

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

1 JANUARY 1976

THE REAL WEAPONS OF PEACE

To you, Statesmen!

To you, Representatives and Promoters of the great international Institutions!

To you, Politicians! To you, Students of the problems of life in international society, Publicists, Workers, Sociologists, and Economists concerned with the relationships between Peoples.

To you, Citizens of the world, whether you are fascinated by the ideal of a universal brotherhood or disappointed and sceptical regarding the possibility of establishing relationships of equilibrium, justice and collaboration between Peoples!

And finally to you, the followers of Religions which promote friendship between people; to you, Christians, to you, Catholics: who make peace in the world the principle of your faith and the goal of your worldwide love!

In this year 1976, as in previous years, we once more presume respectfully to come before you with our message of Peace.

We preface our message with an invitation: that you should listen to it; that you should be attentive and patient. The great cause of Peace deserves a hearing; it deserves your reflection, even though it may seem that our voice is repeating itself on this recurrent theme at the dawn of the new year; and even though, erudite as you are by reason of your studies and perhaps even more by your experiences, you may think that you already know everything about Peace in the world.

And yet, perhaps it may be of some interest to you to know the nature of our spontaneous feelings concerning this implacable theme of Peace - feelings that derive from immediate experiences of the historical situation in which we are all immersed.

Our first feelings in this regard are twofold, and they are at variance one with the other. First and foremost, we see with pleasure and hope that progress is being made by the *idea* of Peace. This idea is gaining importance and attention in men's minds; and it is accompanied by the development of the structures of the organization of Peace; there is an increase of official and academic manifestations in its favour. Activities are developing in the direction indicated by Peace: journeys, congresses, assemblies, trade-links, studies, friendships, collaboration, aid, and so forth. Peace is gaining ground. The Helsinki Conference of July-August 1975 is an event which gives reason for hope in this regard.

But unfortunately, at the same time we see the manifestation of phenomena contrary to the content and purpose of Peace; and these phenomena too are making progress, even though they are often restricted to a latent state, yet with unmistakable symptoms of incipient or future conflagrations. For example, accompanying the sense of national

identity which is a legitimate and commendable expression of the many-sided oneness of a People, there is a rebirth of nationalism, which exaggerates national expression to the point of collective egoism and exclusivist antagonism. In the collective consciousness it brings about the rebirth of dangerous and even frightening seeds of rivalry and of very probable contentions.

There is a disproportionate growth - and the example causes shivers of fear - of the possession of arms of every kind, in every individual Nation. We have the justified suspicion that the arms trade often reaches the highest levels in international markets, with this obsessive sophism: defence, even if it is planned as something purely hypothetical and potential, demands a growing competition in armaments, which can ensure Peace only through their opposed balance.

This is not the complete list of the negative factors eating away at the stability of Peace. Can we give the name *peaceful* to a world that is radically divided by irreconcilable ideologies - ideologies that are powerfully and fiercely organized, ideologies that divide Peoples from one another, and, when they are allowed free rein, subdivide those Peoples within themselves, into factions and parties that find their reason for existence and activity in poisoning their ranks with irreconcilable hatred and systematic struggle within the very fabric of society itself? The apparent normality of such political situations does not conceal the tension of a corresponding iron hand, ready to crush the adversary as soon as he should betray a sign of fatal weakness. Is this Peace? Is it civilization? Can we give the name *People* to a mass of citizens who are opposed one to another to the bitter end?

And where is Peace in the festering centres of armed conflicts, or of conflicts that are barely contained by the impossibility of more violent explosions? We follow with admiration the efforts being made to calm these centres of warfare and guerilla activity which for years have been devastating the face of the earth, and which every minute are threatening to break out into gigantic struggles involving continents, races, religions and social ideologies. But we cannot conceal the precariousness of a Peace which is merely a truce of already clearly defined future conflicts, that is, the hypocrisy of a tranquillity which is called peaceful only with cold words of simulated reciprocal respect.

We recognize that Peace, in historical reality, is a work of continual therapy. Its health is by its very nature frail, consisting as it does in the establishment of relationships between overbearing and fickle men.

Peace demands a wise and unceasing effort on the part of that higher creative imagination which we call diplomacy, international order or the dynamic of negotiations. Poor Peace!

What then are your weapons? Fear of unheard-of and fatal conflagrations, which could decimate, indeed almost annihilate humanity? Resignation to a certain state of endured oppression, such as colonialism, imperialism or revolution which begins as violence and inexorably becomes static and terribly self-perpetuating? Preventive and secret weapons? A capitalist, that is, egoistical organization of the economic world, which is obliged by hunger to remain subdued and quiet? The self-absorbed bewitchment of an historical culture, presumptuous and convinced of its own perennial triumphant destinies? Or the magnificent organizational structures intent on rationalizing and organizing international life?

Is it sufficient, is it sure, is it fruitful, is it happy - a Peace sustained only by such foundations?

