

DIVINE ORDER AND HARMONY IN THE WORLD

1957 Christmas Message of
Pope Pius XII

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1 **L**eva, Jerusalem, oculos tuos et vide potentiam regis: Ecce salvator venit solvere te a vinculo ("Lift up your eyes, O Jerusalem, and see the power of the King: Behold, the Saviour cometh to free thee from thy chains").¹

2 The invitation of Our Mother the Church to lift our gaze toward heaven, to expect therefrom God our Saviour and with Him the loosening of the bonds of discord which are holding souls captive, We desire to repeat to you, dear sons and daughters of the Catholic world, as Our fatherly greeting at this Christmas season which finds men with their gaze indeed raised on high, but with hearts heavy with anxious thought for the uncertain fate of the human family and of the earth itself on which it dwells.

3 Not thus was the gaze of the shepherds of Bethlehem nor of the wise men from the East when the news of the birth of the Son of God on earth was given—to one group by the angels' appearance and to the other by the shining light of the mysterious star. A deep feeling of wonder filled their minds on learning, and playing a part in, the *magnalia dei*,² the great and wondrous works of God which reached their climax in the synthesis of all possible grandeur in that tender Babe, born in the City of David, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a lowly manger.³

4 Their feeling of wonder indeed bore no resemblance to the consternation and troubled feeling which terrifying magnificence usually arouses. Rather was it changed into a wave of consolation with a breath of ineffable peace and soothing harmony such as God alone knows how to infuse into the souls of men who seek Him, welcome and adore Him.

Greatness of Man and the Greatness of God

5 But when confronted by the inexpressible fact of the coming into the world of the Divine Word, this happening which surpasses all other events in the history of the human race, worthy, therefore, of supreme admiration, not all men bow in adoration, for they are, as it were, prisoners of their own littleness, incapable of imagining the possibility of infinite grandeur. Others again—with eyes on the tremendous development of modern science, which the knowledge and the power of man has extended even to the realms of the stars—as if blinded and hypnotized by their own achievements, know how to acknowledge only "the splen-

dors of man," willfully shutting their eyes to the "splendors of God."

- 6 Ignorant or forgetful that God is even higher than the heavens themselves, and that His throne rests above the height of the stars⁴ they no longer recognize the truth and the meaning of the hymn sung by the angels above the cave where the supreme magnificence of God revealed itself: "*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*" ("Glory to God in the Highest"). But, on the contrary, they are tempted to put in its place another: "Glory on Earth to Man," to man who plans and produces so much, to the *homo faber* (Man, the maker) therefore, as he has been named by some philosophers, having been revealed in this character in works which seem to surpass all human limits.
- 7 This is the moment to lead back to a right sense of proportion modern man's admiration for himself. By tempering with prudent moderation the almost rapturous feeling which the modern victories in technology are arousing, the admirers of the *homo faber* must be persuaded that the pausing in wonder and the gesture of adoration before the crib of the Divine Infant would not check their movement along the path of progress, but would crown it with the perfection of the *homo sapiens* (Man, the spiritual being).

Man's Anxiety in the Face of New Triumphs of Science and Technology

- 8 Indeed this man, "maker" and "spiritual being" at one and the same time, recognizes without difficulty that all that God does and reveals in the mystery of Christmas immeasurably surpasses all the effort, energy or achievement of man to the same extent that the infinite surpasses the finite. With a sensibility more live and complete than that which brings others to give unqualified admiration to some material product, he feels the sweetness of ecstasy before the Divine Babe who bears government upon his shoulders⁵.
- 9 In Him he sees the marvellous works of the eternal God, who is clothed in time, of God in His immensity and omnipotence who girds Himself about with space and weakness, of the God of majesty who has revealed "the kindness of God our Saviour"⁶ full of infinite mercy and love.
- 10 Therefore the angel who announced to the shepherds the wonders of Christmas roused them with the encouraging: "Fear not, for I bring you tidings of great joy that shall be

to all people".⁷ Quite different feelings arise, on the contrary, at the news of the new technical marvels. Once the first rush of exaltation is passed, when confronted by the unlooked for mass of their increased knowledge and the effects which follow from it, by this unheard of invasion into both the greatest and the tiniest elements of the universe, men are tortured by a real anxiety; they are brought to ask themselves if they will preserve their own control over the world, or if they will not fall victims to their own progress.

- 11 The unforeseeable changes which the new paths opened up by science and modern technology bring to them, some regard as examples of disharmony and consider them destined to provoke unrest and confusion and the unity of order and harmony which befit human reason; others again treat the changes as motives for serious apprehension with respect to the actual survival of those who brought them about. Man is beginning to fear the world which hitherto he thought to hold in his hands; he fears it more than ever, and particularly when God does not live truly in his heart and mind—God whose creation the world is, and all it contains, and in which has been imprinted indelibly His own mark as God Almighty, absolute spirit, essential wisdom, source of all order, harmony, goodness and beauty.

