

## APOSTOLIC LETTER

### MOTU PROPRIO OF POPE PAUL VI

#### “IUSTITIAM ET PACEM”

Definitive structuring of the

#### PONTIFICAL COMMISSION JUSTICE AND PEACE



The promotion of justice and peace and the penetration of all spheres of human society with the light and the leaven of the Gospel have always been the object of the Church's efforts in fulfillment of the Lord's command. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council directed its attention to the hopes and possibilities the trials and difficulties peculiar to our time and threw fresh light on this duty (cf. the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 90). In response to the Council's desire, a Commission was established and given its juridical structure by our Motu Proprio *Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam* of 8 January 1967. It was set up for a five-year experimental period, since "practice and experience can suggest suitable modifications" (AAS 59, 1967, p. 28). This period was later extended by us for another five years.

During these ten years the Commission has studied carefully and put into practice the doctrine and precepts of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and other Church documents. It has rendered the good service of making the Church's voice heard in society as the herald of true justice and true peace.

However, since the questions the Commission has to deal with are very complex and are often linked with other problems, many people have asked for its functions to be more clearly defined, so that this body of the Apostolic See may be able to fulfill ever more effectively the duties entrusted to it.

In determining definitively the Commission's aims and structure, we intend to affirm plainly once again the great importance that the Church attaches to fostering and defending justice and peace.

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The members of the Commission must therefore be constantly attentive to what is happening in their field and to what people in various times and circumstances desire should happen. They must study these questions in the light of the Gospel and the Church's Magisterium. By making known the results of their reflections they are to help in giving guidance to God's people and in encouraging them to become more aware of the obligations imposed in this field by a truly Christian life.



The Commission has the following noble aims and practical principles: to carry out action-directed studies that are fitted into a pastoral evangelizing perspective; to be at the service of the Church's members and institutions, enabling them to translate into concrete commitments, valid as Christian witness, the Commission's recommendations and advice; to encourage progress and renewal while seeing in the Church's supreme authority the fundamental guideline and the guarantee of effectiveness; and to perform this work in an ecumenical perspective.

It must not be forgotten that the continuous rapid change in relations between individuals and peoples constantly gives rise to new questions and reveals new aspects of problems concerning justice, peace, the development of peoples, and human rights. The Commission needs suitable structures for dealing with this complex and changing reality.

Therefore, after long and due consideration of the whole question and having consulted experts, we decide and decree each of the following points with regard to the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace.

### I

The Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace is the Holy See's organization for examining and studying (from the point of view of doctrine, pastoral practice and the apostolate) problems connected with justice and peace, with the aim of awakening God's people to full understanding of these questions and awareness of the part they play and of the duties that fall to them in the fields of justice, the development of peoples, human advancement, peace, and human rights. The Commission is to examine what specifically Christian contribution can be made to solving these problems. It is also to encourage the members of God's people to Christian witness and appropriate action in the above fields.

**II**

To achieve these aims, the Commission shall:

1. in the first place, study in depth the social doctrine of the Church's Magisterium, spread knowledge of it by appropriate means, and endeavour to ensure that it is put into practice at all levels of society;

2. collect and synthesize studies referring to the development of peoples, peace, justice, and human rights, viewed in their cultural, moral, educational, economic, and social aspects; evaluate these studies from the theological point of view, and then see how this documentation can be used as an aid for pastoral activity and for more clearly defined involvement by Christians in the various local, national, and international situations;

3. make the results of its studies, documentation research, and reflection known to all the sectors of the Church which are concerned, and gather from these latter all useful information; for this purpose, the Commission shall in particular have regular organic contacts with the Bishops' Conferences and through them or in agreement with them provide information and every other possible aid to the bodies set up for the study of these problems (national Justice and Peace Commissions and other bodies) and working in accordance with statutes decided or approved by the Bishops' Conference;

4. be in regular contact with the Departments and other bodies of the Apostolic See involved in these problems, in order to keep them informed and remain at their disposal for assistance in drawing up appropriate action programmes; these bodies can ask the Commission for advice on all questions belonging to the field of competence of the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace; the Commission shall have regular links with the Secretariat of State or Papal Secretariat, which will give the Commission appropriate instructions;

5. In collaboration with these same bodies, place the results of its reflection at the disposal of other groups and institutions within the Church, such as the Religious Orders and Congregations and the International Catholic Organizations; it shall act in the same way with regard to groups and persons outside the Church with whom the bodies of the Apostolic See have regular links, such as the other Christian Churches and communities, the non-Christian religions, and the associations and agencies contributing to the attainment of the Commission's purpose;

8. endeavour to obtain information on cases of denial of justice, occurring in concrete situations, and to gather objective and complete information on these cases; the Commission shall express Christian solidarity with those who suffer injustice whenever the gravity of the situation or of the facts justifies it, after having come to an agreement with the Secretariat of State regarding any such declaration or initiative.

### III

The Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace is composed of Cardinals, Bishops, clerics and lay people, named by the Supreme Pontiff for a five-year period. It is under the direction of a Cardinal President, assisted by a Secretary and an Undersecretary. Clerics and lay people who are genuinely competent in the Church's social thought and activity shall likewise be appointed by the Pope as Consultors for a five-year period.

### IV

The Members take part in the General Assembly, which, unless there are special circumstances, shall take place once a year, in order to contribute by their specialized knowledge and pastoral experience to the drawing up of the general lines for the Commission's work. The Consultors shall frequently be asked for written reports on questions in which they are competent, or be called upon to take part in study groups. There will be regular meetings of the "Congressus" of the Commission, as demanded by the work to be done.

### V

The norms of the Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae* and of the *Regolamento* for the Departments of the Holy See apply to the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace, unless otherwise laid down.

We order that all that we have decreed by this *Motu Proprio* shall be regarded as established and ratified, any disposition to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on the tenth day of December in the year 1976, the fourteenth of our Pontificate.

PAULUS PP.VI