

## **FIDELITY TO THE TEACHING MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

*At the General Audience on Wednesday, December 4th, the Holy Father spoke to groups of the faithful including many delegations of religious congregations. His exhortation to fidelity to the teaching mission of the Church follows:*

*The Catholic magisterium and the teaching problems of today*

Beloved Sons and Daughters!

When we speak to you, when the duty of Our ministry obliges Us to express what We think is true and necessary for salvation ("woe is me if I did not preach the Gospel!", St. Paul admonishes: 1 Cor 9, 16), when some inner testimony gives us the exhilarating certainty of our faith (cfr. Rom. 8, 16), We are seized by a spiritual dismay, which only the duty and love of Our office enables Us to overcome. It is the fear of not being able to speak, of not being able to say what we should like to and what we ought to. We are always reminded of the groans of the prophet Jeremiah: "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak" (1, 6); and not only because of Our own incapability, but for two other reasons: firstly, because of the greatness, the profundity, the ineffableness of what should be said; secondly, because of the doubt that those listening to Us may not understand what We say.

The last-mentioned difficulty, that of making ourselves understood, is becoming more and more formidable and more problematical at the present time for those whose mission it is to announce the doctrine of faith. How to translate religious truths into understandable words? How to preserve the inviolable orthodoxy of the Christian dogma and clothe it in a language accessible to the men of our time? How to maintain vigilantly the authenticity of the message of salvation and at the same time have it accepted by the modern mentality? You know

that this didactic difficulty is creating great problems for the magisterium of the Church today, and that it is inducing some teachers of religion and not a few publicists (whose art is to make everything not only understandable, but easy and impressive), to make an effort to express religious truth clearly, happily, so that everyone may accept it and, to a certain extent, understand it.

### *Preaching, teaching, apologetics*

This effort is praiseworthy and deserving; it determines and qualifies the announcement of the revealed message, that is, preaching, teaching, apologetics, theological reflection. If the contact between God and man takes place normally through words, and not only through events, signs, charisms (cfr. 1 Cor. 2, 5), it is necessary for the words to be comprehensible somehow; they keep their transcendent depth, but, through the analogy of the terms in which they are expressed, they can be accepted, understood, reduced to the limited proportions of listeners (let us remember the scholastic saying: *quidquid recipitur per modum recipientis recipitur*; that is: what is received; is received according to the capacity of the receptacle). And this is the justification of the pedagogical art of gradualness, of exemplification, of the spoken language, and also of eloquence, or of figurative representation, applied to the communication, the transmission, the diffusion of the revealed Word.

### *The universal significance and the objective authority of the Word of God*

This effort to adapt the revealed Word of God to the understanding of the listeners, that is, the disciples of God (cfr. Jn. 6, 45), it exposed to the danger of going beyond the intention that makes it praiseworthy, and beyond the limit which keeps it faithful to the divine message: that is, to the danger of ambiguity, reticence, or distortion of the message. It may even be led into the temptation of choosing among the treasure of revealed truths the ones that are popular, leaving out the others, or into the temptation of shaping these truths in accordance with arbitrary and particular conceptions, no longer in conformity with their genuine meaning. This is a danger and a temptation to which everyone is exposed, because everyone, coming into contact with the Word of God, tries to adapt it to his own mentality, his own culture;

that is, to submit it to that free examination which takes away from this same Word of God its univocal significance and its objective authority, and ends up by depriving the community of believers of adhesion to an identical truth, to the same faith: the "one faith" (Eph. 45) disintegrates and with it that very community that is called the one, true Church. This remark would be enough to convince us that the divine plan is right in wishing the revealed Word contained in the Scriptures and in the apostolic tradition, to be protected by a vehicle of transmission, We mean a visible and permanent magisterium, authorized to guard, interpret and teach that Word.

