

The Message of Bethlehem and Problems of the Day

1955 Christmas Message
of Pope Pius XII

"The Divinization of Man"

Technical Achievements and Human Security

Irreconcilability of Communism with Christian Teachings

Christians in Public Life

False Nationalism

Nuclear Arms and Armament Control

Colonialism



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THE INWARD JOY OF THE NATIVITY

1. With a heart open to welcome the sweet joy which the Birth of the Redeemer will once again bring to the hearts of the faithful, We desire to express good wishes to you, beloved sons and daughters, and to all men without distinction. We shall draw the subject of Our address, as in the past, from the inexhaustible mystery of light and grace which shone forth from the cradle of the Divine Infant on the holy night in Bethlehem, whose brilliance will never be extinguished so long as one will hear on this earth the steps of those who, in sorrow, seek amid the thorns the path of true life.

2. O how We could wish that all men, scattered over the continents, in cities and towns, in valleys and across the deserts, on steppes and on vast reaches of glacier wastes, and on the seas, throughout the whole world could again hear, as coming to each of them in particular, the voice of the angel announcing the mystery of the divine grandeur and of the infinite love which closed a past of darkness and condemnation and ushered in the reign of truth and salvation. "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which shall be to all the people; for there has been born to you today in the town of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10, 11).

3. O We could wish that, like the simple shepherds who were among the first to hear in silent adoration the message of salvation, men of today were won over and conquered by that same sense of wonder which surpasses human words and which turns the mind to meditative adoration when a sublime majesty is revealed to their gaze, that of God Incarnate.

I

MODERN MAN AND THE TRUTH OF THE NATIVITY

(A) The Admirers of External Human Power

4. There is reason, indeed, for asking with fear and anxiety if modern man is still disposed to allow himself to yield to a supernatural truth so sublime, to be penetrated by the joy it has to offer: This man so convinced of his own increasing

power, inclined to measure his stature according to the power of his instruments, his organizations, his weapons, the precision of his calculations, the vastness of his production, of the distance he can reach with his words, his gaze, and influence; this man who speaks at length with pride of an age of easy prosperity as if one just had to reach out a hand for it; who is so sure of himself and his future he dares all, urged by an insatiable desire to know nature's deepest secrets, to bend its forces to his own will, eager to penetrate in his own person the interplanetary spaces.

5. In truth modern man, precisely because he is in possession of all that the mind and labor of man have produced, ought to recognize even more the infinite distance between what he can do and what proceeds from the limitless power of God.

6. But the reality is quite different, because the false or limited concepts of the world and of life accepted by men not only hinder them from drawing a sense of admiration and joy from the works of God, and especially from the Incarnation of the Word, but make it impossible for them to recognize that indispensable principle which gives constancy and harmony to all human works. Not a few indeed permit themselves to be dazzled by the limited splendor deriving from these works, refusing to follow that internal prompting to seek their source and end, outside of and above the world of science and technology.

7. Like the construction of the Tower of Babel, they are dreaming false dreams, "The Divinization of Man," suitable and sufficient for every exigency of the physical and spiritual life. In them, the Incarnation of Man and "His dwelling amongst us" (John 1:14) do not arouse either profound interest or fruitful emotions.

8. The Nativity has not for them any other content or message than that which expresses a birth: sentiments more or less lively, but only human when indeed they have not been stifled by worldly and noisy customs which profane even the simple value, aesthetic and familiar which the Nativity, in the manner of a distant reflection, radiates of the grandeur of its mystery.

(B) The Devotees of a False Interior Life

9. Others on the contrary, in the opposite way, condemn the works of God, excluding themselves in this way from access to the hidden joys of the Nativity. Formed by the hard experience of the last twenty years, which have shown, as they say, modern society's brutality clothed in a human form, they denounce bitterly the external lustre of its appearance, denying all credit to man and his works; nor do they hide the deep disgust which man's excessive exultation provokes in their souls. At the same time, they hope that man may renounce all this feverish external and, above all, technological dynamism, that he may enter within himself, where he will find the richness of an interior life, all his, exclusively human, such as will satisfy every possible exigency.

10. And yet, this entirely human interior life is incapable of maintaining the promise it gives to measure up to all the demands of men. It is rather a withdrawing from life prompted by arrogance, almost despair, by the fear and an incapacity to give oneself to the external order and has nothing in common with a genuine interior life which is complete, dynamic, and fruitful.

