

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

**1 JANUARY 1971**

MEN OF 1971!

On the timepiece of the world's history  
the hand of time,  
of our time,  
points to the beginning of a new year this one  
which We wish to inaugurate,  
as We have inaugurated previous years,  
with Our affectionate greeting,  
with Our message of Peace:  
Peace to you, Peace to the world.

Listen to Us. It is worthwhile. Yes, as usual, Our word is: peace. But it is the word of which the world is in need, urgently in need, and that makes it new.

Let us open our eyes at the dawn of this new year, let us observe two orders of general facts and events, which affect the world, its peoples, families and individuals. These facts, it seems to Us, influence our destinies deeply and directly. Each one of us can be their horoscope.

Observe the first order. In truth it is not an order, but a disorder. For the facts which We assemble in this category all indicate a return to thoughts and deeds which it seemed the tragic experience of war had, or should have, wiped away. At the end of the war everyone said: Enough! Enough of what? Of everything that gave rise to the human butchery and the appalling devastation. Immediately after the war, at the beginning of this generation, humanity became suddenly conscious that it was not enough to bury the dead, heal the wounds, rebuild what was destroyed and renew and improve the face of the earth; the causes of the conflagration we had undergone must be removed. The causes: this was the wise plan: to look for the causes and to eliminate them. The world breathed again. Indeed it seemed that a new era was about to open, the era of universal peace.<sup>(1)</sup> Everyone seemed ready to accept radical changes, in order to avoid new conflicts. For the political, social and economic structures a perspective of wonderful moral and social innovations was presented. There was talk of justice, of human rights, of betterment of the weak, of orderly coexistence, of organized collaboration, of world union. Great gestures were made: the victors, for example, came to the aid of the vanquished. Great institutions were founded. The world began to organize itself on principles of effective union and common prosperity. The way to peace, as a normal and fundamental condition of life in the world, seemed to have been finally planned.

And yet, what do we see after twenty-five years of this material and idyllic progress? We see, first of all, that, here and there, wars still rage, and seem to be incurable plagues, which threaten to spread and grow worse. We see a continuation of, and in places an increase in, social, racial and religious discrimination. We see a return of the old mentality;

man seems to entrench himself in situations of the past, first psychological and then political. The demons of yesterday rise up again. The supremacy of economic interests, with the all too easy exploitation of the weak, once more returns;(2) so does class hatred (3) and class warfare, and thus is born again international and civil strife. The struggle for national prestige and political power is back; the inflexible conflict of opposing ambitions, and of the rooted and uncompromising prejudices of races and ideologies has returned; recourse is had to crime and violence, as a burning ideal, heedless of the conflagration that may ensue. Peace is again thought of as no more than a balance of mighty forces and of terrifying armaments . Once again people feel a tremor of fear lest some catastrophic imprudence might lead to incredible and uncontrollable holocausts. What is happening? Where are we going? What has gone wrong? Or what has been lacking? Must we resign ourselves to doubting that man is capable of achieving a just and lasting peace, and to renouncing the task of implanting into the education of the new generations the hope for, and the mentality of, peace?(4)

Fortunately another set of ideas and facts appears before our gaze; and it is that of progressive peace. For, notwithstanding everything, peace marches on. There are breaks in continuity, there are inconsistencies and difficulties. But all the same peace marches on and is establishing itself in the world with a certain invincibility. Every man is conscious of it: peace is necessary. It has in its favour the moral progress of humanity, which is indisputably directed towards unity. Unity and peace, when freedom unites them, are sisters. Peace benefits from the growing favour of public opinion, which is convinced of the absurdity of war pursued for its own sake and believed to be the only and unavoidable means of settling controversies among men. Peace avails it self of the ever closer network of human relations in the fields of culture, economics, commerce, sport and tourism. We must live together, and it is good to know each other, and to respect and help one another. A fundamental cohesion is taking shape in the world. This favours peace. International relations are increasingly developing, and they form the premise and also the guarantee of a certain concord. The great international and supranational institutions are seen to be providential, at the source as well as at the perfection of humanity's peaceful coexistence.

Before this double picture, on which are superimposed phenomena contrary to the purpose closest to Our heart - that is, peace - it seems to Us that a single, ambivalent observation can be drawn. Let us ask a two-fold question, concerning two aspects of the ambiguous scene the world presents today:

why, today, does peace recede?  
and why, today, does peace progress?

