



The Holy See

VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI

Yankee Stadium, New York
Monday, 4 October 1965

Brothers and sons of New York,
Brothers and sons of the United States and of all America,
All of you who have assembled here from every part of the World,
We greet you and We bless you!

This is this day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad today! This is the day which We have desired for centuries! The day which, for the first time, sees the Pope setting foot on this young and glorious continent! An historic day, for it recalls and crowns the long years of the evangelization of America, and the magnificent development of the Church in the United States! All honour to you, Brothers and sons! Peace and joy in Christ to you, whom We wish We could individually receive and embrace! A paternal and brotherly greeting to you, Bishops and Pastors, to you, Priests, Men and Women Religious of America! To the Shepherd of this most flourishing Archdiocese, Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, who is, here beside Us, Our greeting and blessing,. as a token of Our veneration and Our affection, of Our gratitude to him and Our esteem; especially today, on the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi. Our best wishes on his name day; and together with him We greet and salute the entire Catholic community of New York and of all the United States of America. We know your pastoral work and your faithfulness; We know the splendid organization and spiritual vitality of your parishes, of your seminaries, of your universities, of your schools, of your hospitals, of your works of charity! We know too your love for Christ and His Church. We affirm of you what Saint Paul wrote to the Romans: «Your faith is proclaimed all over, the world» (*Rom. 1, 8*). And it is from Rome that We bring you that message of faith and love which unites us all in Christ; together with the blessing of Saints Peter and Paul.

We are most happy to greet at the same time, with all reverence and sincerity, those Christian brothers here present, separated from us, yet united with us by baptism and by belief in the Lord Jesus. We keep them all in Our heart and in Our prayers. We also greet those here present who follow other religious beliefs, and who in good conscience intend to seek and honour Almighty God, the Lord of heaven and earth; among whom the descendants of Abraham have Our particular consideration.

We feel, too, that the entire American people is here present, with its noblest and most characteristic traits: a people basing its conception of life on spiritual values, on a religious sense, on the rule of law, on freedom, on loyalty, on work, on the respect of duty, on family affection, on generosity and courage. We pay honour to the human and civil virtues of this great people, and in these virtues We recognize valuable derivations from Christian values, which We hope will ever remain living and active, safeguarding the American spirit from those dangers which prosperity itself can entail, and which the materialism of our day can make even more menacing. From its brief but heroic history, this young and flourishing country can derive lofty and convincing examples to encourage it in its future progress.

So, too, We turn Our thoughts cordially to all those who belong to other nations and are present at this great religious assembly; they show forth the hospitality of this country, and also the fact that men of different origins can live together, work together and prosper together in freedom and in concord. To all of them and to their respective countries We send Our greetings and good wishes.

What are We to say to you, that can correspond to the duties of Our apostolic ministry and be adequate to the spirit of this unique occasion? Our words can only be the words to the Gospel, which has just been read to you; the words of the risen Jesus, which He repeated three times: Peace be to you!

Truly, verily, Peace be to you!

How rich in meaning, how abundant in good things, is this divine and human greeting of Peace! Repeated thousands of times, we all recognize it, we all desire it. And that is good. But allow Us to exhort you to consider it once again, to preserve it as the Gospel message of the Pope as He lands on this soil and proclaims to all those He meets: Peace be to this house, to this continent, and to all those who inhabit it!

We have, then, three things to say to you.

First of all, you must love peace. Here We can use the words of Christ: «Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the son of God» (*Matth.* 5, 9). If we truly wish to be Christians, we must love peace, we must make our own the cause of peace, we must meditate on the real meaning of peace, we must conform our minds to the thought of peace. In the past, it was

not always so in the education of minds and the training of citizens; but today it must be so; we must love peace, because its dwelling is first in men's hearts, and only afterwards in the external condition of society. Peace must live and reign in men's consciences, as Holy Scripture teaches us: «May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts» (*Col.* 3, 15). Peace is order, in relation to God and in relation to men; it is wisdom, it is justice, it is civilization. Whoever loves peace loves mankind, without distinction of race or of colour.

Second thought: You must serve the cause of peace. Serve it, and not make use of it for aims other than the true aims of peace. Serve it, and not use this noble standard as a cover for cowardice or selfishness, which refuses to make sacrifices for the common good; not debilitate and pervert the spirit, by evading the call of duty and seeking one's own interests and pleasure. Peace is not a state which can be acquired and made permanent. Peace must be built; it must be built up every day by works of peace. These works of peace are, first of all, social order; then, aid to the poor, who still make up an immense multitude of the world population, aid to the needy, the weak, the sick, the ignorant. Peace must be like a garden, in which public and private beneficence cultivates the choicest flowers of friendship, of solidarity, of charity and love.

Third thought: Peace must be based on moral and religious principles, which will make it sincere and stable. Politics do not suffice to sustain a durable peace. The absence of conflict does not suffice to make of peace a source of happiness and of true human progress. Peace must have its roots anchored in wisdom, and this wisdom must draw nourishment from the true concept of life, that is the Christian concept. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus: «Peace I leave with you, *My* peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you» (*Jo.* 14, 27). Jesus, the Prince of Peace (*Is.* 9, 6), has His own original and characteristic peace, which can regulate every human relationship because, in the very first place, it regulates the relationship with God.

Coming among you at a moment, so beautiful, so brief but so important, as this, We have no better greeting, no better remembrance for you than to repeat that holy salutation of Christ: Peace, His peace!

Finally, one more word.

At the end of this Mass, We shall bless a stone, which We had removed from Saint Peter's Basilica and which We Ourselves brought here from Rome. This blessed stone will be placed in the foundations of a great new edifice, the Seminary of the Archdiocese of New York. Cardinal Spellman, with that courage and farsightedness which are characteristic of him, is preparing to build this Seminary for the new and future generations of students for the Priesthood in the service of Holy Mother Church. This is indeed a monument worthy of perpetuating the memory of Our visit to you. You can see in this corner stone an eloquent symbol of the faith and love which unite the Catholics of New York to the Church of Rome. You can see in this ceremony the proof of Our confidence in the Seminarians of New York, those of today and those of tomorrow; the pledge of

Our good wishes that they may always be sustained by Christ, and always be the *gloria Christi*, the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 8, 23).