Christ the Source of Harmony in the World

- 12 To this human race made up for the most part of men who admire themselves alone, but who are beginning to fear themselves and their world, We point out again the paths to Bethlehem. There they will find Him whom they seek, Him of whom the Apostle declared: "For all things have been created through and unto Him, and He is before all creatures, and in Him all things hold together".⁸
- 13 This is the truth of salvation which gleams forth from the lowly cave, and which We desire to burn brightly in your minds. In particular the newborn Christ appears and offers Himself to all today:
- 14 One, as the comfort of those who bewail discords and despair of peace and concord in the world.
- 15 Two, as the pledge of peace and concord in the world,
- 16 Three, as the light and the way for every attempt of the human race to establish peace and concord in the world.

I. CHRIST AS COMFORTER AMIDST THE DISCORDS OF THIS WORLD

- 17 Man from his first contact with the universe has been dazzled by its incomparable beauty and harmony. The heavens sparkling with light or studded with stars, oceans with the changing hues of their tremendous expanse, the unapproachable summits of the mountains crowned with snow, the green forest throbbing with life, the ordered succession of the seasons and the multiple variety of living things drew from his heart a cry of admiration. Himself fashioned in the same beauty, he caught glimpses of it even in unconnected fragments, those expressions of the power of the Creator: "More powerful than the breakers of the sea, powerful on high is the Lord"⁹ and "God shall thunder wonderfully with his voice".¹⁰
- 18 An ancient people of high civilization rightly found, to indicate the universe, no more apt name than "cosmos" or order, harmony and beauty. Again, each time that man turns his gaze on himself, comparing his longings with his achievements, he breaks into groans of discouragement on account of the too numerous contrasts, the disharmonies and disorders which tear his life asunder.

Discords in the Universe

- 19 Just as did the man of the past, so the man of the present fluctuates between rapt admiration for the world of nature, of which the most hidden secrets and the most distant limits have been explored, and the bitterness of disappointment which the disorder of his own existence, directed by himself, brings upon him. The contrast between the harmony of nature and the disharmony of life, rather than being weakened with the increased power of knowledge and action, seems, on the contrary, to follow it like a heavy shadow. In the isolation with which he is surrounded modern man knows only how to repeat the lament of Job: "Behold, I shall cry suffering violence, and no one will hear: I shall cry aloud, and there is none to judge".¹¹ Well then, let us permit ourselves to listen to his lamentation in order to understand better his inner feelings and to point out to him the One who in truth can dispel his darkness and restore harmony to his existence in conflict with itself.

Total Pessimism Unjustified

- 20 At present, in one part of the human race, the sight of discords in the world leads to a condemnation of the entire creation, as if discord must be its characteristic note, an inevitable fate before which nothing remains for man but to fold his arms and resign himself, while at best seeking to refresh himself with transitory pleasures which are snatched away by the same overriding disorder. This complete pessimism, which is taking possession of the majority of souls which are susceptible to the most expansive and even unreasonable optimism, derives from an extension to the whole world and its fundamental laws of the undeniable lack of unity which the world presents, and in attributing the blame to the Creator Himself. Thus those who cannot see anything else in the world save the sea of cruelty and suffering, harassing individuals and nations, and directly or indirectly accompanying the actual results of external progress, give in to the attacks of total pessimism.
- 21 Others are induced to despair of the possibility of reestablishing harmony by the admittedly serious fact that there are men who permit themselves to be so firmly ensnared by the attraction of novelty and by a contempt for other real values, particularly those which uphold human society. Many others finally surrender, so to speak, in the face of complete pessimism, when they observe the lamentable fact that men, superficially progressive, are becoming interiorly uncivilized.

Its Causes

- 22 If, then, the inquiry is pushed to the roots of these and similar facts, hope remains still more shaken, since their causes admit still deeper disharmonies and foretell others yet more serious. Why such indifference for another's right to life, such contempt for human values, such a lowering in tone of true civilization, if not because preponderant material progress has shattered the harmonious and happy completeness of man, has somehow mutilated his appreciation of those ideas and values, giving him completeness only in one particular direction? Indeed, to the man born and educated in surroundings of strict technology, there will necessarily be lacking a part, and not the least important, of his complete being, as if it had been atrophied by conditions opposed to his natural development.

