



# The Holy See

---

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS

**POPE PAUL VI**

FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE  
DAY OF PEACE

1 JANUARY 1969

## **THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, THE WAY TO PEACE**

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 upon 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 peoples. 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 is capable, which grows, 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 Christians, 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 into 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, 8 December 1968.*

**PAULUS PP. VI**