### *The richness of our doctrinal heritage*

You understand how grave and delicate the question of our religious language is (cfr. Denz. Sch. 1500, 782, 2831, 1658; 3020, 1800; 3881, 2309 John XIII, A.A.S. 1962, 790, 792). On the one hand, it must remain scrupulously faithful to divine Thought and to that Word that gave us its original expression; on the other hand, it must obtain a hearing, and to the extent possible be understood by those to whom it is addressed. It is not surprising if religious teaching seems difficult in itself, both because of its content and because of the genuine expression that communicates it. Nor is it amazing if that effort at adaptation, about which We were speaking, or of "aggiornamento" as is said now, may sometimes be imperfect both as regards the doctrine to be set forth, and as regards the listeners by whom it is to be accepted. Nor should we wonder if the forms of study and of theological exposition are multiple; one form may be occupied in consideration of a given aspect of the doctrine, while another is taken up with an authentic, but different, aspect. On the contrary, this multiplicity of forms is desirable; it indicates the richness of our doctrinal heritage and the inexhaustible fruitfulness of the exegetical, speculative, historical, literary, moral, biblical, liturgical mystical explorations, etc., of which it can be the object. It also indicates the relative freedom of study and exposition, which permits scholars, teachers, artists and even simple believers to draw what is necessary for our thirst from the spring of running water of the doctrine of the faith.

*Absolute respect for the integrity of the revealed message*

But one condition is necessary, the one We mentioned of the absolute respect for the integrity of the revealed message. On this point the Catholic Church, as you know, is watchful, severe, demanding, dogmatic. The very formulas in which the doctrine has been deliberately and authoritatively defined, cannot be abandoned. In this connection the magisterium of the Church is adamant, even at the cost of bearing the negative consequences of the unpopular terms in which the doctrine is expressed. It cannot do otherwise. Jesus himself, moreover, experienced the difficulty of his teaching; many of his hearers did not understand it (cfr. Mt. 13, 13), in fact even his beloved disciples found his words hard and were upset by them (In. 6, 60-62), when he announced the mystery of Holy Eucharist to them, and Jesus did not hesitate to ask them a very painful question: "What about you, do you want to go away too?" (ibid. 68).

The problem is still a tormenting one. Then, too, the function of the ecclesiastical magisterium has become difficult and contested today. But it cannot fail to carry out its orders, and must give its faithful testimony, at all costs, should it be necessary in the matter of faith and divine law; nevertheless it is the first to study and encourage everything that can make its doctrinal and pastoral teaching more acceptable to men of our time.

You, beloved Sons, who are certainly aware of the difficulties with which the teaching mission of the Church has to cope today, will share them and sustain her effort, with your fidelity, your support of good theological and didactic studies, promotion of genuine religious teaching, the profession of your Christian faith, in liturgical prayer and in moral life, and also with a certain family indulgence or the not infrequent imperfections of ecclesiastical and Catholic expression, both written and spoken. Confident of this, We thank you with Our Apostolic Blessing.

*Special greeting to young farmers*

We now wish to address a particularly warm greeting to the five hundred participants in the National Congress of Young Farmers and of the Rural Women's Movement, led at this Audience by the National

President of the Confederation of Farmers, Paolo Bonomi, and by the Ecclesiastical Counsellor, Msgr. D'Ascenzi. The interest with which We follow, and the importance of the subject of the Congress, which deals with "Rural youth and the problem of the formation of the new family", would have called for far more time than is at Our disposal, to be able to tell you what you are expecting of Us. But we know that, both during the preparation of the Congress, and in the last few days, you have studied and will continue to study the teaching of the Church on the family, as it has been given by Our Predecessors, and as it was illustrated by Vatican II and proposed by Ourselves, in the recent Encyclical "Humanae Vitae", for the good of society and the serenity of families.