- 23 Just as a plant cultivated in ground from which vital substances have been subtracted developed this or that quality but does not reproduce the complete uniform type, so this "progressive" civilization, that is, one exclusively materialistic, by banishing some values and essential elements from the life of families and nations, ends by depriving man of his true form of thought, judgment and action. In reality, in order to attain truth, justice and honor—in a word, to be human—there is need for the widest scope and variety in direction. Technical progress, on the other hand, when it imprisons man within its own limitations by cutting him off from the rest of the universe, particularly from interior spiritual forces, fashions him to its own characteristics of which the most notable are superficiality and instability.
- 24 The development of such a deformation is no secret, if one considers the tendency of man to accept the questionable and the erroneous so long as these bring within his grasp the promise of an easier life. Consider, for example, the doubtful substitution of values produced by the wonderful advance in the speed of machines. Lured on by its fascination, by transferring the value of speed of movement to things which one cannot expect to be perfected by quick changes, things which, on the contrary, become fruitful by stability and faithfulness to tradition, the "speed crazy" man tends to become in his life like a reed shaken by the wind, unproductive of lasting achievement and incapable of supporting himself and others.
- 25 A similar ambiguity results from the increase, admirable in itself, of the efficiency of the senses, to which remarkable modern instruments of investigation give powers. And almost completely absorbed in the exercise of his senses, the "all-seeing" man, without being aware of it himself, is led on to reduce the application of his intellect, that is, of the complete spiritual faculty for searching into the internal structure of things, and to become ever less capable of arriving at true notions of that in which life consists. Similarly, the manifold applications of marvelously increased external energy tend more each day to enclose human life within a mechanical system which does everything automatically and at its own expense, thereby reducing the incentives which previously forced man to develop his own personal energy.

World, by Remaining United with Christ, Restored To Its Original Harmony

- 26 There exist, then, deep discords in the new man who has been created by progress. But although these are full of danger, they are not such as to justify the excessive despair of the pessimists nor the resignation of the indolent. The world can and must be brought back to its initial state of harmony which was the plan of the Creator from the beginning when He gave his works a share in His own perfections.¹²
- 27 The ultimate foundation of this hope lies in the mystery of Christmas: Christ, God-man, source of all harmony, visits His own creation. How can a creature despair of the world if God Himself does not despair and if the Divine Word, by whom all things were made, became flesh and dwelt amongst us so that His glory as the only Begotten of the Father might in the end shine forth?¹³ And how could the glory of the Creator and Restorer of all things shine forth in a world necessarily based on contradictions and discords?
- 28 The pessimism of those men and their resignation will never be accepted by Christianity because they are opposed to the Christian idea of man. From the very beginning Saint Paul stood up against the prejudice of the forces and movements of nature. So he gave the warning: We are not in bondage to the power of nature, but to Christ who has made us free and the heirs of God.¹⁴ All redemption and freedom comes to us, therefore, from Christ, not from nature, which always and perhaps even more so today, under the power of technology, is ready to fasten on its chains.
- 29 Modern man for his part is more liable to become again a slave of nature since, contrary to other ages when he was in bondage to it out of ignorance and weakness, man is subjected to its very strong pressure because of his extensive knowledge and application of its forces, and consequently is likely to bestow on it the worship of adoration and gratitude for the wonders which he perceives there and for the immediate benefits he derives from it.
- 30 The exhortations of the Apostle to break the bonds of slavery imposed by nature by choosing Christ and keeping close by Him have, therefore, greater reality than ever. He and no other is your God, the Source and Lord of Nature. Through Him you are destined "to become sons of God",¹⁵

not slaves of the elements of this world, not destined to a partial perfecting of this or that faculty, but called to renew in the whole man the perfect image of God, who is harmony itself, the source of all order in the universe.

- 31 These resplendent truths are indeed the appropriate measures for restoring the dignity of man and for raising his hopes once more. On the other hand, they are rejected by those who fail to establish the essential connection between the eternal and the temporal, between the Creator and the creature. By a contrary way of thinking they separate God from the world as being too different and remote from each other and consequently without any connection with each other. But the coming of the Son of God on earth clearly shows the close links which bind the transient to the eternal.
- 32 The world and man would have no explanation and possibility of continued existence were they not given a share in the eternal being of God, their Creator. The created and finite world, travelling of necessity on the ocean of the divine eternity, follows, so to speak, its course and laws. Saint Augustine, with many other wise men of ancient and modern times, rightly declares that in the world, because it is created and contingent, there exists a supreme and eternal law from which it derives its continuing existence and dignity. Truly it is that eternal law which raises creation, by nature finite, to a dignity reflecting the infinite and eternal. It does so by means both of the essential orderly arrangement established in all things and of the interior consistency and harmony which are echoed throughout the world. But if one rejects the very idea of God's eternity and the possibility that God shares with His creatures something of Himself, it is useless to speak of order and harmony in the world.
- 33 Such a denial, of course, does not quench in man the thirst for harmony, order and happiness. Man is then forced to promote to a supreme value that which remains, namely his own solidly finite being. Removed from external order and all harmony in the world, he has to choose life, which is nothing more than a continual preoccupation with his own existence and is like a road toward death, though it is decked out with a certain vain pride in his own finite nature. Modern man, who feels no essential link with the eternal, lapses into worship of the finite, in the midst of which he continues to act and work as if aware of himself and of all being.

