

THE ILLUD ENCYCLICAL OF POPE PIUS XII ON THE CRUSADE OF PRAYER FOR

Pius XII

Venerable Brethren,

Health and Apostolic Blessing.

That admirable prodigy of fraternal concord which the numberless multitudes of the faithful, from almost every nation, flocking to Rome as devout pilgrims during the course of the Holy Year have provided seems to us to contain as it were a warning voice, a solemn testimony to everybody that the peoples of the world do not wish for war nor discord nor hatred, but ardently desire peace, unity of minds and that Christian love which alone can be the source of a better and more happy era for all. It is our ardent wish that all should at last hear that warning, as with anxious mind We behold peoples engaged in a fearful preparation for war while in certain places a horrible fury of slaughter is already reaping its harvest of courageous, youthful lives.

2. Is it not abundantly clear that bloody conflicts bring in their wake untold ruins, slaughter and misery of every kind? So terrible are the mechanical equipment and instruments of modern warfare invented by the genius of man - genius which indeed was created for other purposes - that they must inspire any thinking person with profound horror, especially as they oftentimes strike not merely armies but also civilians and even innocent children, women, the aged and infirm, and likewise sacred buildings and most outstanding artistic achievements.

3. Who is there who is not stricken with horror at the thought of possible addition of other cemeteries to the innumerable graveyards of the recent war; likewise, that to the still crumbling walls of so many cities and towns still further ruins may be added? Who is there, in fine, who does not tremble at the prospect of economic difficulties which so greatly affect almost all peoples, and in particular those of the poorer classes, being aggravated still more by the further loss of wealth which is a necessary concomitant of war.

4. We who raise our mind above the flood of human desires, We who cherish fatherly affection for the people of all nations and races and desire to preserve intact the peace of all and to daily advance their prosperity, We, Venerable Brethren, whenever We see the brightness of the heavens overcast with lowering clouds and new dangers of wars threaten mankind, We cannot help raising our voice and exhorting all to put aside animosities, to compose differences and to introduce that true peace which, as it behooves, will publicly and sincerely recognize and safeguard the rights of religion and peoples and of individual citizens.

5. Nevertheless we well know that human efforts are incapable of achieving such result. It is necessary first of all to renew the hearts of men, to repress covetousness and greed, to allay hatreds, to really put into practice the norms and dealings of justice, to bring about a better distribution of wealth, to foster mutual charity and to stir up virtue in all.

6. There is nothing which can conduce more effectively and contribute more to the attainment of this great objective than the Christian religion; for its divine precepts teach us that men, as brothers, form one family whose Father is God, of which Christ is the Redeemer and by His heavenly grace the nourisher, and whose lasting homeland is Heaven.

7. If these precepts were really and duly put into effect, then without any doubt no wars, sedition, strife or suppression of civil or religious liberty would disturb public and private life, but a peaceful stability, founded on right order and justice, would possess the minds and souls of men and would open up a safe path to the attainment of a daily growing measure of prosperity.

8. This is indeed a difficult but necessary task. And if necessary it can brook no delay, but should be put into effect as soon as possible. If it is difficult and beyond human capacity, then we must have recourse in prayer and supplication to the heavenly Father, as down through the centuries in times of crisis our forefathers have done with happy and salutary results.

9. Wherefore We strongly urge and exhort you, Venerable Brethren, to arrange for public supplications and to invite your flocks to implore peace and concord for peoples; so that under the patronage of religion there may be a sacred struggle, as it were, to offset that abominable strife which threatens the whole human family with so many dangers.

10. You are undoubtedly aware that We shall celebrate the Eucharistic sacrifice at the hour of midnight that marks the beginning of the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and that our suppliant voice by means of radio communication may be heard by all. We wish, moreover, that especially on that holy night all the faithful, united with the Vicar of Jesus Christ, should invoke from the Father of Mercies through the intercession of the most powerful patronage of the Virgin Mother of God, preserved from every stain of Original Sin, that at long last, with hatreds put to rest and all differences justly and equitably settled, the light of real and genuine peace may radiate to all nations and peoples.

11. And We further desire that with the same spiritual ardor for this cause prayers be repeatedly offered during the novena of supplication customarily held in preparation for the solemn feast of the Birth of Jesus Christ, to beseech the Divine Infant that the peace proclaimed above His sacred crib by angelic choirs to men of good will (Luke 2, 14) may shine forth throughout the world and become firmly established everywhere.

12. Nor should there be omitted earnest prayers of supplication to the new-born Redeemer through His Blessed Mother that the Catholic religion, which is the most secure foundation of human society and civilized culture, may enjoy due liberty in all nations and that those "who suffer persecution for justice' sake" (Matt. 5, 10), those who because of their courageous defense of the rights of the Holy Church are confined to prison, or are driven forth and banished from their homes, and those also who, exiled from their fatherlands, wander about in wretchedness or still languish in captivity, may receive heavenly consolations and be granted at length that good fortune which they have been awaiting with such burning desire and ardent longing.

13. We do not doubt, Venerable Brethren, that with your usual pastoral care and diligence you will communicate this, our paternal exhortation, to your clergy and faithful in the way you deem most suitable; and We likewise feel certain that all our dearly beloved children in Christ throughout the world will gladly and willingly correspond to this present invitation.

14. Meanwhile, may the apostolic blessing which, lovingly in the Lord, We impart as a pledge of our paternal benevolence be to each and all of you, Venerable Brethren, to all your fellow citizens, and to those in particular who pour forth suppliant prayers in accordance with our intentions, a source of heavenly graces.

Given at Rome from St. Peter's on the sixth day of December, the year 1950, the twelfth of Our Pontificate.

PIUS XII

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