



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS

POPE PAUL VI

FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE
DAY OF PEACE

1 JANUARY 1970

**TO BE RECONCILED WITH EACH OTHER,
TO EDUCATE THEMSELVES FOR PEACE**

CITIZENS OF THE WORLD! As you salute the dawn of this new year
nineteen hundred and seventy,
take thought for a moment:

Whither is mankind's path leading?

Today we can take an overall view, a prophetic view. Mankind is travelling forward, that is, progressing towards an ever greater mastery of the world: thought, study and science are guiding it towards this conquest; work, tools and technology are making this wonderful conquest a reality. And how does this mastery help mankind? It helps it to live a better and fuller life. Mankind seeks fulness of life within the limits of time - and is attaining it. But it is aware that this fulness would not be such if it were not universal, that is, extended to all men. Mankind therefore seeks to extend the benefits of progress to all Peoples; it strives for that unity, justice, balance and perfection, which we call Peace. Even when men work against Peace, mankind strives for Peace. "For the sake of Peace even wars are fought" (*De Civitate Dei*, XIX, ch. XII; PL 7, 637). Peace is the logical aim of the present world; it is the destiny of progress, the goal of the great strivings of modern civilisation (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, No. 36). Once more therefore today We proclaim Peace as our best wish for the coming year. Peace be with you, men of the year 1970. We proclaim Peace as the dominant idea in the conscious life of man, if he gazes at the prospect of his immediate and more distant journey. Once more We proclaim Peace, for Peace is, at one and the same time, under different

aspects, both the beginning and the end of the normal and progressive development of human society. It is the beginning, that is, the necessary condition: just as a machine cannot work well unless all its parts correspond to the design according to which the machine was invented, so mankind cannot develop efficiently and harmoniously unless Peace first gives it its own equilibrium. Peace is the idea that reigns over human progress; it is the true and fertile concept from which spring the better life and ordered history of us men. Peace is also the end, that is, the crowning of the efforts, often hard and painful, by which we men seek to subdue the external world to our service, and to organise our society according to an order that reflects justice and well-being. We insist: Peace is the true life and the ideal framework of the World of men. We note this: Peace is not really a static state which can be reached once and for all; it is not an immobile tranquillity. We would misunderstand St. Augustine's famous definition which calls Peace "the tranquillity of order" (*De Civitate Dei*, XIX, ch. XIII; PL 7, 640), if we had an abstract idea of order, if we did not realise that human order is an act, rather than a state; order depends on the conscious effort and will of those who create it and enjoy it, rather than on the circumstances that favour it; order, to be truly human, is ever perfectible, that is, it is unceasingly brought to being and developed; in other words, it lies in a progressive motion, just as the balance of flight must be continuously supported by a driving force. Why do We say this? Because Our words are meant especially for the young. When we speak of Peace, friends, we do not put before you a state of repressive, selfish inertia. Peace is not enjoyed: it is created. Peace is not a level that we have now reached: it is a higher level, to which each and every one of us must ever aspire. It is not a philosophy that lulls us to sleep; it is a philosophy of action, which makes us all responsible for the common good, and obliges us to dedicate all our efforts to its cause - the true cause of mankind. Those who wish to analyse this conviction for themselves will find out many things. They will find that there must be a radical change of the ideas that govern the world. They will find that all these dominant ideas are at least in part false, because they are particular, restricted and selfish. They will find that only one idea is basically good and true: the idea of universal love; that is, the idea of Peace. And they will find that this idea is at the same time very simple and very hard; very simple in itself, for man is made for love, for peace; it is very hard, for how can one love? How can one raise love to the dignity of a universal principle? How can love find a place in the mind of modern man; so steeped in strife, selfishness and hate? Who can say of himself that he has love in his heart? Love for all mankind? Love for mankind still coming into being, the mankind of tomorrow, the mankind of the age of progress, that authentic mankind which cannot be such unless it is united - not by force, not by selfish, exploiting self-interest - but by loving brotherly concord? Those who study the great idea of Peace will then discover that today, immediately, there is need of a new ideological education, education for Peace. Yes, Peace begins within hearts. We must first know, recognize, will and love Peace; then we shall express it, and impress it on the renewed morals of humanity; on its philosophy, its sociology, its politics. Let us realize, Men, Our brothers, the greatness of this futuristic vision, and let us courageously undertake the first programme: to educate ourselves for Peace. We are aware of the paradoxical appearance of this programme; it seems to find its affirmation outside of reality, outside of every instinctive reality of philosophy, sociology or history. Strife is the law. Strife is the force of success. And even, strife is