We exhort you, therefore, to make this teaching yours, more and more yours acquiring a clear knowledge of its main lines and generously putting it into practice in your lives. Today the rural family is going through a period of difficulties, the material aspects of which are certainly not the hardest ones, in comparison with the change in mentality that is going on and with the hedonistic lure of the outside environment. On you young people, looking to the future in a realistic, positive spirit, lies the great responsibility of the families of the future: how they will live, how they will move in the context of social progress, how, above all, they will be centres of spiritual cohesion and moral energy for each of their members. To you, women, is entrusted the most difficult part, because it is the most hidden one, that of ensuring your families, today and tomorrow, warmth of affection, constant educational care, upright Christian morality, the fervour of piety and the riches of faith.

Prepare yourself for your tasks. As the creators of a well-balanced, hard-working humanity, know how to acquire day by day that wealth of personal gifts, professional concepts, spiritual resources, which are and will be an irreplaceable help to you in giving the best of yourselves in this vast, severe but exciting duty. The Lord, who will call you to account for it, also gives you the grace to carry it out in a worthy way. We pray ardently for you, that he may grant you the abundance of his graces, of which Our Apostolic Blessing to you, to your dear ones and to the whole beloved Confederation of Farmers, is an affectionate token.

## POPE PAUL'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

"CHRIST IS OUR TRUE AND HIGHEST HOPE"

Beloved Brothers and sons!

and all of you, both men and women, who hear Our voice!

Citizens of the world!

We, Paul, Servant of the servants of God, Bishop of Rome and Pastor of the Catholic Church, invested with the mission of preaching the Gospel of Salvation and peace, We wish to announce to you once again, in this year nineteen hundred and sixty-nine which is about to dawn, the Birth of Jesus, called the Christ (Mt. 1, 16) Our Lord (Rom. 1, 4).

In Our plaintive voice there resounds the voice of the centuries. For centuries, indeed, this announcement has been repeated; yet always, in its authentic message or even in a confused echo, there comes to us as a new statement the good news for mankind. Every year, at this pleasant hour, the clock of time marks a moment full of surprise, of meaning, of interest and of hope. It is indeed a happy moment, deeply human, mysteriously sacred. It is a moment which intimately affects our life, its conscience, its essence and its destiny. At this moment there rise up before our gaze the first concrete values of life, the childhood, the family, the home, the family table, rest, serenity and peace; and in our hearts there rise up the finest feelings, of goodness, compassion and love. Christmas is like that.

At this time We desire to consider the aspect of the intention of that prodigious fact which is Christmas: namely, the reason why Christ came among us.

Brothers, sons and all men who hear Our voice! Our joy is the truest and greatest of all joys! The reason for the coming of

Christ is our salvation! No other event concerns us so directly as Christmas does. We repeat this every time that we recite the "Credo" during Holy Mass: "for us men and for our salvation, He came down from Heaven"!

### **The Strength of Hope**

Therefore We are happy to repeat to the world today the announcement of Christmas as a message of hope: Christ is the true and the highest hope of mankind!

It is not difficult to see how active hope is in our time; indeed it is even characteristic of its most salient aspects. Everything today moves and changes under the sign and with the strength of hope. Today, man thinks, acts and lives by virtue of hope. Is not hope the interior mainspring of modern dynamism? Is not hope the root which nourishes the immense task of the world, as it reaches forward towards its transformation and progress? Is not hope that apocalyptic attraction towards a future to be conquered, towards a new humanism which should spring forth from the chrysalis of the traditional concepts of social customs? No one is any longer satisfied with what exists at present. At one time, the experience of the older generation was the guarantee of actual or desirable order; but now it is just that order which is attacked, precisely because it is inherited from the past; it is overturned rather than conserved and renewed, in the blind hope that what is new will of itself be fruitful for human progress. No further credence is now given to the stable values of faith, culture and institutions; men look towards the future not in its chronological aspect of coherence with an organic and developing tradition, but under a rebellious, surprising and indeffinible aspect, with an almost fatalistic and messianic confidence in a radical and general renewal, and a happiness finally free and entire. Two factors have concurred to generate this tension of hope: the discovery of ever-increasing possibilities of unforeseeable conquests through scientific exploration and the technical domination of nature; and the observation of the conditions of need in which under so many aspects, the greater part of mankind lives. Consequently, this twofold discovery has awakened new and immense desires in human hearts: that is, the hope of using the riches of the

means acquired to fill the lack caused by hunger, misery, ignorance, insecurity and insufficiency, from which the man of our century still suffers.

