



The Holy See

«URBI ET ORBI» RADIOMESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL I

Dear Brothers!

My dear sons and daughters throughout the entire Catholic World!

Having been called by the mysterious and paternal goodness of God to this awesome responsibility of the Papacy, we extend to you our greetings. At the same time we greet everyone in the world, all who hear us. Following the teachings of the Gospel, we would wish to think of you as friends, as brothers and sisters. To all of you, we wish good health, peace, mercy and love: "May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

We are still overwhelmed at the thought of this tremendous ministry for which we have been chosen: as Peter, we seem to have stepped out on treacherous waters. We are battered by a strong wind. So we turn towards Christ saying: "Lord, save me" (Mt 14:30). Again we hear his voice encouraging and at the same time lovingly reminding us: "Why do you doubt, oh you of little faith." If human forces alone cannot be adequate to the task before us, the help of Almighty God who has guided his Church throughout the centuries in the midst of great conflicts and opposition will certainly not desert us, this humble and most recent *servant of the servants of God*. Placing our hand in that of Christ, leaning on him, we have now been lifted up to steer that ship which is the Church; it is safe and secure, though in the midst of storms, because the comforting, dominant presence of the Son of God is with it. According to the words of St Augustine, an image dear to the ancient Fathers of the Church, the ship of the Church must not fear, because it is guided by Christ and by his Vicar: "Although the ship is tossed about, it is still a ship. It carries the disciples and it receives Christ. Yes, it is tossed on the sea but without it, one would immediately perish" (*Sermon 75,3; PL 38, 475*). Only in the Church is salvation: *without it one perishes!*

We proceed then in this faith. God's assistance will not be wanting to us, just as he has promised: "I am with you always even to the end of the world" (Mt 28:20). The common response and willing

cooperation of all of you will make the weight of our daily burden lighter. We gird ourselves for this awesome task, realizing the uniqueness of the Catholic Church. Its tremendous spiritual power is the guarantee of peace and order; as such it is present in the world; as such it is recognized in the world. The echo of its daily life gives witness that, despite all obstacles, it lives in the heart of men, even those who do not share its truth or accept its message. As the Second Vatican Council (to whose teachings we wish to commit our total ministry, as priest, as teacher, as pastor) has said: "Destined to extend to all regions of the earth, the Church enters into human history, though it transcends at once all time and all racial boundaries. Advancing through trials and tribulations, the Church is strengthened by God's grace, promised to her by the Lord so that she may not waver from perfect fidelity, but remain the worthy bride of the Lord, until, through the cross, she may attain to that light which knows no setting." (*Lumen Gentium*, 9). According to God's plan: "All those, who in faith look towards Jesus, the author of salvation and the principle of unity and peace, God has gathered together and established as the Church, that it may be for each and everyone the visible sacrament of this saving unity" (*Ibid*).

In that light, we place ourselves interiorly, putting all of our physical and spiritual strength at the service of the universal mission of the Church, that is to say, at the service of the world. In other words we will be at the service of truth, of justice, of peace, of harmony, of collaboration within nations as well as rapport among peoples. We call especially on the children of the Church to understand better their responsibility: "You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world" (Mt 5:13). Overcoming internal tension which can arise here and there, overcoming the temptation of identifying ourselves with the ways of the world or the appeal of easily won applause, we are, rather, united in the unique bond of love which forms the inner life of the Church as also its external order. Thus, the faithful should be ready to give witness of their own faith to the world: "Always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pt 3:15).

The Church, in this common effort to be responsible and so respond to the pressing problems of the day, is called to give to the world that "strengthening of the spirit" which is so needed and which alone can assure salvation. The world awaits this today: it knows well that the sublime perfection to which it has attained by research and technology has already reached a peak, beyond which yawns the abyss, blinding the eyes with darkness. It is the temptation of substituting for God one's own decisions, decisions that would prescind from moral laws. The danger for modern man is that he would reduce the earth to a desert, the person to an automaton, brotherly love to planned collectivization, often introducing death where God wishes life.

The Church, admiring yet lovingly protesting against such "achievements", intends, rather, to safeguard the world, that thirsts for a life of love, from dangers that would attack it. The Gospel calls all of its children to place their full strength, indeed their life, at the service of mankind in the name of the charity of Christ: "Greater love than this no man has than that he would lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13). In this solemn moment, we intend to consecrate all that we are and all that we can achieve for this supreme goal. We will do so until our last breath, aware of the task

insistently entrusted to us by Christ: "Confirm your brothers" (Lk 22:32).

