

CHRISTI MATRI

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE PAUL VI ON PRAYERS FOR PEACE DURING OCTOBER

SEPTEMBER 15, 1966

To His Venerable Brothers the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops and other Local Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brothers, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

It is a solemn custom of the faithful during the month of October to weave the prayers of the Rosary into mystical garlands for the Mother of Christ. Following in the footsteps of Our predecessors, We heartily approve this, and We call upon all the sons of the church to offer special devotions to the Most Blessed Virgin this year. For the danger of a more serious and extensive calamity hangs over the human family and has increased, especially in parts of eastern Asia where a bloody and hard-fought war is raging. So We feel most urgently that We must once again do what We can to safeguard peace. We are also disturbed by what We know to be going on in other areas, such as the growing nuclear armaments race, the senseless nationalism, the racism, the obsession for revolution, the separations imposed upon citizens, the nefarious plots, the slaughter of innocent people. All of these can furnish material for the greatest calamity.

A Special Task from God

2. Like Our immediate predecessors, We seem to have received a special task from God in His providence to work patiently and constantly to preserve and strengthen peace. This task, as is evident, arises from the fact that We have been entrusted with the governing of the whole Church, which, as a "sign lifted up to the nations," (1) does not serve political ends but rather must bring the truth and grace of Jesus Christ, its divine Founder, to mankind.

3. Indeed, from the very beginning of Our apostolic ministry, We have omitted no effort to further the cause of peace in the world through prayers, entreaties and exhortations. As you well remember, last year We flew to North America to speak about the most desirable blessing of peace at the General Assembly of the United Nations, before a very distinguished audience representing almost every nation. (2) We warned against allowing some to be inferior to others, and against allowing some to attack others. Instead, all should devote their efforts and zeal to the establishment of peace. Even afterwards, moved by apostolic concern, We did not stop urging those upon whom this great matter depends to ward off from mankind the frightful disaster that might result.

A Very Grave Obligation

4. Now once again We raise Our voice "with a loud cry and with tears," (3) urgently beseeching those who rule over nations to do everything they can to see to it that the conflagration spreads

no farther but rather is completely extinguished. We do not doubt that all men who want what is right and honorable—whatever their race, color, religion and social class—feel the same as We do.

5. Therefore, let all those responsible bring about the necessary conditions for the laying down of arms before the possibility of doing so is taken away by the pressure of events. Those in whose hands rests the safety of the human race should realize that in this day and age they have a very grave obligation in conscience. Mindful of their own nation, of the world, of God and history, let them examine their own consciences. Let them realize that in the future their names will be blessed if they wisely succeed in complying with this exhortation.

Negotiations Must Begin

6. In the name of the Lord We cry out to them to stop. Men must come together and get down to sincere negotiations. Things must be settled now, even at the cost of some loss of inconvenience, for later they may have to be settled at the cost of immense harm and enormous slaughter that cannot even be imagined now. But this peace must be based on justice and freedom for mankind, and must take into account the rights of individuals and communities. Otherwise it will be fluid and unstable.

7. As We say all this with deep emotion and an anxious heart, it is only right for Us to do as Our supreme pastoral care urges, and ask for help from heaven. Peace, which "is such a great good that even among earthly, mortal things, there is nothing more pleasant to hear, nothing more ardently desired, and finally nothing better to be found," (4) has to be sought from Him who is the Prince of Peace. (5) But since the Church, in uncertain and anxious times, has been accustomed to have recourse to that most ready intercessor, her Mother Mary, We have good reason to direct Our own attention and yours, venerable brethren, and that of all the Christian faithful, to her. For as St. Irenaeus says, she "has become the cause of salvation for the whole human race." (6)

Mary, Queen of Peace

8. Nothing seems more appropriate and valuable to Us than to have the prayers of the whole Christian family rise to the Mother of God, who is invoked as the Queen of Peace, begging her to pour forth abundant gifts of her maternal goodness in midst of so many great trials and hardships. We want constant and devout prayers to be offered to her whom We declared Mother of the Church, its spiritual parent, during the celebration of the Second Vatican Council, thereby winning the applause of the Fathers and of the Catholic world, and confirming a point of traditional doctrine. For the Mother of the Savior is, as St. Augustine teaches, "surely the mother of His members," (7) and St. Anselm, to mention only one other, agrees with him in these words: "What could ever be deemed more suitable than for you to be the mother of those whose father and brother Christ deigned to become?" (8) She was called "most truly the mother of the Church" by Our predecessor Leo XIII. (9) Hence We have good reason to place our trust in her in the midst of this terrible disorder.