We live in the era of hope.

It is, however, a hope in the kingdom of this earth, a hope in human self-sufficiency.

### **The Crisis of Hope**

And it is precisely in our day that that hope is going through a most serious crisis.

Before the terrified gaze of contemporary man, a grandiose and complex phenomenon emerges. First of all, well-being itself, built up by intelligent and painful human efforts, easily becomes a source of new needs, and often of even greater evils. Progress itself, in some fields, craves enormous fearful dangers for all of humanity. The use which modern man can make of the murderous forces which he has mastered raises on the horizon, not hope, but heavy clouds of terror and folly. The peace of peoples, or in clearer words, the existence of man upon the face of the earth, is put in peril. The destructive power of modern man is incalculable; and the fatal probable use of such power to devastate the city of man depends upon causes which are tragically free, which neither science nor technique can of themselves dominate. Thus it happens that instead of hope there comes forth anguish.

Unfortunately, too, by yet another road, our generation is coming to an analogous result. Today's man has observed that the entire construction of the economic and social system, which he painfully builds up with superb practical results, is in danger of becoming his prison, of depriving him of his personality, of turning him into a mechanical instrument of the great machine of production. That machinery, while it provides enormous wonderful external improvements, subjects man to a colossal apparatus of domination. In this way there will arise a society redundant with material well-being, satisfied, satiated, but lacking



in superior ideals which give meaning and value to life, and deaf, as it were, to the groans of the poor, near and far, who yet call themselves men and are in fact brothers. The gaze of some young people in particular, of those who are usually clairvoyant and prophetic, has been darkened by their never being taught absolute principles, by the systematic spread of doubt and agnosticism. At a certain point, then, contestation became the fashion, with the temptation of degenerating into rebellion, violence and anarchy. In this social and ideal field, too, human hope is being degraded and extinguished.

With sorrow do We see that, because of these ill-advised collective confusions, historical, cultural, moral values which are still valid and worthy are being lost, with consequent damage to the entire civilized community. We see with amazement how many sane and honest citizens, even wise and heeded-teachers, and responsible public men, cannot find in themselves the energy to defend and revive intelligently a patrimony of civilization won by immense sacrifices and available to the enjoyment of all; the energy to save society, and especially future generations, from the consequence of useless and ruinous material and moral destruction. With regret also do We see that often the presumed remedy for these disorders, real or anticipated, is nothing more than a recourse to heavy-handed repression of lawful freedoms, or general deprivation of civil rights, or refusal to recognize the imploring needs of poor people. In this way, too, hope is wounded.

The argument could continue with regard to international life: Does hope for peace falter today?

It could also penetrate to the depths of many minds representative of modern culture. Perhaps never before, as much as in our day, literature, theatre, art, philosophical thought, have cruelly borne witness to the deficiency of man, his mental debility, his domination by sensuality, his moral hypocrisy, his facile delinquency, his increasing cruelty, his possible abjection, his inconsistent personality. All these self-satisfied accusations are based on a terrible and seemingly irrefutable argument: Such is man! Such is the great and miserable son of the century! This is the true reality of life.

Where, then, brother man, is your hope?

In proposing for your meditation a theme so complex, so vast and, We may well add, so real, it is certainly not Our intention to perturb the serene observance of Christmas with sinister and disconcerting thoughts. Rather, We do so in order to help you understand better and welcome the joyous message of hope which Christmas brings to us.