- 34 But that is a false representation of reality which can deceive, but cannot satisfy, the thirst for truth and (man's) innermost yearnings. If men wish these to be satisfied, let them go to Bethlehem where the Eternal Word made flesh dwelt amongst us in order to teach us that each single human activity must ever draw from the eternal its aim, fruitfulness and certainty. If man's very nature is in the image of God, his activity also ought to be conformable, as philosophy teaches when it says "operari sequitur esse" (the work takes its nature from worker).
- 35 It follows that man's work on earth is not doomed to discord, but is intended to show forth the eternal harmony of God. In this way the Eternal Word frees man from slavery, gives him back hope in the paths of progress.

II. CHRIST AS PLEDGE OF THE HARMONY OF THE WORLD

The Orderly Design of Creation

- 36 Before the Christian concept of a cosmos designed by the creative wisdom of God, and therefore having unity, order and harmony, there stands the vision, perhaps yet centuries distant, of a solemn fulfillment where there is "in the new heavens and the new earth ¹⁶ . . . a tabernacle of God with men for Him to dwell with them . . . and He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away".¹⁷ In other words, present discords have been vanquished.
- 37 But with this passage, has the fulfillment of the harmonious design of the creation been perhaps entirely postponed? Is it possible that God, who in the very act of creating him, "gave man power over all things that are upon earth",¹⁸ has gone back on his word? Certainly not. Far from withdrawing from him the power to rule the earth, God confirmed him in it on the day on which He clothed in human nature His only begotten Son, having "proposed, in the dispensation of the fullness of time, to reestablish all things in Christ, that are in heaven and on earth",¹⁹ so that Christ, the Incarnate Word, God-man, coming into the world, from the first moment of His visible existence, bears witness that the lordship over the world belongs, in different degrees to both God and man, and that consequently it will not be won save in the spirit of God.

38 In Christ has truly dwelt substantially the same Divine Spirit [See Colossians, 2, 9] who at the beginning of time said: "Be light made, and light was made."²⁰ In Christ was the same Divine Spirit who, stamped like an indelible seal on all things, is the bond of unity, source of order and basis of harmony in them all, animate and inanimate.

The Perfect Harmony which the Presence of Christ in the World Produces

39 But even before man could become explicitly aware of the perfect harmony which the presence of Christ in the world and His union in nature with man produces, he was able to discover in his own spirit an image of the spirit of God, bond of unity which fused things intrinsically with one another. The ancient philosophers of Athens and Rome had in fact already established this excellent synthesis as, though with greater clarity, did the leading thinkers in Christian philosophy such as Augustine and Aquinas.

40 In every respect, technology by itself is incapable of recognizing and developing the divine seed of unity and harmony implanted in creatures. Today there are scientists who believe that they can—at least in their method of working—leave this truth out of account. That is, they do their work as if the spirit were nonexistent and deny its presence in their researches. Imbued with materialism and the philosophy of the senses, they look for answers to their questions only from their instruments and calculations, from the accurate observation of facts and from the checking and co-ordination of external phenomena. Others readily admit some kind of connection, but, as they say, it is in the relations of mathematical logic. The presumption is that—leaving aside entirely the influence of spirit—order in the world can equally well come about by virtue of the physical arrangement of the individual parts after the manner of a gigantic calculating machine.

41 Even if philosophy were incapable of proving the inconsistency of such an opinion, science itself would provide its denial. Real observation of how the best investigators have proceeded and how inventions and discoveries of the highest importance come to birth forces one to admit the active presence of spirit. From the spirit comes the direct perception of the essential connection between facts which are often diverse in character. From the spirit comes the penetrating sharpness of observation and analysis. From the

spirit comes the strength of the synthesis which has set true reality before the mind and led it to form final judgment.

- 42 It is obvious, then, that the presence of spirit in human activity is undeniable. Clear evidence of it in the world cannot be passed over in silence save by prejudice and superstition. The evidence is of unity, order and harmony which have their origin in God and without which even the application of mathematical formulae and the sciences would not truly portray reality.
- 43 Spirit and harmony, therefore, bear witness to one another. As the richness of the harmony will always correspond to the richness of the spirit, so all lack of harmony, wherever found in the sciences, arts and life itself, is an indication that there exists some kind of impediment to the full outpouring of spirit.
- 44 Such an interrelationship points the finger of rebuke at those who in the fields of literature and art foster the cult of disharmony or, as they themselves express it, of absurdity. What would the world and man be if feeling and esteem for harmony were lost? Nevertheless this is the precise aim of those who try to clothe with the adornments of beauty and attractiveness all that is base, sinful and evil. Nay, their offense goes beyond the limits of aesthetics and order to inflict wounds on the very dignity of man who, being an image of the Divine Spirit, is essentially of like nature with harmony and order.
- 45 One is not, of course, denying that evil also can be depicted in the light of true art, provided, however, that the representation appears to the mind and senses as something directly opposed to spirit, as a sign of its absence. Art acquires great renown and dignity the more it does honor to the spirit of man, the image of God, and consequently the more it reveals his creative productivity, his full maturity in development, together with his achievements and different attitudes of life, as the subject of divine unity and harmony.
- 46 But, on other hand, no matter how clear may be the evidence of the spirit of man in favor of harmony in the world, no matter how productive his activity in the development of the seeds of order, history and life show his intrinsic insufficiency and weakness. To heal this weakness

it was necessary in the designs of the infinite love of the Creator for His works, for the spirit of God Himself to become visible and reveal Himself in Time. Hence Christ, the Divine Word made flesh, came into the world as into His own dwelling place, His own possession: *In propria venit.*²¹

