



# The Holy See

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MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS  
**POPE PAUL VI**  
FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE  
**DAY OF PEACE**

1 JANUARY 1975

## **RECONCILIATION - THE WAY TO PEACE**

*To all men of good will.*

*Here is our Message for the year 1975!*

*You know it already, nor could it be any different:*

*Brethren! Let us make Peace!*

Our message is very simple, but at the same time it is so serious and so demanding as to seem offensive: does not Peace yet exist? What else and what more can be done for Peace than what has already been done and is still being done? Is the history of mankind not travelling, under its own power, towards worldwide Peace?

Yes, it is; or rather it seems to be. But Peace has to be "made". It has to be continually generated and produced. It results from a balance of forces that is unstable and that can only be maintained by movement in proportion to its speed. The very institutions that in the juridical order and in international society have the task and merit of proclaiming and preserving Peace reach their opportune aim if they are continually active, if they know how to generate Peace, make Peace, at every moment.

This necessity results mainly from the human phenomenon of becoming, from the ceaseless evolutionary process of mankind. Men succeed men, generations succeed generations. Even if no

changes took place in the existing juridical and historical situations, there would still be a need for an effort, continually "in fieri", to educate mankind to stay faithful to the fundamental laws of society. These laws must remain, and they will guide history for an indefinite period, but only on condition that changeable men, and the young people taking the place of those passed on, are unceasingly educated in the discipline of order for the common good and in the ideal of Peace. From this point of view, making Peace means educating to Peace. And it is not a small undertaking, nor an easy one.

But we all know that it is not just men that change on the stage of history. Things change too. This is to say, the questions on the balanced solution of which depends men's peaceful life together in society. No one can maintain that the organization of civil society and of the international context is perfect. Many, very many problems still remain potentially open. The problems of yesterday remain; the problems of today are arising; tomorrow others will arise. And they are all awaiting a solution. This solution, we declare, cannot and must not ever again spring from selfish and violent conflicts, still less from murderous wars between men. As has been said by wise men, learned in the history of peoples and experts in the economy of nations, and as we too, defenceless as we are in the midst of the world's strife, yet strong in the divine Word, have said: all men are brothers. And at last the whole of civilization has admitted this fundamental principle. Therefore: if men are brothers, but there still exist and spring up among them causes of conflict, then Peace must become operative and wise. Peace must be made;

Peace must be produced; Peace must be invented. It must be created through an ever watchful disposition, with a will ever fresh and untiring. Thus we are all persuaded of the principle that animates modern society: Peace can be neither passive nor oppressive; it must be inventive, preventive and operative.

We are glad to note that these guiding criteria of social living in the world are today universally accepted, at least in the main. And we feel it is our duty to thank, to praise and to encourage the leaders and the institutions destined today to promote Peace on earth, for having chosen, as the first article of their activity, this basic axiom: only Peace generates Peace.

Allow us to repeat in a prophetic way to the farthest boundaries of the globe the message of the recent Ecumenical Council: " It is our clear duty, then, to strain every muscle as we work for the time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent.... Peace must be born of mutual trust between the nations rather than imposed on them through fear of one another's weapons.... For government officials, who must simultaneously guarantee the good of all their own people and promote the universal good, depend on public opinion and feeling to the greatest possible extent. It does them no good to work at building peace so long as feelings of hostility, contempt and distrust, as well as racial hatred and unbending ideologies, continue to divide men and place them in opposing camps.

"Hence arises a surpassing need for renewed education of attitudes and for new inspiration in the area of public opinion. Those who are dedicated to the work of education, particularly of the young, or who mould public opinion, should regard as their most weighty task the effort to instruct all in fresh sentiments of Peace. Indeed, every one of us should have a change of heart as we regard the entire world and those tasks which we can perform in unison for the betterment of our race" (Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 82).

And it is in this regard that our message centres on its characteristic and inspiring point, affirming that Peace only has value to the extent that it seeks first to be interior before becoming exterior. Minds must be disarmed if we wish effectively to stop the recourse to arms which strike bodies. It is necessary to give to Peace, that is to say to all men, the spiritual roots of a common form of thought and love. Saint Augustine, designer of a new City, writes that the identity of men's nature is not sufficient to bring them together among themselves. They must be taught to speak the same language, that is to say to understand one another, to possess a common culture, to share the same sentiments, otherwise "man will prefer to be with his dog rather than with a man who is a stranger" (cf. *De Civ. Dei*, XIX, VII; *PL* 41, 634).

This interiorization of Peace is true humanism, true civilization. Fortunately it has already begun. It is maturing as the world develops. It finds its persuasive strength in the universal dimensions of the relations of every kind which men are establishing among themselves. It is a slow and complicated work, but one which, to a great extent, is happening spontaneously: the world is progressing towards its unity. Nevertheless we cannot delude ourselves, and while peaceful concord

among men is spreading, through the progressive discovery of the complementarity and interdependence of countries, through commercial exchanges, through the diffusion of an identical vision of man, always however respectful of the original and specific nature of the various civilizations, through the ease of travel and social communications, and so on, we must take note that today new forms of jealous nationalism are being affirmed, enclosed in manifestations of touchy rivalries based on race, language and traditions; there remain sad situations of poverty and hunger. Powerful economic multinational expressions are arising, full of selfish antagonisms. Exclusive and arrogant ideologies are being organized into social systems. Territorial conflicts break out with frightening ease. And above all, there is an increase in the number and the power of murderous weapons for possible catastrophic destruction, such as to stamp terror with the name of Peace. Yes, the world is progressing towards its unity, but even as it does so there increase the terrifying hypotheses which envisage more possible, more easy and more terrible fatal clashes - clashes which are considered, in certain circumstances, inevitable and necessary, and called for, as it were, by justice. Will justice be one day the sister no longer of peace but of wars? (cf. Saint Augustine, *ibid.*).