### Proclamation of Salvation

The experience of the dramatic and, in itself, desperate condition of human life, an experience which modern progress, instead of suppressing, often sharpens and exacerbates, must call us back to admit an unavoidable need which humanity, in various forms and degrees, has always preserved in its deepest consciousness: the need of being saved. Indeed, all of us have need to be saved. We cannot succeed in this by our own strength alone (cf. Rom. VIII, 15 sq.). Our presumptuous struggle to save ourselves by ourselves only serves, finally, to underline the conviction of our radical incapability. We can go even further, in virtue of man's conscience and that of history: we have need of a Saviour, of a Messiah. The name of Jesus means Saviour; and Christ means Messiah. That name "Jesus Christ", is the proclamation of our salvation; it is necessary that He have divine power, because no other power can overcome our ills. It is necessary that He have brotherhood with men, because if He were not a brother, we could not understand Him. Saint Leo, the great Pope of the mystery of Christ, says: "If (Christ) were not true God, He could not offer us a remedy; if He were not true man, He could not offer us an example" (Sermon XXI; P.L., liv. 192).

That is why our proclamation of Christmas, after nearly twenty centuries, remains fresh and new; and, by reason of our faith in Christmas, we may add, remains valid. We are authorized to make our own the piercing words of the Christmas Angel: "I bring you good tidings — the good news of the gospel — of great joy that shall be to all the people: today in the city of David, there is born to you a Saviour" (Lk. II.10-11).

This proclamation is not in vain, because the hope we place in it will not be in vain. On that blessed night, through the virginal motherhood of Mary, Christ inserted Himself into the history and destiny of mankind, and He still lives today. He lives in the fulness of a glory which for now we cannot properly name or imagine, in the life of heaven; but He lives also here among us, being continually reborn, like a fountain from its spring, in His Mystical Body which is the Church, ever spreading throughout the world His truth and His grace.

The Evangelist says: He was filled with grace and truth (Jn. 1.14). His truth, that is, His word, making His thought tangible among us, is our teacher of life, revealing Who God is, teaching what man is, telling us what we must do and love, helping us to see, in a man who suffers, not only our brother but Christ Himself, restoring us to the freedom, dignity and expectation of the ideal man, making us capable of goodness, justice and peace: He is the light of the world. Then, in order that His bright and lofty word should not blind us, should not oppress and confuse our innate weakness, He strengthens it with a mysterious and powerful aid, the action of His Spirit. This is Christmas. This is the Incarnation, which spreads from Christ to embrace all mankind; to shake and arouse it, to torment it, to regenerate it now, in time, so as to guide it beyond time towards eternity.

This revival is slow but sure, toilsome but triumphant, ancient but thrillingly new. This is Christianity. It has the power to infuse hope and give life, not only in its own order which is that of religion and the supernatural, but also in the profane and natural order; for when that order links its own earthly and therefore fallacious hopes to that unshakeable hope which descends from the kingdom of heaven, it no longer doubts that its work may be in vain. Christianity lives in the reality which Christ works among us: the candid pious innocence of children, the sufferings offered by the sick, the healthy deep love of families, the generous unselfishness of youth, the humble invoking patience of the poor, the yearning struggle for greater justice of workers, the silent active charity of the good, the unceasing prayer of the community of the faithful. This is Christianity alive in the holy Catholic

Church, which upholds eternal hope, and also strengthens earthly and truly human hopes (cf. *Gaudium et spes*).

We are so deeply sure of this, beloved Brothers and sons, that with all Our heart We again announce to you this happy message, and We add to it Our Apostolic Blessing.

## THE POPE'S WORLD PEACE DAY MESSAGE

To all men of good will, to all those responsible for the development of history today and tomorrow; hence, to those who guide politics, public opinion, social directions, culture, education, to youth, rising up in its yearning for world-wide renewal, with a humble and free voice, which comes forth from the desert where no worldly interest is. We again proclaim that imploring and solemn word: Peace.

Peace is today intrinsically linked with the ideal recognition and effective realization of the Rights of Man. To these fundamental rights there corresponds a fundamental duty, which is Peace.