- 47 His right to this dominion is that supreme right: creation. The world, then, by its extent and universality—Extensive et diffusive as Saint Thomas expresses it²²—reflects the eternal truth and goodness of the Creator and under this aspect the relationship of Christ with the world appears suffused with dazzling light.

Man, Image of the Divine Spirit, Lord of the World, with Knowledge, Will, Activity

- 48 Likewise the Creator places man, the image of His spirit, in the world so that with his knowledge, will and activity he may be its lord, making himself in intensity and profundity—intensive et collective²³—a reflection of the eternal truth and goodness extensively diffused throughout the world. Even here, then, the relationship of man with the world enjoys the clear light of the eternal spirit communicated by the Creator to creation. In this manner incarnation preserves and adds to the dignity of man and to the nobility of the world, because they are derived from the same source, the Divine Spirit, origin of unity, order and harmony.

- 49 If, however, this foundation of spirit and consequently the image (in man) or the stamp (in creatures without reason) of the eternal divine essence in created things is removed, harmony also in man's relationship with the world is at end. Man would be reduced to a mere fixed point of an anonymous life devoid of reason. He would no longer be in the world as in his own home. The world would become for him something alien, dark and dangerous, ever inclined to lay aside the character of an instrument and make itself his enemy.

- 50 And what would be the normal relationships of social life without the light of the Divine Spirit and without account being taken of the relationship of Christ with the world? The answer to this question, alas, is the bitter reality of those who, preferring darkness in the world, proclaim themselves worshippers of the external works of man. Their

society is successful only under the iron discipline of collectives in sustaining the anonymous existence of one group alongside that of the other. Altogether different is the social life based on the pattern of the relationships of Christ with the world and with man. It is a life of brotherly cooperation, of mutual respect for others' rights, a life worthy of the first beginning and last end of every human creature.

Christ, Pledge of Redemption And of Restoration

- 51 But the depths of darkness and disharmony, roots of all the other disorders which the Word Incarnate has come to enlighten and set aright, lay in the damage caused by original sin, which has involved in its dire consequences the entire human race and the world wherein it dwells. Fallen man, with his spirit darkened, no longer sees around him a world subdued, a docile instrument of his destiny, but a kind of conspiracy of nature in revolt, the unconscious executor of the decree which disinherited its original master. However, both in man and in the world, there was never extinguished the expectation of a return to the primordial condition, to the divine order made manifest, as the apostle says, with the groans of every creature²⁴. For, in spite of the slavery of sin, man remained always the image of the Divine Spirit, and the world the possession of the Word.
- 52 Christ came to restore to life what sin had put to death, to heal what had been wounded and to enlighten what had been darkened whether in man or in the world, by restoring to the former his lordship over nature in accordance with the spirit of God, and by withdrawing the latter from man's sinful misuse. But though the wound was radically healed, there yet remain as the legacy of the human race certain consequences: doubts, difficulties and sufferings. But from these fruits of sin also, Christ is the pledge of redemption and new life.
- 53 The supernatural light which shone forth on the night of Christmas at Bethlehem is cast like a new rainbow proclaiming peace over the entire future of the world, "made subject to vanity, not by its own will, but by reason of Him who made it subject, in hope"²⁵. The hope is still Christ who, as He freed the world from the slavery of sin, will likewise free it from the slavery of corruption by restoring to it the freedom of the sons of God.

- 54 The life of man and the history of the world are deeply influenced by this expectation. If men will not see harmony entirely restored until the dawn of the last day, if their bread will remain watered with sweat and tears, if the groans of creatures on earth will continue to be heard, theirs will not be the sadness of death, but the travail of a mother who, according to the vivid words of our Divine Master, when her hour is come, willingly forgets all pain, for a man has been born into world.²⁶ The birth, painful and slow though it may be, of a new life, of a humanity in continual development of order and harmony, is the function assigned by God to history *post Christum natum* (after Christ's birth), to which sons of God, restored to liberty, have as individuals to make their individual contribution.
- 55 It is useless, then, to look for perfection in the order of the world from any inherent process of which man remains an external spectator—as some declare him to be. Such obscure immanentism is a return to ancient superstition, which defied nature. It can find no support, as is claimed, from history, except by false manipulation of the explanation of the facts.
- 56 The history of the human race in the world is a very different thing from a procession of blind forces. It is a marvelous and vital working out of the actual history of the Divine Word. From Him [came] its first movements and through Him it will reach fulfillment on the day when all things will return to their first beginning, when the Word Incarnate offers to the Father, as evidence of His glory, His own possessions ransomed and given their full meaning by the Spirit of God.
- 57 Many facts, then, particularly of history, which at present appear to be in discord, will be revealed as elements of a true harmony, for example, the unending coming of new things and the disappearance of the old, for both one and the other had or do now have a share, in some manner, in the truth and goodness of God. The transient nature of a thing or an event does not affect them, since they have this character, the dignity of expressing the Divine Spirit. The whole world, for that matter, as the Apostle notes, is of this nature: "The fashion of this world passes away."²⁷ But it is the final destiny for the glory of the Father and the triumph of the Word which lies at root of all its development, confers on and preserves in the world the dignity of a witness and instrument of eternal truth, goodness and harmony.