justice. An inexorable law, this, reborn at every stage of human progress. Even today, after the fearsome experiences of the last wars, it is strife, not Peace, that is thrust on us. Even violence finds followers and adulators. Revolution bestows renown and prestige on every indication of justice, on every renewal of progress. It is inevitable: Force alone clears the way for human destinies. Men, Our brothers, this is the great difficulty that we must consider and solve. That strife can be necessary, that it can be the arm of justice, that it can rise to a noble-hearted, heroic duty, We do not deny. That strife can obtain successes, no one can contest. But We say that it cannot constitute the illuminating idea of which mankind has need. We say that it is time for civilization to draw inspiration from a concept other than that of strife, of violence, of war, of oppression, to set the world on the way to true justice for all. We say that Peace is not cowardice, is not faint-hearted weakness. Peace must gradually, immediately if possible, substitute moral strength for brute force; it must substitute reason, speech and moral greatness for the fatal, and too often fallacious efficacy of arms, of violent means, and of material and economic power. Peace is Man, who has ceased to be a wolf to his fellow man, Man in his invincible moral power. This it is that must today prevail in the world. And it does prevail. We enthusiastically greet the efforts of modern man to give affirmation, in the world and in present history, to Peace as a method, as an international institution, as sincere negotiation, as self-discipline in territorial and social disputes, as a question that is higher than the prestige of reprisal and revenge. Questions of importance for the victory of Peace are already under discussion: disarmament, first of all, limitation of nuclear weapons, the hypothesis of recourse to arbitration, the substitution of collaboration for competition, peaceful coexistence in diversity of ideologies and forms of government, the hope that a proportion of military expenditure will be devoted to aid to developing peoples. Thus We see a contribution to Peace in the now universal deploration of terrorism, of torture of prisoners, of retaliatory repression of innocent people, of concentration camps for civilian detainees, of killing of hostages, and so on. The world's conscience no longer tolerates such crimes, the fierce inhumanity of which turns back in dishonour on those who perform them. It is not Our duty to pass judgment on the disputes still in progress between nations, races, tribes, and social classes. But it is Our mission to cast the word "Peace" into the midst of men at strife with one another. It is Our mission to remind men that they are brothers. It is Our mission to teach men to love one another, to be reconciled with each other, to educate themselves for Peace. Accordingly, We express Our approval, Our encouragement and Our hopefulness to all who are promoters of this education for Peace. This year, also, We call on persons and organisations that hold responsibility, on the organs of public opinion, on statesmen, teachers, artists and, especially, on youth, to walk resolutely along this path of true and universal civilization. We most attain the actual celebration of the Bible prophecy: Justice and Peace have met and kissed each other. And to you, our Brothers and Sons in the same Christian Faith, We add a word more on the duty, which We have mentioned, to educate men to love each other, to be reconciled with one another and to forgive each other mutually. We have precise teachings on this from the Master, Jesus; we have His example, we have the obligation, which He hears from our lips when we recite the "Our Father", according to the well-known words: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us". The word "as" is a tremendous one; it establishes an equation, that, when put into practice, is for our good in the economy of salvation;

when not put into practice, it can be for our damnation (cf. *Mt.* 18, 21-35). To preach the Gospel of forgiveness seems absurd to human politics, because in the natural economy justice does not often permit forgiveness. But in the Christian economy, which is superhuman, it is not absurd. Difficult, yes, but not absurd. How do conflicts in the secular world end? What kind of Peace do they finally attain? In the insidious and furious dialectic of our history, as men filled with passion, pride, and rancour, the Peace which puts an end to any conflict is usually an imposition, a suppression, a yoke; the weaker and more submissive party undergoes this with forced toleration, often equal to postponing revenge to the future; and accepts the treaty protocol which merely conceals hypocrisy in hearts which remain hostile. A Peace like this, too often feigned and unstable, misses the complete resolution of the conflict, which is in pardon, in the victor's renunciation of those advantages he has won but which humiliate the conquered and make him inexorably unhappy; and the conquered one is lacking in that strength of mind necessary for reconciliation. If Peace is without clemency, how can it be called Peace? If Peace is imbued with the spirit of revenge, how can it be true Peace? What is necessary is that one side and the other both appeal to that superior justice, which is pardon, which cancels out insoluble questions of prestige, and makes friendship possible once again. A hard lesson, this; but is it not a magnificent one? Is it not truly contemporary? Is it not truly Christian? Let us educate ourselves, first of all, Christian sons and brothers, in this superior school of Peace; Let us read again the Sermon on the Mount (cf. *Mt.* 5, 21-26; 38-48; 6. 12, 14-15); and then let us strive, by our word and by our example, to announce this good news to the world. To each of you We impart Our Apostolic Blessing. *From the Vatican, 30 November 1969.*

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