What is the element which emerges, in a negative sense, or indeed in a positive sense, from this simple analysis? The element is always man. Man abased in the first case, man upraised in the second. Let us venture to use a word, which may itself appear ambiguous, but which, given the thought its deep significance demands, is ever splendid and supreme. The world is "love": love for man, as the highest principle of the terrestrial order. Love and peace are correlative entities. Peace is a product of love: true love, human love.(5)

Peace supposes a certain "identity of choice": this is friendship. If we want peace, we must recognize the necessity of building it upon foundations more substantial than the nonexistence of relations (relations among men are inevitable; they grow and become necessary), or the existence of relations of self-interest (these are precarious and often deceptive), or the web of purely cultural or fortuitous relations (these can be double-edged, for peace or for combat).

True peace must be founded upon justice, upon a sense of the intangible dignity of man, upon the recognition of an abiding and happy equality between men, upon the basic principle of human brotherhood, that is, of the respect and love due to each man, because he is man. The victorious word springs forth: because he is a brother. My brother, our brother.

This consciousness of a universal human brotherhood is also happily developing in our world, at least in principle.

Whoever works to educate the rising generations in the conviction that every man is our brother, is building from the foundation the edifice of peace. Whoever implants in public opinion the sentiment of human brotherhood without reserve, is preparing better days for the world. Whoever conceives of the protection of political interests without the incitement of hate and of combat amongst men, as a logical and indispensable necessity of social life, is opening to human society the ever effective advancement of the common good. Whoever helps in discovering in every man, beyond his physical, ethnic and racial characteristics, the existence of a being equal to his own, is transforming the earth from an epicentre of division, antagonism, treachery and revenge into a field of vital work for civil collaboration. Where brotherhood amongst men is at root disregarded, peace is at root destroyed. And yet peace is the mirror of the real, authentic, modern humanity, victorious over every anachronistic self-injury. Peace is the great concept extolling love amongst men who discover that they are brothers and decide to live as such.

This then is Our message for the year 1971. It echoes, as a voice arising anew from the conscience of civil society, the Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". This is the summit reached by the teaching of civilization. Let us not turn back. Let us not lose the treasures of this axiomatic conquest. Rather let us all give rational and resolute attention to this formula, this goal of human progress: "Every man is my brother". This is peace, in being and in the making. And it avails for all!

For us, brothers of faith in Christ, it is especially valid. To the human wisdom, which, with great effort, has reached such an eminent and difficult conclusion, we believers can add a needed support before all, the support of certitude (for doubts of all kinds may besiege it, weaken it, destroy it), that of our certitude in the divine word of Christ our Master, as inscribed in his Gospel: "You are all brothers" (*Mt 23: 8*). We can offer encouragement as to the possibility of applying it (for, in practical reality, how difficult it is to be truly brothers to everybody!) We can do this by turning to another of Christ's fundamental teachings, as to a practical and standard rule of action: "Treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets" (*Mt 7: 12*). How philosophers and saints have meditated on this maxim, which implants the universality of the precept of brotherhood into the individual and positive actions of social morality! And so, finally, we are in a position to provide the supreme argument: the concept of God's Fatherhood over all men, proclaimed to all believers. A true brotherhood, among men, to be authentic and binding, presupposes and demands a transcendental Fatherhood overflowing with metaphysical love, with supernatural charity. We can teach human brotherhood, that is peace, by teaching men to acknowledge, to love, to invoke our Father in heaven. We know that we shall find the way to God's altar barred if we have not first removed the obstacle to reconciliation with our brother man (*Mt 5. 23 ff., 6: 14-15*). And we know that if we are Promoters of peace, then we can be called sons of God, and be among those whom the Gospel calls blessed (*Mt 5: 9*).

What strength, what fruitfulness, what confidence the Christian religion bestows on the equation of brotherhood and peace. What joy it is for us to find, at the meeting point of these two terms, the crossing of the paths of our faith with those of the hopes of humanity and civilization.

*From the Vatican, 14 November 1970.*

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(1) Cf. VERGIL, *Bucolicon IV*, 2: «magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo».

(2) «... en acceptant la primauté de valeurs matérielles, nous rendons la guerre inévitable ...». ZUNDEL, *Le poème de la sainte liturgie*, p. 76.

(3) «... ci sono poche cose che corrompano tanto un popolo, quanto l'abitudine dell'odio». MANZONI, *Morale cattolica*, I, VII.

(4) On the evils of war, cf. SAINT AUGUSTIN, *De Civitate Dei*, XIX, 7: «... whoever tolerates them and thinks of them without anguish of spirit, is much more despicable in his belief that he has found satisfaction, for he has lost even his human feeling: et humanum perdidit sensum».

(5) Cf. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 29, 3.