III. CHRIST AS LIGHT AND LIFE FOR MEN IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH PEACE AND CONCORD IN THE WORLD

The Great Law of Harmony which Pervades the World

- 58 The omnipotence of Him who "does all things whatsoever he will" ²⁸ united with His infinite wisdom, which "reaches from end to end mightily and ordereth all things seemly," ²⁹ has established the great laws of the harmony which pervades the world and explains events therein. The spirit of God, which in the beginning from on high presided over creation, has, as it were, penetrated it until, in the fullness of time, as a work of love and mercy, the Word Incarnate Himself, by taking flesh, has entered within it in person and has taken visible and decisive possession of it. "Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and the same forever." ³⁰
- 59 In this fashion the universe appears as a wonderful symphony, composed by the spirit of God, whose basic melody welled up from a fusion of the divine perfections: wisdom, love and omnipotence. "Domine, dominus noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra" ("O Lord, Our Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth"). ³¹
- 60 And yet, for those who with the Psalmist have ears to hear in gladness the divine symphony which reechoes through the universe, and before all others for Christians, creation is not merely an aesthetic fact offered to man to arouse his satisfaction and to evoke in a unique way praise for its Supreme Maker. From the beginning God, by placing man on a rank of higher dignity than all the other works of His hands, had already subjected to him all the creatures, even the heavens, moon and stars fashioned by His fingers, ³² in a word, the whole world, in order that he might work in it and preserve its harmony. ³³ But Christ Himself, who is the witness and pledge of the world's harmony, has shown by the example of His life and death what an active, laborious and painful contribution man must furnish towards its preservation, towards its development and, wherever harmony might be lacking, towards its restoration. The work of restoration achieved by Christ was defined by Himself as a struggle against the "prince of this world," and its conclusion as a victory—*ego vici mundum* (I have overcome the world). ³⁴
- 61 The divine symphony of the universe, particularly on earth among men, is entrusted by its Supreme Author to mankind

itself, so that, like a tremendous orchestra spread over time and diversified in its means, the human race may ever unite under the direction of Christ, follow it faithfully, rendering the single and characteristic theme with all possible perfection. In other words, God has handed over to men His own designs so that they may put them into operation in their own person and with complete freedom, assuming full moral responsibility for them and demanding of themselves, where necessary, toil and sacrifice after the example of Christ.

- 62 In this respect the Christian is primarily an admirer of the divine order of the world, one who loves its presence and does his utmost to see it recognized and proclaimed. Consequently, he will be its vigorous defender against the forces and tendencies which oppose its realization, whether these are concealed within himself—his evil inclinations—or come from without—Satan and his deceits and snares.
- 63 It is thus that Saint Paul saw the Christian in the world when he pointed out the adversaries opposed to God and urged Christians to put on His armor so as to resist the snares of the evil one, girding their loins with truth and wearing the breastplate of justice.³⁵ The call to Christianity is not, then, an invitation from God simply to aesthetic pleasure and the contemplation of His marvellous order, but the call to unceasing action under obligation and strict discipline, with respect to all the paths and conditions of life. Its activity is manifested before all else in a complete observance of the moral laws, whatever may be their object, whether great or small, private or public, whether a question of restraint or of positive action. Moral life is not confined only to the interior man, so much so that it does not also effectively influence the harmony of the world.
- 64 Man is never so completely alone, so individual and set apart by himself, even in the most extraordinary circumstances, that his decisions and deeds cause no reaction in the world around him. As a performer of the divine symphony, no man can regard his particular task as exclusively his own, concerning no one but himself. Certainly moral life is, in the first place, something individual and interior, but not in the sense of what is called "interiorism" or "historicism," according to which some do their utmost to weaken and set aside the universal force of the moral law.