He helps then by strengthening us in our difficult challenge. We remember the example of our Predecessors, whose lovable gentle ways bolstered by a relentless strength, provide both the example and programme for the papacy: we recall in particular the great lessons of pastoral guidance left by the most recent Popes, Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII. With wisdom, dedication, goodness and love of the Church and the world, they have left an indelible mark on our time, a time that is both troubled and magnificent. Most of all the pontifical pastoral plan of Paul VI, our immediate Predecessor, has left a strong impression on our heart and in our memory. His sudden death was crushing to the entire world. In the manner of his prophetic style, which marked his unforgettable pontificate, he placed in clear light the extraordinary stature of a great yet humble man. He cast an extraordinary light upon the Church, even in the midst of controversy and hostility these past fifteen years. Undertaking immense labours, he worked indefatigably and without rest. He extended himself to carry into effect the Second Vatican Council and to seek world peace, the *tranquility of order*.

Our programme will be to continue his; and his in turn was in the wake of that drawn from the great heart of John XXIII.

— We wish to continue to put into effect the heritage of the Second Vatican Council. Its wise norms should be followed out and perfected. We must be wary of that effort that is generous perhaps but unwarranted. It would not achieve the content and meaning of the Council. On the other hand, we must avoid an approach that is hesitant and fearful—which thus would not realize the magnificent impulse of the renewal and of life.

— We wish to preserve the integrity of the great discipline of the Church in the life of priests and of the faithful. It is a rich treasure in history. Throughout the ages, it has presented an example of holiness and heroism, both in the exercise of the evangelical virtues and in service to the poor, the humble, the defenceless. To achieve that, we place a priority on the revision of the two codes of canon law; that of the oriental tradition and that of the Latin tradition to assure the blessed liberty of children of God, through the solidarity and firmness of juridical structures.

— We wish to remind the entire Church that its first duty is that of evangelization. Our Predecessor, Paul VI, presented the directions for this in his memorable document: animated by faith, nourished by the Word of God, and strengthened by the heavenly food of the Eucharist, one should study every way, seek every means "in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2), to spread the word, to proclaim the message, to announce that salvation which creates in the soul a restlessness to pursue truth and at the same time offers strength from above. If all the sons and daughters of the Church know how to be tireless missionaries of the Gospel, a new flowering of holiness and renewal would spring up in this world that thirsts for love and for truth.

— We wish to continue the ecumenical thrust, which we consider a final directive from our immediate Predecessors. We watch with an unchanging faith, with a dauntless hope and with endless love for the realization of that great command of Christ: "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). His heart anxiously beats for this on the eve of his sacrifice on Calvary. The mutual relationships among the churches of the various denominations have made constant and extraordinary advances as anyone can see; yet division remains a cause for concern, and indeed a contradiction and scandal in the eyes of non-Christians and non-believers. We intend to dedicate our prayerful attention to everything that would favour union. We will do so without diluting doctrine but, at the same time, without hesitance.

— We wish to pursue with patience but firmness that serene and constructive dialogue that Paul VI had at the base of his plan and programme for pastoral action. The principal theme for this was set forth in his great Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, namely, that men, as men, should know one another, even those who do not share our faith. We trust always be ready to give witness of the faith that is ours and of the mission that Christ has given to us, "that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21).

— We wish finally to express our support for all the laudable, worthy initiatives that can safeguard and increase peace in our troubled world. We call upon all good men, all who are just, honest, true of heart. We ask them to help build up a dam within their nations against blind violence which can only destroy and sow seeds of ruin and sorrow. So, too, in international life, they might bring men to mutual understanding to combining efforts that would further social progress, overcome hunger of body and ignorance of the mind and advance those who are less endowed with goods of this earth, yet rich in energy and desire.

Brothers and dearest sons and daughters, in this awesome moment for us, yet a moment enriched by God's promise, we extend our greeting to all of our sons and daughters: we wish we could see all of them face to face, embrace them, give them courage and confidence, while asking for their understanding and prayers for us.

To all then, our greeting:

— to the Cardinals of the Sacred College, with whom we have shared this decisive hour. We depend upon them now, as we will in the future. We are grateful to them for their wise counsel. We appreciate the strong support that they will continue to offer us, as an extension of their consent which, through God's will has brought us to the summit of the Apostolic Office;

— to all the Bishops of the Church of God, "each of whom represents his own Church, whereas all, together with the Pope, represent the entire Church in a bond of peace, love and unity" (*Lumen Gentium*, 23), and whose collegiality we strongly value. We value their efforts in the guidance of the universal Church both through the synodal structure and through the curial structure in which they share by right according to the norms established;

— to all of our co-workers called to a strict response to our will and thus to an honoured activity which brings holiness of life, called to a spirit of obedience, to the works of the apostolate and to a most exemplary love of the Church. We love each of them and we encourage them to stay close to us as they were to our Predecessors in proven faithfulness. We are certain to be able to rely on their highly esteemed labours, which will be for us a great joy;

— We salute the priests and faithful of the diocese of Rome, given to us upon our succession to the chair of Peter and to the unique and singular title of this Roman See "which presides over the whole society of love (cf. St Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans*, Funk 1, 252).