### Peace is a duty

All the comments of the modern world concerning the development of international relations, the interdependence of the interests of peoples, the accession of new States to freedom and independence, the efforts made by civilization to attain a single world-wide juridical organization, the dangers of the incalculable catastrophes should new armed conflicts occur, the psychology of modern man with his desire for undisturbed prosperity and universal human relationships, the progress of ecumenism and mutual respect for personal and social freedoms, all this persuades us that Peace is one of the supreme benefits of man's life on earth, an interest of the first order, a common aspiration, an ideal worthy of mankind, master of itself and of the world, a necessity in order to maintain the conquests achieved and to achieve others, a fundamental law for the free circulation of thought, culture, economy, art, and a demand which can no longer be suppressed in view of human destiny. This is so because Peace is security. Peace is

order. A just and dynamic order, We add, which must continually be built up. Without Peace there is no trust, without trust there is no progress. And that trust. We declare, must be rooted in justice and fairness. Only in a climate of Peace can right be recognized, can justice advance, can freedom breathe. If, then, such is the meaning of Peace, if such is the value of Peace, then Peace is a duty.

It is the duty of present history. Whoever reflects the lessons which past history teaches us will proceed at once to declare that a return to war, to struggle, to massacre, to the ruins caused by the psychology of conflicting arms and forces, even to the death of men who are citizens of the earth, the common fatherland of our life in time, that such a return is absurd. He who knows the significance of man cannot avoid being a follower of Peace. He who reflects on the causes of the conflicts between men must recognize that they betray a lack in man's mind, and not true virtues of his moral greatness. The necessity of war could be justified only in exceptional and deplorable conditions of fact and law, which should never be verified in modern world society. Reason, and not might, must decide the destinies of people. Understanding, negotiations, arbitration, and not outrage, blood and slavery, must intervene in the difficult relationships between men. No precarious truce, unstable equilibrium, fear of reprisals and revenge, successful conquest or fortunate arrogance, can guarantee a Peace worthy of that name. Peace must be willed. Peace must be loved. Peace must be produced. It must be a moral consequence; it must spring up from free and generous spirits. A dream it may well seem; but a dream which becomes a reality by virtue of a new and superior human concept.

Yes, a dream, since the experience of these recent years and the rise of recent murky floods of evil ideas, such as radical anarchic contestation, violence considered lawful and always necessary, the policy of power and domination the armaments race, trust in methods of cunning and deception, the inescapable tests of strength, and others, seem to suffocate hope for the peaceful ordering of the world. Yet that hope remains, for it must remain. It is the light of progress and of civilization. The world cannot give up its dream of universal Peace.

It is precisely because Peace is always coming to be, always incomplete, always fragile, always under attack, always difficult, that We proclaim it. We proclaim it as a duty, an inescapable duty. The duty of those responsible for the destiny of peoples. The duty of every citizen of the world; because all must love Peace, and all must work together to produce that public mentality and common conscience which make it possible and probable. Peace must first be in men's minds, so that it can then exist in human events.

Indeed, Peace is a universal and perennial duty. In order to recall this axiom of modern civilization, We invite the world to celebrate once again, for the year 1969 which is about to begin, World Peace Day on the first of January. This is a wish, a hope and an engagement; the first sun of the new year must shed upon the earth the light of Peace.

We dare to hope that, above all, it will be Youth who will grasp this invitation as a demand which can interpret everything new, lively and great, yearned for by their exasperated spirits, because Peace demands the correction of abuses and coincides with the cause of justice.