Cooperation in the Order of the World Demanded by God of the Christian

- 65 In general, the cooperation in the order of the world demanded by God of the Christian should equally keep clear of a spiritualism which desires to hinder him from all access to, or taking part in, external things and which, when admitted at one time within the Catholic fold, caused serious damage to the cause of Christ and of the Divine Creator of the universe. But how would the maintenance and development of order in the universe be possible if full liberty of action were left to those who do not recognize it or do not wish to see it become organized? Intervention in the world to maintain divine order is a right and a duty which belongs essentially to a Christian's responsibility and permits him lawfully to undertake all those actions private or public or organized, which aim at and are suited to that end.
- 66 Subtle pretexts, made up to excuse the laziness of some Christians, or suggested by an unfounded jealousy on the part of adversaries, cannot permit the evasion of such a responsibility, especially if it is asserted that Christian action in the world is a mask for seeking a power which is contrary to the spirit of Christ, that it arouses opposition to the Christian faith among those already ill disposed that it is the result of a lack of confidence in God and His Omnipotent providence and that it has the flavor of arrogance on the part of the creature. There are some even who hint that it is Christian prudence to return to the so-called modest ambitions of the period of the catacombs.
- 67 On the contrary, it would be wiser to return to the inspired wisdom of Saint Paul who, writing to the community at Corinth with a zeal worthy of his great soul and founded on the complete sovereignty of God, opened all paths of action to Christians: "For all things are yours . . . or the world, or life, or death, or things to come; for all are yours. And you are Christ's; and Christ is God's." ³⁶ The Christian who would not dare to make his own this fulness of liberty would implicitly be denying to Christ Himself the prerogative of that "power whereby He is able to subject all things to Himself." ³⁷ He ought, on the contrary, to reckon it a disgrace to allow himself to be surpassed by the enemies of God in energy of spirit, of work and initiative, joined to a spirit of sacrifice. It is no secluded territory nor restricted administration which is being entrusted to the activity of

the Christian. No field of life, no institution and no exercise of power can be forbidden to those who cooperate with God to maintain divine order and harmony in the world.

Christian Intervention to Maintain Divine Order and Harmony in the World

- 68 Such intervention in no way suggests any kind of action done in secret and as if jealous of other men's contributions. We have already stated on many occasions that Catholics can and ought to admit collaboration with others if the action of these and the joint enterprise are such as to be of true assistance to harmony and order in the world. However, it is necessary for Catholics first to take account of the extent of their ability and of their aims; that is, let them be spiritually and technically trained for what they are proposing to do. Otherwise they will bring no positive assistance, still less the precious gift of eternal truth, to the common cause, with undeniable hurt to Christ's honor and to their own souls.
- 69 Once that is granted, it is unfair to attribute a spirit of "intolerance" and of segregation—often called a "ghetto"—if Catholics aim at having schools, education and the training of youth on a Christian basis and to set up Catholic organizations in the professions and to support the organized influence of Christian principles even in the political and trade union field where tradition and circumstances advise it. The creation in the past of the high civilization of which Christian nations have rightly been proud was not exclusively a Christian "idea" existing merely as an abstraction; there were practical applications of that idea, that is to say, of the laws, regulations and institutions founded and promoted by men devoted to the Church and working under its guidance, or at least under its inspiration. The Catholic hierarchy was not only careful that the light of the faith should not be extinguished, but by solid work in government, by plans and by the choice and appointment of men, it has built up that varied group of living organizations which, alongside others not under the hierarchy's immediate direction, are at the foundation of the civil community.
- 70 Christian action cannot, least of all today, surrender its unique claim and character merely because someone sees in the human association of the present time a so-called pluralistic society which is cut off from the attitudes of

mind which oppose it, set permanently in its respective positions and impatient of every collaboration that does not develop on an exclusively "human" plane. If this term "human" means, as it seems to, agnosticism with regard to religion and the true values of life, every invitation to collaboration would be equivalent to a request to surrender, to which the Christian cannot consent. Besides, whence would this "human" criterion obtain the force of obligation, the power to establish freedom of conscience for all, except on the strength of order and divine harmony? That "human" concept would end by creating a new kind of "ghetto", but one lacking a universal point of view.

Order and Divine Harmony in the World the Basis of Action of All Men of Good Will

71 For the sake of the common good, the chief basis of action, not only of Christians but of all men of good will, should be order and divine harmony in the world. Their preservation and development should be the supreme law which ought to govern the important meetings among men. If humanity today should fail to agree on the supremacy of this law, that is on absolute respect for universal order and harmony in the world, it would be difficult to foresee what would be the proximate destiny of nations. The need for this agreement has been felt in practice when, lately, some specialists in the modern sciences have expressed doubts and internal disquiet at the development of atomic energy. Whatever, may be, at present, the result of their deductions and resolutions, it is certain that the doubts of these men of the highest standing were directed at the problem of existence, the very foundations of order and harmony in the world.

72 At the present time, one must be convinced that, on the preservation of these benefits, order and harmony, every resolution ought to depend when there is discussion of either developing or abandoning completely the achievements that are within the scope of man's ability. Nowadays an apparently blind fascination for progress leads nations to overlook evident dangers and not to take quite considerable losses into account. Everyone is aware of how the development and application of any invention to a military purpose almost everywhere brings harm out of proportion, even in the political sphere, to the advantages which are

derived from them and which could be secured by other paths at less cost and danger, or be quite simply postponed to a more convenient time.