— We salute in a special way the members of our native diocese of Belluno and those who were entrusted to our care at Venice, they are remembered as most beloved sons and daughters, and of them we think now with a sincere longing, conscious of their magnificent work for the Church and of their common commitment to the cause of the Gospel.

— And we embrace all priests—especially parish priests and those dedicated to the direction of souls, often in difficult conditions or genuine poverty, yet radiating the grace of their vocation in their heroic following of Christ, "the pastor of our souls" (1 Pt 2:25).

— We salute religious men and women, both those in contemplative and active life, who continue to make present in the world a hymn of total commitment to the Gospel ideal; and we ask them to continue to "see well to it that the Church truly shows forth Christ through them with ever-increasing clarity to believers and unbelievers alike" (*Lumen Gentium*, 46).

— We salute the entire missionary Church, and we extend to all men and women, who in their outposts of evangelization dedicate themselves to the care of their brothers, our encouragement and our most loving recognition. They should know that, among all who are dear to us, they are the dearest: they are never forgotten in our prayers and thoughts, because they have a privileged place in our heart.

— To the associations of Catholic Action, as also to the variously named movements which contribute with new energy to the renewal of society and the "consecration of the world" as a leaven in the mass (cf. Mt 13:33)—to them go all support and encouragement, because we are convinced that their work, carried out in collaboration with the hierarchy, is indispensable for the Church today.

— We salute young people, the hope of tomorrow—a better, a healthier, a more constructive tomorrow—that they may know how to distinguish good from bad and, with the fresh energy that they possess, bring about the vitality of the Church and the development of the world.

— We greet the families who are the "domestic sanctuary of the Church" (*Apostolicam*

Actuositatem, 11), and indeed a true, actual "domestic Church" (*Lumen Gentium*, 11) in which religious vocations can flourish and holy decisions be made. It is there that one is prepared for the world of tomorrow. We exhort them to oppose pernicious ideologies of hedonism which undermine life, and instead to form strong souls endowed with generosity, balance, dedication to the common good.

— We extend a particular greeting to all who are now suffering, to the sick, to prisoners, to exiles, unemployed, or who have bad fortune in life; to all upon whom restraints are placed in their practice of the Catholic faith, which they cannot freely profess except at the cost of the basic human rights of freemen and of willing, loyal citizens. In a special way our thoughts turn to the tortured land of Lebanon, to the situation in the homeland of Jesus, to the area of Sahel, to India, a land that is so tried, indeed, to all those sons, daughters, brothers and sisters who undergo privations in their social and political life or as a result of natural disasters.

My brothers and sisters—all people of the world! We are all obliged to work to raise the world to a condition of greater justice, more stable peace, more sincere cooperation. Therefore we ask and beg all—from the humblest who are the connective fibres of nations to heads of state responsible for each nation—to work for a new order, one more just and honest.

A dawn of hope spreads over the earth, although it is sometimes touched by sinister merchants of hatred, bloodshed, and war with a darkness which sometimes threatens to obscure the dawn. This humble Vicar of Christ, who begins his mission in fear yet in complete trust, places himself at the disposal of the entire Church and all civil society. We make no distinction as to race or ideology but seek to secure for the world the dawn of a more serene and joyful day. Only Christ could cause this dawn of a light which will never set, because he is the "sun of justice" (cf. Mal 4:2). He will indeed oversee the work of all. He will not fail us.

We ask all our sons and daughters for the help of their prayers, for we are counting on them; and we open ourselves with great trust to the assistance of the Lord, who, having called us to be his representative on earth, will not leave us without his all-powerful grace. Mary Most Holy, Queen of the Apostles, will be the shining star of our pontificate. St Peter, the foundation of the Church (St. Ambrose, *Exp. Ev. sec. Lucam*, IV, 70: CSEL 32,4, p. 175), will support us through his intercession and with his example of unconquerable faith and human generosity. St Paul will guide us in our apostolic efforts directed to all the people of the earth. Our holy patrons will assist us.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we impart to the world our first, most loving Apostolic Benediction.

Sunday, 27 August 1978

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