by a shared journey into the mystery of God, and the Christ who made God known. *Pacem* attempts to provide that possibility, and merits further support that it may expand this important ecumenical activity. At the moment, the ecumenical service of the center is located in the co-presence of people from many faiths, praying and spending time together in the one sacred place. Further

development could allow the center to become a place where people united in prayer, reflection and space could naturally turn to the sharing and the evaluation of their various experiences of the Christian faith.

What must be stressed, however, is the importance of this facility within the Roman Catholic tradition. Catholic lay people, clergy and religious tend to regard the withdrawal into silence and prayer as a privilege – or even an escape – that only those who have been personally called to a “contemplative” life-style within the structures of the institutional Church should indulge. This is simply not true, as Jesus reminds us: “Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). Every human being is fundamentally contemplative, forever searching (however unconsciously) for responses to the deeper mysteries that determine our dreams, and eventually our actions. It is remarkable that *Pacem in Terris*, the initiative of a lay family deeply embedded in the Catholic tradition, has taken this message seriously and offers all who may turn to them the possibility for such an experience. In my time there I met nothing but wonder and excitement from those who had taken the risk to accept this experience. Catholics must not lose touch with the contemplative traditions that lie at the source of their tradition, in Jesus, in the earliest Church, and in the beginnings of the phenomenon of the religious life. These contemplative traditions lie at the heart of Catholicism, but are often forgotten in a “busy Church.” They must be given the chance to blossom if the Church is to maintain a healthy contact with the very reason for its existence. *Pacem in Terris* is designed to make this possible.

It is crucial that the visionary and important initiative of *Pacem* must not stop now because of lack of support. So much has been achieved, with the fine central building and its Chapel, dining room, accommodations and rooms for consultation and direction. The hermitages are well-designed, and serve their purpose superbly. However, as someone who has used the facility, and experienced its life-giving potential, I would like to lend my support to a number of further initiatives that the institution of *Pacem* could offer the Christian tradition, and especially the Catholic Church of America.

With more property and more facilities, this could become a haven for prayer, reflection, sharing and even the promotion of Catholic learning. The proximity of St Paul, Minneapolis, and St Cloud, with the fine library facilities of the University of St Thomas, the Lutheran Theological Seminary and St John’s Abbey, makes the location of *Pacem* ideal for a center of quiet prayer, reflection and research. Added to this is the remarkable resource of the second-hand bookstore at Stillwater, MN, where some of the great treasures of often-unavailable resources can be found. I dream of the possibility of a place like *Pacem* offering fellowships for scholars or a group of scholars who might join in prayer, reflection and study to further and to deepen our understanding of the Christian mystery.

I write these few words with trust in the Lord who will guide the Catholic Church in these difficult times into new initiatives that touch on the center of the mystery of the universal Christian vocation to holiness (see *Lumen Gentium* 39-42, especially paragraph 40). Prayer, silence, reflection, study, peace, community, and a sense of well-being with the Lord in the midst of all the storms are crucial. *Pacem in Terris* is such an institution. It has the potential, with further support and expansion, of providing for some of the most important needs of the Catholic and Christian Churches of the third millennium.

May it be blessed, and receive all the support it deserves. If any interested party would like to consult further with me concerning my appreciation of *Pacem in Terris*, and my understanding of its potential development, please feel free to reach me at any one of the above contact points.

In the Lord,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Francis J. Moloney S.D.B." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'F' and 'M'.

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