



The Holy See

*URBI ET ORBI MESSAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
CHRISTMAS 1978*

Monday, 25 December 1978

1. I am addressing this message to every human being, to man in his humanity. Christmas is the feast of man. A human being is born. He is one of the millions and millions of people who have been born, are being born and will be born on earth. A human being, one item in the vast range of statistics. It is not without reason that Jesus came into the world when a census 'was being held, when a Roman emperor wanted to know the number of subjects in his territory. A human being is an object to be counted, something considered under the aspect of quantity, one of many millions. Yet at the same time he is a single being, unique and unrepeatable. If we celebrate with such solemnity the birth of Jesus, it is to bear witness that every human being somebody unique and unrepeatable. If our human statistics, human categories, human political, economic and social systems, and mere human possibilities fail to ensure that man can be born, live and act as one who is unique and unrepeatable, then all this is ensured by God. For God and before God, the human being is always unique and unrepeatable, somebody thought of and chosen from eternity, some called and identified by his own name.

It is as it was with the first man, Adam. It is as it was with the new Adam, born of the Virgin Mary in the cave at Bethlehem: "You shall call his name Jesus" (Lk 1:31).

2. This message is addressed to every human being, precisely as a human being; it is addressed to his humanity. For it is the humanity that is elevated in God's earthly birth. Humanity, human "nature" is taken into the unity of the Divine Person of the Son, into the unity of the Word in whom God eternally expresses himself. God expresses this divinity in God, true God in true God, the Father in the Son and both in the Holy Spirit.

On today's feast we also raise ourselves towards the impenetrable mystery of this Divine Birth.

At the same time, the Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem gives witness that God has expressed this eternal Word in time, in history. With this "expression" God has built up and continues to build up the structure of man's history. The Birth of the Incarnate Word is the beginning of a new power for humanity itself, the power open to every man, in accordance with the words of St John "he gave power to become children of God" (Jn 1: 12). In the name of this unrepeatable value in every man and in the name of this power which the Son of God on becoming man brings to every man, in this message I address pre-eminently the human being:

every human being;

wherever he may work, create, suffer, fight, sin, love, hate, or doubt;

wherever he may live and die;

I address him today with all the truth of the Birth of God, with God's message.

3. A human being lives, works, creates, suffers, fights, loves, hates, doubts, falls, and recovers in fellowship with others.

I address therefore all the various communities: the peoples, the nations, the regimes, the political, economic, social and cultural system, and I say:

— Accept the great truth concerning man;

— Accept the full truth concerning man that was uttered on Christmas Night;

— Accept this dimension of man that was opened for all human beings on this Holy Night;

— Accept the mystery in which every human being lives since Christ was born;

— Respect this mystery;

— Allow this mystery to act in every human being.

— Allow him to develop in the outward conditions of his earthly existence.

Humanity's power resides in this mystery. The power that permeates everything that is human. Do not make it hard for that power to exercise its influence. Do not destroy its influence. Everything that is human grows from this power; without this power it perishes; without this power it falls to ruin.

Therefore I thank you all, families, nations, states, political, economic, social and cultural systems,

for all that you are doing to enable the life of human beings in its various aspects to become ever more human, that is to say ever more worthy of man.

It is my heartfelt hope and my prayer to you that you may not grow weary in this endeavour, in this commitment.

4. "Glory to God in the highest heaven" (Lk 2:14).

God has come near. He is in our midst. He is the Man. He is born (has been born) at Bethlehem. He is lying in the manger, because there was no room for him at the inn (cf. Lk 2:7).

His name: Jesus!

His Mission: Christ!

He is the Messenger of great Counsel, "Wonder-Counsellor" (Is 9:5); and we so often are irresolute, and our counsels do not bear the desired fruits.

He is "Eternal-Father" (Is 9:5). "Pater futuri saeculi, Principis pacis"; and in spite of the fact that two thousand years separate us from his birth, he is always ahead of us, always goes before us. We must "run after him", and try to "reach him".

He is our Peace!

The Peace of men!

Peace for men, whom he loves (cf. Lk 2:14).

God is pleased with man through Christ. Man cannot be destroyed; it is not permitted to humiliate him; it is not permitted to hate him!

"Peace among men with whom he is pleased!"

To everyone I address a pressing invitation to pray together with the Pope for Peace, especially today and in a week's time, when we shall celebrate throughout the world the "Day of Peace".

5. Happy Christmas to each and every human being! My good wishes, full of heartfelt affection and sincere respect, are addressed to you. Sisters and Brothers, present in this Square; to all of you who, through the social communications media, are able to join in this brief ceremony; to all of you who are sincerely seeking the truth; who are hungry and thirsty for justice; who yearn for goodness and joy. To you, fathers and mothers of families; to you, workers and professional

people; to you, the young people; to you, the children; to you, the babies; to you, the poor, the sick; to you, the elderly, to you, the imprisoned, and to all of you who are unable to spend Christmas with your families, with your dear ones.

Happy Christmas!

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