11. In the true interior life man is not alone, but lives with Christ, sharing in His thoughts and actions, associating with Him as a friend, a disciple and, as it were, a collaborator, and, in turn, is assisted and sustained by Him in facing the world according to the divine precepts because He is the pastor and guardian of our souls (cfr. 1 Pet. 2, 23).

(C) The Indifferent and Insensible

12. Between this first and second type, whom a wrong and erroneous conception of man have withdrawn from the guiding and salutary influence of God Incarnate, stand the vast class of those who neither feel pride in the external splendor of modern society nor intend to withdraw into a solitary life of the spirit. They are those who say they are satisfied to live for the moment, interested and desirous of nothing else than to be sure of enjoying the goods of the world in abundance and to be free from any fear lest tomorrow bring a lowering of their standard of life. Neither the grandeur of God nor the dignity of man, both marvellously and visibly exalted in the mystery of the Nativity, make an impression on these poor souls who have become insensible and incapable of giving any meaning to their lives.

13. The presence of God Incarnate having been ignored or cast aside in such manner, modern man has constructed a world in which the marvelous is confused with the miserable, overcome with incongruities, like a road without an exit or a house furnished with everything, but which, through the lack of a roof, is incapable of giving security to its inhabitants. In some nations indeed, notwithstanding the enormous development of prosperity and although every class of people is assured of material sustenance, there is spreading and increasing an indefinable sense of forboding, an anxious awaiting of something which seems bound to happen. One recalls the expectancy of the simple shepherds of the countryside of Bethlehem; They by their prompt reaction can teach the proud men of the Twentieth Century where it is necessary to seek what is lacking. "Let us go over to Bethlehem," they say, "and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." (Luke 2:15). The event took place 2,000 years ago but its truth and influence must continue to take possession of men's consciences, that is, God came unto his own (John 1:11).

14. Now mankind can no longer, without guilt, reject and forget the coming and dwelling of God on earth because it is, in the economy of Providence, essential for the establishment of order and harmony between man and what is his, and between that and God. The Apostle, St. Paul, has described the totality of this order in an admirable synthesis: "All are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. 3:23). Those who would want to allow God and Christ to fall from this indestructible order, retaining only of these words of the Apostle the right of man over other creatures, would effect an essential breach in the design of the Creator. St. Paul himself would urge the warning: "Therefore let no one take pride in men." (1 Cor. 3:22). Who does not see how much this admonition applies to men of our times, so proud of their inventors and discoverers, who no longer are oppressed by the hardships of loneliness as formerly, but on the contrary have seized on the imagination of the crowd, yes, even the watchful attention of statesmen?

15. However, it is one thing to attribute to them due honor, and still another to await from them and their discoveries the solution of the fundamental problem of life. At the same

time the wealth and labor, the projects and inventions, the boasts and torments of our modern age must be considered in relation to man, the image of God.

16. If, therefore, what is called progress is not reconcilable with the divine laws of the world order it is most certainly not progress, but marks the way to ruin. Neither the most perfected art of organization, nor the highly developed methods in the field of calculations will put off the inevitable results. They have no power to create man's essential steadfastness, much less can they substitute for it.

II

CHRIST IN THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE HUMAN RACE

17. Jesus Christ alone gives to man that interior steadfastness. "When fullness of time came" (*Gal.*, 4:4), the Word of God entered upon this life on earth, taking a true human nature, and in that form entered also into the historical and social life of the human race, here also "being made like unto men" (*Phil.* 2,7) through God from all eternity. His coming indicates in fact that Christ intended to set Himself as a guide for men and as their support in history and in society. The fact that man has won in the present technical and industrial era a marvelous power over both the organic and inorganic materials of the world does not establish a right to be free from the duty of submission to Christ, the Lord of history, nor does it diminish the need that man has to be sustained by Him. And indeed, the uneasy search for security has become more urgent.

18. Present day experience clearly shows that forgetfulness or negligence of Christ's presence in the world has provoked the sense of bewilderment, and that absence of security and stability peculiar to the technical era. Forgetfulness of Christ has brought about also the ignoring of the reality of human nature, fixed by God as a basic factor of social life in space and time.

