



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD
XXXV WORLD DAY OF PEACE

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Tuesday, 1 January 2002

1. *"Hail, holy Mother! The Child to whom you gave birth is the King of heaven and earth for ever"* (cf. Entrance Antiphon).

With this ancient greeting, today, the eighth day of the Octave of Christmas and the first of the year 2002, the Church greets the Blessed Virgin Mary, invoking her as *Mother of God*.

In her the eternal Son of the Father took our very flesh and through Her became "son of David and son of Abraham" (Mt 1,1). Thus Mary is his true Mother: the *Theotokos*, Mother of God!

If Jesus is Life, Mary is the Mother of Life.

If Jesus is Hope, Mary is the Mother of Hope.

If Jesus is Peace, Mary is the Mother of Peace, Mother of the Prince of Peace.

Entering the new year, let us ask this holy Mother to bless us. Let us ask Her to give us Jesus, *our full Blessing, in whom the Father blessed all history once and for all*, making it become the history of salvation.

2. *Hail, holy Mother!* I have placed The World Day of Peace under Mary's motherly gaze. Let us reflect on peace in this climate of widespread anxiety on account of the recent tragic events that have shaken the world. But although it may seem humanly difficult to look to the future with optimism, we must not give in to the temptation to despair. On the contrary, we must work for peace courageously, certain that evil will not prevail.

The light and hope for this commitment come to us from Christ. The Child born in Bethlehem is the eternal Word of the Father who became flesh for our salvation, he is "God-with-us", who brings with him *the secret of true peace*. He is the *Prince of Peace*.

3. With these sentiments, I respectfully greet the distinguished Ambassadors to the Holy See who have wished to take part in this solemn celebration. I warmly greet the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Cardinal François Nguyễn Văn Thuận, and all who work with him, thanking them for all they do to spread my annual [Message for the World Day of Peace](#), whose theme this year is: *"No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness"*.

Justice and forgiveness: these are the two "pillars" of peace, and I wanted to draw attention to them both. *Between justice and forgiveness there is not opposition but complementarity*, because both are essential for promoting peace. Indeed, far more than a temporary ceasefire, this is the deep healing of the wounds that weary souls (cf. [Message](#), n. 3). Only forgiveness can quench the thirst for revenge and open hearts to an authentic and lasting reconciliation among peoples.

4. Today we turn our gaze to the Child whom Mary holds in her arms. In Him we recognize the One in whom mercy and truth meet, justice and peace embrace (cf. Ps 84,11). In Him we adore the true Messiah, in whom, for our salvation, God joined together truth and mercy, justice and forgiveness.

In God's name I renew my heartfelt appeal to all, believers and non-believers, so that the two words, "justice and peace" may always be impressed upon relations between individuals, social groups and peoples.

This appeal is first and foremost for *those who believe in God*, in particular for the great "Abrahamic religions": *Judaism, Christianity and Islam, called to declare their firm and decisive rejection of violence. No one, for any reason, can kill in the name of God, who is one and merciful.* God is life and the source of life. To believe in Him means to witness to His mercy and forgiveness, rejecting the exploitation of his holy Name.

An agonizing cry for peace is being raised from various parts of the world; it is rising particularly from the *Land* which God blessed with his Covenant and his Incarnation and for this reason is called "*Holy*". "The voice of your brother's blood" cries out to God from that land (cf. Gn 4,10); the blood of brothers poured out by brothers who hark back to the same Patriarch Abraham; sons, like every human being, of the same heavenly Father.

5. "*Salve, Madre santa!*" Virgin Daughter of Zion, how deeply must your Mother's heart suffer for this bloodshed!

The Child you embrace has a name that is dear to the peoples of biblical religion: "*Jesus*", which

means "God saves". So the Archangel named him before he was conceived in your womb (cf. Lk 2,21). In the face of the newborn Messiah, we recognize the face of all your children, who suffer from being despised and exploited. We recognize especially the faces of your children, to whatever race, nation or culture they may belong.

For them, O Mary, for their future, we ask you to move hearts hardened by hatred so that they may open to love and so that revenge may finally give way to forgiveness.

Obtain for us, O Mother, that the truth of this affirmation - *No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness* - be engraved on every heart. Thus the human family will be able to find the true peace, that flows from the union of justice and mercy.

Holy Mother, Mother of the Prince of Peace, help us!
Mother of Humanity and Queen of Peace, pray for us!

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