



The Holy See

REDEMPTORIS NOSTRI CRUCIATUS

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE PIUS XII
ON THE HOLY PLACES IN PALESTINE
TO THE VENERABLE BRETHREN THE PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES,
ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS, AND OTHER ORDINARIES
IN PEACE AND COMMUNION WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE

1. The passion of Our Redeemer, rendered present, as it were to us during these days of Holy Week, makes the minds of Christians turn with deepest reverence to that land which Divine Providence willed to be the cherished home-country of the Word Incarnate, and in which Christ Jesus lived His earthly life, shed His blood and died.
2. Yet at the present time, as We recall the memory of those Holy Places with more ardent devotion, Our heart is full to overflowing with keenest anxiety because of the difficulty and uncertainty of the situation which there prevails.
3. During this past year, We have urged you insistently, Venerable Brethren, in successive letters, that all should join in public prayer to implore the cessation of hostilities which have brought destruction and death in that land, and settlement of the dispute on principles of justice, which would fully safeguard the freedom of Catholics and at the same time provide guarantees for the safety of those most Holy Places.
4. And now that hostilities have ended, or at least have been suspended after the recent truce, We offer Our most sincere and heartfelt thanks to God and voice Our emphatic approval of the labor of those whose noble efforts have contributed towards the re-establishment of peace.
5. But although the actual fighting is over, tranquillity or order in Palestine is still very far from having been restored. For We are still receiving complaints from those who have every right to deplore the profanation of sacred buildings, images, charitable institutions, as well as the destruction of peaceful homes of religious communities. Piteous appeals still reach Us from

numerous refugees, of every age and condition, who have been forced by the disastrous war to emigrate and even live in exile in concentration camps, the prey to destitution, contagious disease and perils of every sort.

6. We are not unmindful of the considerable aid contributed by public and private agencies for relief of these suffering thousands; and We Ourselves, continuing the work of charity, organized from the beginning of Our Pontificate, have left nothing undone, within Our means, to meet the more urgent needs of this same unhappy multitude.

7. But the condition of these exiles is so critical and unstable that it cannot longer be permitted to continue. While, therefore, We encourage all generous and noble souls to put forth their best effort to aid these homeless people in their sorrow and destitution, We make an earnest appeal to those responsible that justice may be rendered to all who have been driven far from their homes by the turmoil of war and whose most ardent desire now is to lead peaceful lives once more.

8. During these holy days this is Our fondest hope, and likewise that of all Christian peoples: that peace may finally shed its light over the land where He, Who is called by the Sacred Prophets, "the Prince of Peace" (*Is. 9: 6*) and by the Apostle of the Gentiles Peace Itself (*Eph. 2: 14*), lived His life and shed His blood.

9. We have never ceased to pray repeatedly for this enduring and genuine peace. And to the end that it might be brought to fruition and permanence at the earliest possible moment, We have already insisted in Our Encyclical letter *In Multiplicibus*, that the time has come when Jerusalem and its vicinity, where the previous memorials of the Life and Death of the Divine Redeemer are preserved, should be accorded and legally guaranteed an "international" status, which in the present circumstances seems to offer the best and most satisfactory protection for these sacred monuments.

10. We cannot help repeating here the same declaration, encouraged by the thought that it may also serve as an inspiration to Our children. Let them, wherever they are living, use every legitimate means to persuade the rulers of nations, and those whose duty it is to settle this important question, to accord to Jerusalem and its surroundings a juridical status whose stability under the present circumstances can only be adequately assured by a united effort of nations that love peace and respect the right of others.

11. Besides, it is of the utmost importance that due immunity and protection be guaranteed to all the Holy Places of Palestine not only in Jerusalem but also in the other cities and villages as well.

12. Not a few of these places have suffered serious loss and damage owing to the upheaval and devastation of the war. Since they are religious memorials of such moment - objects of veneration to the whole world and an incentive and support to Christian piety - these places should also be

suitably protected by definite statute guaranteed by an "international" agreement.

13. We are well aware of the intense desire of Our children, following the ancient tradition, to go on pilgrimage once more to these places from which they were barred by the general disturbed conditions. The Year of Atonement which is at hand increases all the more these desires; it is only natural that during this period the faithful should be more eager than ever to visit that land which was the scene of our Divine Redemption. God grant that these longings be satisfied as soon as possible.

14. To bring about this happy result, it will be necessary, or course, to make such arrangements as will allow pilgrims to approach freely those sacred edifices; enabling each to profess his devotion openly and without hindrance, and to remain there free from fear and danger. It must also be considered objectionable that pilgrims should see these places profaned by sinful and worldly entertainments, which are assuredly an offense to the Divine Redeemer and to the Christian conscience.

15. Moreover, We very much desire that the many Catholic institutions which have been erected in Palestine to help the poor, to educate youth and give hospitality to visitors, may be enabled, as is fitting, to carry on unimpeded the work they did so laudably in the past.

16. Nor can We omit to point out that all rights to the Holy Places, which Catholics during many centuries have acquired and time and again defended valiantly, and which Our predecessors have solemnly and effectively vindicated, should be preserved inviolate. These, Venerable Brethren, are the considerations We wished to put before you.

17. Encourage the faithful committed to your charge to be ever more concerned about the conditions in Palestine and have them make their lawful requests known, positively and unequivocally, to the rulers of nations. But let them especially implore unceasingly the help of Him, Who is the Ruler of Men and Nations. May God look down with mercy on the whole world, but particularly on that land which was bedewed with the Blood of the Incarnate Word, so that the charity of Jesus Christ, which alone can bring tranquillity and peace, may conquer all hatred and strife.

18. Meantime, may the Apostolic Blessing, which We lovingly impart to you, Venerable Brethren, and to all your flock, be a pledge of heavenly gifts and a token of our affection.

Given at Rome, St. Peter's the fifteenth day of the month of April, Good Friday, in the year 1949, the eleventh of Our Pontificate.

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