



# The Holy See

---

## CLOSING OF THE SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

### *ADDRESS OF POPE PAUL VI TO THE RULERS*

*8 December 1965*

At this solemn moment, we, the Fathers of the 21st ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, on the point of disbanding after four years of prayer and work, with the full consciousness of our mission toward mankind, address ourselves respectively and confidently to those who hold in their hands the destiny of men on this earth, to all those who hold temporal power.

We proclaim publicly: We do honor to your authority and your sovereignty, we respect your office, we recognize your just laws, we esteem those who make them and those who apply them. But we have a sacrosanct word to speak to you and it is this: Only God is great. God alone is the beginning and the end. God alone is the source of your authority and the foundation of your laws.

Your task is to be in the world the promoters of order and peace among men. But never forget this: It is God, the living and true God, who is the Father of men. And it is Christ, His eternal Son, who came to make this known to us and to teach us that we are all brothers. He it is who is the great artisan of order and peace on earth, for He it is who guides human history and who alone can incline hearts to renounce those evil passions which beget war and misfortune. It is He who blesses the bread of the human race, who sanctifies its work and its suffering, who gives it those joys which you can never give it, and strengthens it in those sufferings which you cannot console.

In your earthly and temporal city, God constructs mysteriously His spiritual and eternal city, His Church. And what does this Church ask of you after close to 2,000 years of experiences of all kinds in her relations with you, the powers of the earth? What does the Church ask of you today? She tells you in one of the major documents of this council. She asks of you only liberty, the liberty to believe and to preach her faith, the freedom to love her God and serve Him, the freedom to live

and to bring to men her message of life. Do not fear her. She is made after the image of her Master, whose mysterious action does not interfere with your prerogatives but heals everything human of its fatal weakness, transfigures it and fills it with hope, truth and beauty.

Allow Christ to exercise His purifying action on society. Do not crucify Him anew. This would be a sacrilege for He is the Son of God. This would be suicide for He is the Son of man. And we, His humble ministers, allow us to spread everywhere without hindrance the Gospel of peace on which we have meditated during this council. Of it, your peoples will be the first beneficiaries, since the Church forms for you loyal citizens, friends of social peace and progress.

On this solemn day when she closes the deliberations of her 21st ecumenical council, the Church offers you through our voice her friendship, her services, her spiritual and moral forces. She addresses to you all her message of salvation and blessing. Accept it, as she offers it to you with a joyous and sincere heart and pass it on to your peoples.