



The Holy See

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HOLY MASS FOR PEACE

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Manila (Philippines)

Thursday, 19 February 1981

Here in Quezon circle we have listened to the words of the Lord our God as recorded by the Prophet Isaiah : "Peace, peace to the far and to the near, says the Lord ; and I will heal them"[1]. And looking out today over this vast assembly, I proclaim to all of you, far and near, the peace of the Lord, the peace of Christ ! With the Apostle Peter I say : "Peace to all of you who are in Christ"[2].

1. Dearly beloved brothers and sisters here in the Philippines : we are celebrating today *the peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*—the peace that was announced by the angels at his birth ; the peace that he communicated to all who came into contact with him during his earthly life ; the peace that he gave to his Apostles when he stood among them after his Resurrection, saying : "Peace be with you"[3].

We are celebrating the peace that Christ won for us by his Paschal Mystery—by his Passion, death and Resurrection from the dead. We are able to enjoy peace because God sent his own Son into the world to be our Redeemer.

2. And the peace that we are celebrating is *our redemption from sin*, our deliverance from God's anger and from eternal punishment. Without Christ we would have remained, in the words of Saint Paul, "children of wrath"[4]. But in truth we have been liberated by Christ ; everything is new in our

relationship with God. Christ has reconciled us to himself, "making peace by the blood of his cross"[5]. We have been called out of the darkness of sin into the Kingdom of God's marvellous light, where we have received mercy and grace and peace from Jesus Christ.

3. Through God's love we have not only received the gift of human life but we have also become adopted children of God. *Through Christ's great peacemaking act*—his Sacrifice on the Cross—we have become his brothers and sisters, and, with him, heirs of eternal life. Because of this new relationship of ours with God in Christ, *peace is now possible*: peace in our hearts and in our homes, peace in our communities and in our nations, peace throughout the world.

Yes, Jesus Christ is the supreme Peacemaker of human history, the Reconciler of human hearts, the Liberator of humanity, the Redeemer of man. " He is our peace"[6].

4. It is God the Father's plan that the peace which his beloved Son Jesus Christ won for us on *Calvary should be communicated to every human being*, individually and as a member of society. This communication of Christ's peace takes place in the Church through the action of the Holy Spirit working through God's word and the sacraments.

By faith and *Baptism* we take on a relationship with God that makes peace truly possible. We become in fact the children of God and are incorporated into the Body of Christ. We are baptized into Christ's death[7] —his great peacemaking act—so that we may share in his Resurrection and walk in newness of life.

Through the *Sacrament of Penance* Jesus offers us pardon and peace. Precisely because of its importance as the Sacrament of Reconciliation, I stressed in my first *Encyclical* " man's right to a more personal encounter with the crucified forgiving Christ"[8], and urged the faithful observance of the centuries-old practice of individual confession. Today I present once again the Sacrament of Penance as *a gift of Christ's peace* and his love, and I ask you all to make every effort to profit from this opportunity of grace.

And the *Eucharist*, my dear friends, is *the culmination of our sacramental peace*, in which we represent to the Father the gift of reconcilia-tion and peace—the gift of Jesus himself. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, communicates himself and becomes our peace.

5. Dear brothers and sisters : it is indeed important for us to *understand* how God puts us into contact with Christ and communicates to us the peace of Christ. It is vitally important for parents to transmit to their children an understanding of the faith, and a deep appreciation of sacramental life, so that each generation may be aware of Christ's peace. The success of the Church's mission in this regard depends on you ; it is intimately linked with the family's irreplaceable catechetical activity.

6. At the same time Christ invites us and bids us *bring his peace to the world*. This is the way he wants us to live; he has spelled it out for us in the Gospel Beatitudes : "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God"[9]. We are called to pass on the healing that we have experienced, and the reconciliation that we have been given so lavishly. And in the Second Reading today we are told what we must do : "Clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another ... Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you"[10].

Having been forgiven, we are called to forgive. Having been justified by God's grace, we are called to give witness to justice in our lives, for we know full well that peaceful relationships can exist in the world only when the justice of Christ permeates hearts and is expressed in all the structures of society.

7. But in order *to communicate peace* in accordance with Christ's words, *we must live that peace*. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you are called to that peace"[11] Yes, dear brothers and sisters, there must be peace in our families, between husbands and wives, between parents and children ; peace in our communities ; peace in our parishes and local Churches ; peace in society and over the earth : peace in the hearts of the ministers of Christ, in the hearts of the religious and laity, in the hearts of all those who embrace his Gospel of love.

8. *Only then can our proclamation and communication of peace be effective*: peace to the poor and to the rich, peace to the young and to the old, peace to the sick and the suffering, to prisoners and to all who mourn. Peace to those who are crushed by the burden of sin, and to those who stumble beneath the weight of their cross. Peace to all who serve with us in the name of Christ and for the glory of his Father. Peace to all our brothers and sisters in Christ, to all our fellow human beings : the peace of reconciliation, of justice, of freedom from fear, of liberation from oppression and sin, of deliverance from eternal death. The peace of Christ's Kingdom, the peace of hope, the peace of Jesus himself.

Dearly beloved, this is indeed the peace that I proclaim to you today—to those far and near : the peace of God's Kingdom, the peace of Christ.

9. Peace is yours as a gift from the Lord, as a responsibility and a challenge. Let us listen to Jesus, today and all the days of our lives. He is speaking to our hearts, as he says : "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God". Amen.

[1] *Is* 57:19.

[2] *1 Pt* 5:14.

[3] *Jn* 19:19.

[4] *Eph* 2:3.

[5] *Col* 1:20.

[6] *Eph* 2:14.

[7] Cf. *Rom* 6:4.

[8] *Redemptor Hominis*, 20

[9] *Mt* 5:9.

[10] *Col* 3:12ff.

[11] *Col* 3:15.

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