The Value of the Rosary

9. If evils increase, the devotion of the People of God should also increase. And so, venerable brothers, We want you to take the lead in urging and encouraging people to pray ardently to our most merciful mother Mary by saying the Rosary during the month of October, as We have already indicated. This prayer is well-suited to the devotion of the People of God, most pleasing to the Mother of God and most effective in gaining heaven's blessings. The Second Vatican Council recommended use of the Rosary to all the sons of the Church, not in express words but in unmistakable fashion in this phrase: "Let them value highly the pious practices and exercises directed to the Blessed Virgin and approved over the centuries by the magisterium." (9)

10. As the history of the Church makes clear, this very fruitful way of praying is not only efficacious in warding off evils and preventing calamities, but is also of great help in fostering Christian life. "It nourishes the Catholic faith which readily takes on new life from a timely commentary on the sacred mysteries, and it turns minds toward the truths that have been taught us by God." (11)

October 4th Observance

11. And so during the month of October, dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, prayers and petitions should be increased, so that through her intercession the dawn of true peace may shine forth to men. This means true religious peace too, for unfortunately, not everyone is allowed to profess his religion freely in this age. In particular, We want October 4th—the day on which, as We mentioned earlier, We went last year to the United Nations for the sake of peace—to be celebrated throughout the whole Catholic world this year as a Day of Prayer for Peace. It will be up to you, venerable brethren, in the light of your own commendable devotion and on the basis of the obvious importance of this matter, to prescribe sacred ceremonies in which priests, religious and the faithful—especially boys and girls in the flower of their innocence, and the sick and others who are suffering—can all ask the help of the Mother of God and of the Church.

12. On that day We Ourselves will go to St. Peter's Basilica, to the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, to offer special prayers to the Virgin Mother of God, protector of Christians and mediator for peace. In this way heaven will be moved, in a sense, by the one voice of the Church resounding from all the continents on the earth. For as St. Augustine says, "Amid the various languages of men, the faith of the heart speaks one tongue." (12)

An Appeal to Mary

13. Look down with maternal clemency, Most Blessed Virgin, upon all your children. Consider the anxiety of bishops who fear that their flocks will be tormented by a terrible storm of evils. Heed the anguish of so many people, fathers and mothers of families who are uncertain about their future and beset by hardships and cares. Soothe the minds of those at war and inspire them with "thoughts of peace." Through your intercession, may God, the avenger of injuries, turn to mercy. May He give back to nations the tranquility they seek and bring them to a lasting age of genuine prosperity.

14. With confidence that the exalted Mother of God will graciously hear Our humble prayer, We lovingly impart the apostolic blessing to you, venerable brethren, and to the clergy and people committed to your care.

Given at St. Peter's, Rome, on the 15th day of September, in the year 1966, the fourth of Our pontificate.

PAUL VI

NOTES

LATIN TEXT: *Acta Apostolicae sedis*, (1966), 745-49.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: *The Pope speaks*, 11 (Summer, 1966), 221-25.

REFERENCES

(1) Cf. Is 11. 12.

(2) [Cf. TPS XI, 47 - 57].

(3) *Heb* 5.7

(4) St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 19. 11: PL 41. 637.

(5) Is 9. 6.

(6) *Adversus Haereses* 3. 22: PG 7. 959.

(7) *De Sanct. Virg.* 6: PL 40. 399.

(8) Or. 47: PL m158. 945

(9) Encyc. Letter *Adiutricem populi christiani*, Sept. 5, 1895: *Acta Leon.* 15, 1896, p.302

(10) *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, no. 67 [cf. TPS X, 399].

(11) Pius XI, Encyc. Letter *Ingravcentibus malis*, Sept. 29, 1937: AAS 29 (1937), 378.

(12) *Enarr.* In Ps. 54. 11: PL 36. 636.

Source: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_15091966_christi-matri_en.html: Vatican Translation.

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