More is needed. This is our message. It is necessary before all else to provide Peace with other weapons - weapons different from those destined to kill and exterminate mankind. What is needed above all are moral weapons, those which give strength and prestige to international law - the weapon, in the first place, of the observance of pacts. *Pacta sunt servanda* is the still valid axiom for the consistency of effective relations between States, for the stability of justice between Nations, for the upright conscience of Peoples. Peace makes this axiom its shield. And where pacts do not reflect justice? Here is the justification for the new international Institutions, the mediators for consultations, studies and deliberations, which must absolutely exclude the ways of the so-called *fait accompli*, that is to say, the contention of blind and uncontrolled forces, which always involve human victims and incalculable and unimputable ruin, rarely attaining the pure object of effectively vindicating a truly just cause. Arms and wars are, in a word, to be excluded from civilization's programmes. Judicious disarming is another weapon of Peace. As the prophet Isaiah said: "He will wield authority over the nations and adjudicate between many peoples; these will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles " (*Is* 2:4). And then let us listen to the word of Christ: "Put your sword back, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (*Mt* 26:52). Is this utopia? For how much longer?

Here we enter into the speculative world of ideal humanity, of the new mankind still to be born, still to be educated - mankind stripped of its grievous weight of murderous military weaponry, and rather clothed and strengthened by moral principles which are natural to it. These are principles which already exist, but still in a theoretical and in practice immature, weak and tender state, only at the beginning of their penetration into the profound and operative consciousness of Peoples. Their weakness, which seems incurable to the diagnosticians, the so-called realists of historical and anthropological studies, comes especially from the fact that military disarmament, if it is not to constitute an unforgivable error of impossible optimism, of blind ingenuousness, of a tempting opportunity for others' oppression, should be common and general. Disarmament is either for everyone, or it is a crime of neglect to defend oneself. Does not the sword, in the concert of historical and concrete life in society, have its own *raison d'être*, for justice and for peace? (cf. *Rom* 13:4). Yes, we must admit it. But has there not come into the world a transforming dynamism, a hope which is no longer unlikely, a new and effective progress, a future and longed-for history which can make itself present and real, ever since the Master, the Prophet of the New Testament, proclaimed the decline of the archaic, primitive and instinctive tradition, and, with a Word having in itself power not only to denounce and to announce but also to generate, under certain conditions, a new mankind, declared: "Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them ... You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: 'You must not kill'; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you: Anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court" (*Mt* 5:17, 21-22).

It is no longer a simple, ingenuous and dangerous utopia. It is the new Law of mankind which goes forward, and which arms Peace with a formidable principle: "You are all brethren" (*Mt* 23:8). If the consciousness of universal brotherhood truly penetrates into the hearts of men, will they still need to arm themselves to the point of becoming blind and fanatic killers of their brethren who in themselves are innocent, and of perpetrating, as a contribution to Peace, butchery of untold magnitude, as at Hiroshima on 6 August 1945? And in fact has not our own time had an example of what can be done by a weak man, Gandhi - armed only with the principle of non-violence - to vindicate for a Nation of hundreds of millions of human beings the freedom and dignity of a new People?

Civilization walks in the footsteps of Peace armed only with an olive branch. Civilization is followed by the Doctors with the weighty volumes on the Law which will lead to the ideal human society; there follow the Politicians, expert not so much in the calculation of all-conquering armies for winning wars and repressing the defeated and demoralized, but rather in assessing the resources of the psychology of goodness and friendship. Justice too moves in this ordered procession, now no longer proud and cruel but completely intent on defending the weak, punishing the violent and ensuring an order which is extremely difficult to achieve but which alone is worthy of that divine name: order in freedom and conscious duty.

Let us rejoice: this procession, though interrupted by hostile attacks and by unexpected accidents, continues along its way before our eyes in this tragic time of ours. Its step is perhaps a little slow, but it is nonetheless sure and beneficial for the whole world. It is a procession intent on using the real weapons of peace.

This message too must have its appendix for those properly called followers and servants of the Gospel - an appendix which recalls how explicit and demanding Christ our Lord is in regard to this theme of peace stripped of every weapon and armed only with goodness and love.

The Lord makes statements, as we know, which appear paradoxical. Let it not be distasteful to us to rediscover in the Gospel the rules for a Peace which we could describe as self-abnegating! Let us recall, for example: "If a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well" (*Mt 5:40*). And then that prohibition of revenge - does it not undermine Peace? Indeed, does it not aggravate, rather than defend, the position of the injured party? "If anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well" (*Mt 5:40*). So there are to be no reprisals, no vendettas (and these are all the more wrong if they are committed to prevent injuries not yet received!). How many times in the Gospel is forgiveness recommended to us, not as an act of cowardly weakness, nor as a surrender in the face of injustice, but as a sign of fraternal love, which is laid down as a condition for us to obtain God's forgiveness, which we need and which is a far more generous forgiveness! (cf. *Mt 18:23 ff.*, *5:44*; *Mk 11:25*; *Lk 6:37*; *Rom 12:14*, etc.).

Let us remember the pledge we give to be forgiving and to pardon when we invoke God's forgiveness in the "our Father". We ourselves lay down the condition and the extent of the mercy we ask for when we say: "And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us" (*Mt 6:12*).

For us also therefore, who are disciples of the school of Christ, this is a lesson to be meditated on still more and to be applied with confident courage.

Peace expresses itself only in peace, a peace which is not separate from the demands of justice but which is fostered by personal sacrifice, clemency, mercy and love.

From the Vatican, 18 October 1975.

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