We are not playing at utopias, either optimistic ones or pessimistic. We want to remain in the

realms of reality - a reality which, with its phenomenology of illusory hope and deplorable desperation, warns us once more that there is something not functioning properly in the monumental machine of our civilization. This machine could explode in an indescribable conflagration because of a defect in its construction. We say a defect, not a lack. The defect, that is, of the spiritual element, though we admit that this element is already present and at work in the general process of the peaceful development of contemporary history, and worthy of every favourable recognition and encouragement. Have we not awarded to UNESCO our prize named after Pope John XXIII, the author of the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*?

But we dare to say that more must be done. We have to make use of and apply the spiritual element in order to make it capable not only of impeding conflicts among men and predisposing them to peaceful and civilized sentiments, but also of producing reconciliation among those same men, that is of generating Peace. It is not enough to contain wars, to suspend conflicts, to impose truces and armistices, to define boundaries and relationships, to create sources of common interest; it is not enough to paralyze the possibility of radical strife through the terror of unheard-of destruction and suffering. An imposed Peace, a utilitarian and provisional Peace is not enough. Progress must be made towards a Peace which is loved, free and brotherly, founded, that is, on a reconciliation of hearts .

We know that it is difficult, more difficult than any other method. But it is not impossible, it is not a fantasy. We have faith in a fundamental goodness of individuals and of peoples: God has made the generations wholesome (cf. *Wis* 1:14) . The intelligent and persevering effort for the mutual understanding of men, of social classes, of cities, of peoples and of civilizations is not sterile.

We rejoice, especially on the eve of International Women's Year, proclaimed by the United Nations, at the ever wider participation of women in the life of society, to which they bring a specific contribution of great value, thanks to the qualities that God has given them. These qualities, of intuition, creativity, sensibility, a sense of piety and compassion, a profound capacity for understanding and love, enable women to be in a very particular way the creators of reconciliation in families and in society.

It is equally a source of special satisfaction to be able to note that the education of young people to a new universal mentality of human oneness, a mentality which is not sceptical, not vile, not inept, not oblivious of justice, but generous, and loving, has already started and has already made progress. It possesses unforeseeable resources for reconciliation. This can signpost the road of Peace, in truth, in honour, in justice, in love, and thus in the stability and in the new history of mankind.

Reconciliation! Young men and women, strong men and women, responsible men and women, free men and women, good men and women - will you think of it? Could not this magic word find a place in the dictionary of your hopes and of your successes?

This then is our message of good wishes for you: reconciliation is the way to Peace.

*For you, men and women of the Church!*

*Brothers in the Episcopate,*

*priests and men and women religious!*

*For you, the members of our militant Catholic laity, and all the faithful!*

The message on Reconciliation as the way to Peace demands a complement, even if it is already known and present to you.

This is not only an integral part of our message, but an essential one, as you know. For it reminds us all that the first and indispensable reconciliation to be achieved is reconciliation with God. For us believers there can be no other way to Peace than this. Indeed, in the definition of our salvation, reconciliation with God and our Peace coincide; one is the cause of the other. This is the work of Christ. He has repaired the break which sin produces in our vital relationship with God. We recall, among many, one of the phrases of Saint Paul in this regard: "It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us .to himself through Christ" (2 Cor 5:18).

The Holy Year which we are about to begin wishes to involve us in this first and happy reconciliation: Christ is our Peace; he is the principle of reconciliation in the unity of his Mystical Body (cf. Eph 2: 14-16). Ten years after the close of the Second Vatican Council we shall do well to meditate more deeply on the theological and ecclesiological sense of these basic truths of our faith and of our Christian life.

Hence a logical and necessary consequence - one that is also easy if we are truly in Christ: we must perfect the sense of our unity - unity in the Church, unity of the Church. Mystical, constitutive communion, the former (cf. 1 Cor 1: 10; 12: 12-27); ecumenical restoration of the unity of all Christians, the latter (cf. Conciliar Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*). One and the other demand their own proper reconciliation, which must bring to the Christian collectivity that Peace which is the fruit of the Spirit, following upon love and its joy (cf. Gal 5:22).

In these spheres too we must "make Peace"! There will certainly come to your attention the text of our "*Exhortation on Reconciliation within the Church*", published at this time. We exhort you in the name of Jesus Christ to meditate on this document and to try to draw therefrom resolves of reconciliation and of Peace. Let no one think that he can escape these inevitable demands of communion with Christ - reconciliation and Peace - by clinging to long familiar positions which are in conflict with Christ's Church. Let us rather aim at this: that each and every one may make a new and sincere contribution to the filial, humble and positive building up of this Church. Shall we not perhaps recall the last words of the Lord in explanation of his Gospel: " ... may they be so completely one that the world will realize that it was you who sent me" (Jn 17: 23)? Shall

we not have the joy of seeing brethren who are loved and far away come back once more to the old and happy harmony?

We shall have to pray that this Holy Year will give the Catholic Church the inexpressible experience of the restoration of the unity of some groups of brethren, already so near to the one fold but still hesitant to cross its threshold. And we shall pray also for the sincere followers of other religions, so that there may develop the friendly dialogue that we have begun with them, and so that, together, we may collaborate for world Peace.

And above all we must ask God to give us that humility and love which will endow the clear and constant profession of our faith with the attracting power of reconciliation and the strengthening and joyous charism of Peace.

And with our greeting and blessing: " ... that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus " (*Phil 4:7*).

From the Vatican, 8 December 1974.

PAULUS PP. VI