PRINCIPLES OF TRUE HUMAN NATURE A FOUNDATION OF MAN'S SECURITY

19. In what direction, then, should the search be made for the security and interior stability of social life, if not by

leading minds back to preserve and put new life into the principles of true human nature willed by God? There is in fact a natural order, even if its outward appearance changes with historical and social developments; but the essential lines were, and ever remain, the same: family and property as the basis of provision for individuals; then, as complementary factors of security, local and professional groups and finally, the state.

20. Up to the present, in accordance with these principles and directives, men strengthened by Christianity were moved to put into force, in theory and practice, to the extent of their power, the order which guarantees security. But, in a manner different from that of moderns, our ancestors knew—as well by the errors from which their positive application had not been exempt—that human forces, in the establishment of security, are of their nature limited; and therefore, they had recourse to prayer to obtain that a much higher power might make good their own inadequacy. The abandonment of the use of prayer in the so-called industrial era is a most revealing symptom of the pretensions to self-sufficiency of which modern man boasts. There are too many today who no longer pray for security, thinking that the petition “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11), which Our Lord put on men’s lips, has been superseded by technical achievement, or, alternatively, they repeat it outwardly with lips without an interior conviction of its enduring necessity.

FALSE APPLICATIONS OF MODERN SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENTS TO SECURITY

21. But can it be truly asserted that man has attained, or is on his way to attain, full self-sufficiency? Modern achievements, certainly remarkable, in scientific and technical development will assuredly be able to give man an extensive mastery over the forces of nature, over sickness and even over the beginning and the end of human life; but it is also certain that such mastery will not be able to transform the earth into a paradise of assured enjoyment. How, then, will every one of man’s powers be reasonably cared for if the realities of new false developments, and also of new weaknesses, show the one-sided character of an idea which would wish to control life exclusively on the foundation of

quantitative analysis and synthesis? Its application to social life is not only false, but also a simplification of many complex processes which is dangerous in practice. Conditions being what they are modern man needs also to pray, and if he is wise, he is ready to pray for security as well.

22. Yet this does not mean that man must abandon new ways, that is to say, give up adapting to present conditions for his own security, the order just referred to which has regard for true human nature. There is no objection to security ensuring its own stability by also making use of results in technique and industry, yet it is necessary to resist the temptation to gain support for order and security from the above-mentioned purely quantitative method which takes no account of the order of nature, as is the wish of those who entrust man's destiny to the tremendous industrial power of the present age. They think they are establishing complete security on the ever-increasing productivity and on the uninterrupted flow of an ever greater and fruitful production in the nation's economy. This, they say—on basis of a full and ever more perfect automatic system of production, and supported by better methods of organization and accountancy—will guarantee to all workers a continuous and progressive return for their labor. In a subsequent phase this will become so great that, by means of community measures, it will be able to satisfy the security of those who are not yet, or no longer, able to work—the young children, the old, the sick. To establish security, they conclude, there will therefore no longer be any necessity to have recourse to property either private or collective, either in nature or in goods. Even so, this manner of organizing security is not one of those forms of adaptation of natural principles to new developments, but a kind of attack on the essence of man's natural relationships with his fellow men, with work, with society. In this excessively artificial system, man's security over his own life is dangerously separated from arrangements and forces for the organization of the community which are inherent in true human nature itself and which alone render possible a responsible association of men. Somehow, though with necessary adjustments to the times, family and property must remain among the fundamentals of the free settlement of persons. Somehow, the lesser social units and the state must

be able to come together as complementary agents of security.

23. Therefore it once more appears true that a quantitative method, however perfected, neither can, nor ought to, control the social and historical reality of human life. The ever-quickening pulse of life, the constantly multiplying technical productivity are not criteria which, of themselves provide authority for declaring that there is a genuine improvement in the economic life of a nation. Only a one-sided view of the present, or perhaps of the immediate future, and no more, can be satisfied with such a test. From this premise there results—sometimes over a long period—a rash consumption of reserves and of the treasures of nature, and, to excess, even of the available human power to work; and later there gradually results an ever greater disproportion between the need to maintain the cultivation of the soil of the country in reasonable adaptations to all the possibilities of producing, and an excessive crowding together of workers. There are, in addition, the decay of social union, and especially of the family, and in each and every worker and consumer the growing danger of insurance of life based on income from property of all kinds, which is so exposed to every form of currency depreciation and the risk in placing that security exclusively on the immediate return for labor.

24. In this industrial age, the man who accuses, and rightly accuses, communism of having deprived of freedom the people over whom it holds sway, should not omit to note that, in the other part of the world also, liberty will be a very dubious possession if man's security is not derived to a greater extent from a condition of things which corresponds to his true nature.

