



The Holy See

URBI ET ORBI MESSAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II
CHRISTMAS 2001

1. *"Christ is our peace",*
"Christ is our peace;
he has made the two into one people" (cf. *Eph 2:14*).
At the dawn of the new millennium,
which began with so much hope
but is now threatened by dark clouds
of violence and war,
the words of the Apostle Paul
which we listen to this Christmas
are a powerful ray of light,
a cry of trust and optimism.
The Divine Child born in Bethlehem
brings in his little hands as a gift
the key to peace for mankind.
He is the Prince of Peace!
This is the joyful news which echoed that night in Bethlehem,
and which I wish to reaffirm before the world
on this blessed day.
Let us listen once more to the words of the angel:
"I bring you good news of a great joy
which will come to all the people;
for to you is born this day in the city of David
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (*Lk 2:10-11*).
On this day the Church echoes the song of the angels
and repeats their astonishing message,
which first amazed the shepherds

on the hills above Bethlehem.

2. "*Christ is our peace!*"

Christ, "*the babe wrapped in swaddling cloths
and lying in the manger*" (Lk 2:12),

is indeed our peace.

A helpless Newborn Child in a lowly cave
restores dignity to every life being born,
and brings hope to those overcome by doubt and discouragement.

He has come to heal life's wounds
and to restore meaning to death itself.

In that Child, meek and defenceless,
crying in a cold and bare cave,

God has destroyed sin,

and planted the seed of a new humanity,

called to bring to fulfilment

the original plan of creation

and to transcend it through the grace of redemption.

3. "*Christ is our peace!*"

Men and women of the third millennium,
you who hunger for justice and peace,
accept the message of Christmas,
which today rings out around the world!

Jesus was born to strengthen the bonds
uniting individuals and peoples,

to make them all, in himself, brothers and sisters.

He came to break down

"the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph 2:14)

and to make one family of all mankind.

Yes, we can repeat with certainty:

Today, in the Incarnate Word, peace is born!

Peace to be implored,

for God alone is its source and guarantee.

Peace to be forged

in a world in which peoples and nations,

burdened with so many and such varied difficulties,

hope for a new humanity

united not just by economic interests

but by the unceasing effort to bring about

a society that is more just and supportive.

4. Let us hasten like the shepherds to Bethlehem,
let us pause in adoration in the cave,
and gaze upon the Newborn Redeemer.

In him we can recognize the face
of every little child who is born,

of whatever race or nation:

the little Palestinian and the little Israeli;

the little American and the little Afghan;

the child of the Hutu and the child of the Tutsi...

whoever the child is, to Christ each one is special.

Today my thoughts go to all the children of the world:

so many, too many are the children

condemned from birth to suffer

through no fault of their own the effects of cruel conflicts.

Let us save the children,

in order to save the hope of humanity!

This is what we are urgently called to do

by that Child born in Bethlehem,

the God who became man,

to give us back the right to hope.

5. Let us beg from Christ the gift of peace

for all who are suffering as a result of conflicts old and new.

Day after day, I bear in my heart

the tragic problems of the Holy Land;

every day I think with anxiety

of all those who are dying of cold and hunger;

every day there reaches me the desperate cry

of those who, in so many parts of the world,

call for a fairer distribution of resources

and for gainful employment for all.

Let no one lose hope

in the power of God's love!

May Christ be the light and support

of those who believe and work, sometimes in the face of opposition,

for encounter, dialogue and cooperation

between cultures and religions.

May Christ guide in peace the steps

of those who tirelessly devote themselves

to the progress of science and technology.

May these great gifts of God never be used

against respect for human dignity and its promotion!
May God's holy name
never be used as a justification for hatred!
Let it never be used as an excuse for intolerance and violence!
May the gentle face of the Child of Bethlehem
remind everyone that we all have one Father.

6. *Christ is our peace!*

Brothers and Sisters, who are listening to me,
open your hearts to this message of peace,
open your hearts to Christ, the Son of the Virgin Mary,
to the One who became "our peace!"
Open them to the One who takes nothing away from us
except our sin,
and who gives us in return
the fullness of humanity and joy.
And You, the Child of Bethlehem whom we adore,
bring peace to every family and town,
to every nation and continent.
Come, God made man!
Come to be the heart of the world renewed by love!
Come where the fate of humanity
is most in peril!
Come and do not delay!
You are "*our peace*" (*Eph 2:14*)!