This year a special circumstance recommends Our proposal to all: there has just been celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. This event interests all men, individuals, families, groups, associations and nations. No one must forget or neglect it, for it calls all to the fundamental recognition of the full dignified citizenship of every man on earth. From such recognition springs the original title of Peace; in fact, the theme of World Peace Day is precisely this: "The promotion of Human Rights, the way to Peace". In order that man may be guaranteed the right to life, to liberty, to equality, to culture, to the enjoyment of the benefits of civilization, to personal and social dignity, Peace is necessary: when Peace loses its equilibrium and efficiency, Human Rights become precarious and are compromised; when there is no Peace, right loses its human stature. Moreover, where Human Rights are not respected, defended and promoted, where violence or fraud is done to man's inalienable freedoms, where his personality is ignored or degraded, where discrimination, slavery or intolerance prevail, there true Peace cannot be.

Peace and Rights are reciprocally cause and effect, the one of the other: Peace favours Rights, and Rights in their turn favour Peace.

We presume to hope that these arguments will prove valid for every person, every group of persons, every nation; that the transcendental importance of the cause of Peace will encourage meditation upon it and application of it. Peace and Human Rights — such is the thought with which, We hope, men will commence the coming year. Our invitation is sincere, having no other purpose than the good of mankind. Our voice is feeble but clear; it is the voice of a friend, who desires that it be heard not so much because of who says it, but of what he says. It is addressed to the world; that world which thinks, which works, which suffers, which waits. Oh! May this voice not be ignored! Peace is a duty!

This message of Ours cannot lack the strength which comes to us from that Gospel of which We are minister, the Gospel of Christ.

It, too, like the Gospel, is addressed to everyone in the world.

More directly, however, to you, Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, and to you, beloved sons and faithful members of the Catholic Church, do We repeat Our invitation to celebrate the Day of Peace; and this invitation becomes a precept, not of Ours but of the Lord, Who desires that we be convinced and active workers for Peace if we are to be numbered among the blessed marked with the name of sons of God (*Mt. v. 9*). Our voice addresses itself to you; it becomes a cry, because for us believers Peace takes on an even deeper and more mysterious meaning, for us it acquires the value of spiritual fulness and personal as well as collective and social salvation; earthly and temporal Peace, to us, is the reflection and prelude of heavenly and eternal Peace.

For us Christmas, Peace is not only an external equilibrium, a juridical order, a complex of disciplined public relationships; for us, Peace is above all the result of the implementation of that design of wisdom and love, through which God willed to enter supernatural relations with mankind. Peace is the first effect of that new divine economy which we call grace—"Grace and peace," as the Apostle says—it is a gift of God which becomes the style of Christian life; it is a

Messianic phase which reflects its light and hope upon the temporal city also, strengthening with its superior motives those reasons upon which that city bases its own Peace. To the dignity of citizens of the world, the Peace of Christ adds the dignity of sons of the heavenly Father; to the natural equality of men, it adds that of Christian brotherhood; to human competition which ever compromise and violate Peace, Christ's Peace weakens pretexts and opposes motives, thus showing forth the advantages of an ideal and superior moral order, and revealing the marvellous religious and civil virtue of generous pardon; to the incapability of human art to produce a solid and stable Peace, Christ's Peace lends the aid of its inexhaustible optimism; to the fallacy of policies of proud prestige and material interests, Christ's Peace suggests a policy of charity; to justice, too often weak and impatient, upholding its needs by the fury of arms, Christ's Peace infuses the unconquerable energy of those rights derived from the deepest reasons of human nature and from man's transcendental destiny. The Peace of Christ, which derives its spirit from the redeeming sacrifice, is not fear of might and resistance; the Peace of Christ, which understands pain and human needs, which finds love and gifts for the little, the poor, the weak, the disinherited, the suffering, the humiliated, the conquered, is not cowardice tolerant of the misadventures and deficiencies of man with no fortune or defence. In a word, the Peace of Christ is, more than any other humanitarian formula, solicitous of Human Rights.

This, Brothers and sons, is what We would have you remember and proclaim on World Peace Day, under the auspices of which the new year commences, in the name of Christ, the King of Peace, defender of all authentic human rights. So be it, with Our Apostolic Blessing.

*From the Vatican,  
December 8, 1968.*