- 73 Who can give an accurate calculation of the economic damage from a progress which is not inspired by wisdom? Such quantities of material, such sums of money derived from saving and the result of restrictions and toil and such expenditure of human labor taken away from urgent needs are consumed to prepare these new arms that even the wealthiest nations must foresee the times in which they will regret the dangerously weakened harmony of the national economy, or are in fact already regretting it, though they endeavour to conceal the fact.

International Competition in the Development of Armaments

- 74 To a person pondering and forming a judgment on the actual state of affairs—and always allowing for the right of selfdefense—the present-day competition between nations in demonstrating their individual progress in war equipment assuredly offers new “signs in the skies.” But even more it offers signs of pride, of that pride which produces on earth wide differences between souls, nourishes hatreds and prepares the way for conflict. Let those who observe today’s competition, therefore, know how to reduce the facts to their true proportions and, while not rejecting approaches aiming at peace agreements which are always desirable, let them not permit themselves to be misled by records, often of very short duration, nor be too much influenced by fears skillfully evoked to win the interest and support of others who may be glad to be connected with a class of men among whom the *homo faber* takes precedence over the *homo sapiens*. May the advantage then go to the Christian man who, making use of the liberty of spirit which is derived from a truly broad understanding of things, recovers in the objective consideration of events that peace and stability of soul which has its source in the Divine Spirit Who, by His constant presence, holds the world in His care.

The Problem of Peace

- 75 But finally, that to which the supporters of divine harmony in the world have been invited to direct their best efforts, is the problem of peace. To all of you who know Our thoughts, it will be enough for Us on this occasion—

and rather to satisfy Our own mind, which is untiringly devoted to the cause of peace—to recall the immediate ends which the nations ought to aim at and bring to realization. We do this with a father's heart and as interpreting the tender cries of the Divine Infant of Bethlehem, source and pledge of all peace on earth and in the heavens.

76 The divine law of harmony in the world strictly imposes on all rulers of nations the obligation to prevent war by means of suitable international organizations, to reduce armaments under a system of effective inspection and to deter whoever should aim at disturbing the nations which sincerely desire it. We are sure that, at the first sign of danger, the tightening of that bond to a greater degree would not be wanting, as has been clearly attested and revealed on several occasions, even recently.

77 But at the moment, it is a question not so much of hastening to the defense as of preventing the overthrow of order and of giving a deserved breathing space to the world, which has already experienced too much suffering. We have endeavored more than once in times of crisis, with warnings and counsel, to strengthen that mutual dependence, and We regard it as a special task imposed by God on Our Pontificate to forge between nations the bonds of true brotherhood. We renew Our appeal so that among the true friends of peace all possible rivalry may come to an end and so that every reason for lack of trust may be removed. Peace is a good so precious, so productive, so desirable and so desired that every effort in its defense, even with reciprocal sacrifices of legitimate individual ambitions, is well spent. We are sure that the peoples of the world are wholeheartedly in agreement with Us, and that they expect a like sentiment from their rulers.

78 May "the Prince of Peace" from the Crib of Bethlehem arouse, preserve and strengthen these aims; and in the common unity of all men of good will, may He be pleased to fill up what is particularly wanting today in the realization of the order and harmony desired in the world by its Creator.

FOOTNOTES


1. *Roman Breviary*, Monday of the first week of Advent, antiphon for Magnificat.
2. *Acts* 2, 11; *I Peter* 2, 9.
3. *Luke* 2, 12.
4. See *Job* 22, 12.
5. See *Isaias* 9, 6.
6. See *Titus* 3, 4.
7. *Luke* 2, 12.
8. *Collossians* 1, 16-17.
9. *Psalms* 92, 4.
10. *Job*, 37, 5.
11. *Job*, 19, 7.
12. See *Ecclesiasticus* 16, 25-26.
13. See *I John*, 3 ff.
14. See *IV Galatians* 3, 5.
15. *John* 1, 12.
16. See *II Peter* 3, 13.
17. *Apocalypse* 21, 1-4.
18. *Ecclesiasticus* 17, 3.
19. *Ephesians* 1, 10.
20. *Genesis* 1, 3.
21. *John* 1, 11.
22. *Saint Thomas*, Part One, Question 93, Articles 2-3.
23. *Saint Thomas*, Loc. cit.
24. See *Romans* 8, 22.
25. *Ibid*, verse 20.
26. See *John* 16, 21.
27. *I Corinthians* 7, 31.
28. *Psalms* 115, 3.
29. *Wisdom* 8, 1.
30. *Hebrews*, 13.
31. *Psalms* 8, 2.
32. *Psalms* 8, 4.
33. See *Genesis* 2, 13.
34. *John* 12, 31; 16, 33.
35. *Ephesians* 6, 11-14.
36. *I Corinthians* 3, 22-23.
37. *Philippians* 3, 21.

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