25. The erroneous belief which makes security rest on the ever-mounting process of social production is a superstition, perhaps the only one, of our rationalistic age of industry. But it is also the most dangerous, because it seems to deem impossible, economic crises which always bring in their train risk of a return to dictatorship.

26. Moreover, that superstition is in no sense suited to the setting up of a sound bulwark against communism, because in it participate the communists as well as a considerable number of the non-communists. In this erroneous belief the

two sides find a meeting ground, thus establishing a tacit agreement of such a kind as to be able to beguile the apparent realists of the West into the dream of a possible genuine co-existence.

THE MIND OF THE CHURCH ON COMMUNISM

27. In the Christmas radio message last year We set forth the mind of the Church on this topic and We now intend once again to ratify it. We reject communism as a social system by virtue of Christ's doctrine, and We have a particular obligation to proclaim the fundamental principles of natural law. For the same reasons We also reject the opinion that the Christian ought today to see communism as a phenomenon or a stage in the passage of history, one of the necessary "moments," as it were, of its evolution, and consequently to accept it as if decreed by Divine Providence.

WARNINGS TO CHRISTIANS IN THE PRESENT INDUSTRIAL AGE

28. But at same time We again warn Christians of the industrial age, in the spirit of Our immediate predecessors in the supreme pastoral and teaching office, against being satisfied with an anti-communism founded on the slogan and the defense of a liberty which is devoid of content: Rather We urge them to build up a society in which man's security rests on that moral order of which We have very often set forth the need and the consequences, and which has regard for true human nature.

29. Now Christians, to whom here more particularly We address Ourselves, ought to know better than others that the Son of God made Man is the one steadfast support of the human race in the social and historical life also, and that He, by taking to himself human nature, has borne witness to its dignity as the basis and rule of that moral order. It is therefore their primary duty to act with a view to bringing about the return of modern society in its organizations to the sources made sacred by the Word of God made flesh. If ever Christians neglect this duty of theirs by leaving inactive the guiding forces of the Faith in their public life, to the extent that they are responsible, they would be committing treason against the God-Man Who ap-

peared in visible form among us in the cradle of Bethlehem. Let the seriousness and deep motive of the Christian action be an effective testimony in the world and at same time avail to dispel the very suspicion of a supposed aiming at worldly power on the part of the Church.

30. If, therefore, Christians unite to this end in various institutions and organizations, they are setting before themselves no other objective save the service willed by God for the benefit of the world. For the sake of this motive, and not out of weakness, let Christians group themselves together. But let them—and more so than others—remain open to every healthy undertaking and to all genuine progress, and not withdraw themselves into a sealed enclosure as if to preserve themselves from the world. Committed to promote the advantage of all men, let them not despise others who, at any rate if they are submissive to the light of reason, both could and should accept from the teaching of Christianity at least what is based on the natural law.

31. Be on your guard against those who undervalue this Christian service to the world and oppose to it a so-called “pure,” “spiritual” Christianity. They have not understood the divine institution—to begin from its fundamental principle—Christ is true God but also true man. The Apostle St. Paul makes known to us the full essential will of God made Man, which aims at setting aright the earthly world also, when he pays to Him the tribute of honor with two very expressive titles, “Mediator,” and “Man” (*Timothy*, 2:5). Yes, man, as is everyone of those redeemed by Him.

III

NECESSARY INTEGRATION AND STABILITY OF EACH HUMAN LIFE IN CHRIST

32. Jesus Christ is not only the steadfast support of the human race in the social and historical life, but also in that of the individual Christian, so that as “all things were made through Him, and without Him was made nothing that has been made” (John 1; 1,3), so no one will ever be able to carry out works worthy of the Divine Wisdom and glory without Him. The concept of the necessary integration and stability of each life in Christ was strongly presented to the faithful from the earliest days of the Church: by St.

Peter the Apostle, when, at the portico of the temple of Jerusalem, he proclaimed Christ as the "*ton archegon tes zoes*" (Acts 3,15), that is, the "Author of Life," and by the Apostle of the Gentiles, who frequently pointed out what ought to be the foundation of the new life received in Baptism. "You," he wrote, "are not carnal but spiritual, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." (Cfr. Rom., 8,9). Everyone, therefore, who is redeemed, as being "reborn" in Christ, likewise exists through Him "unto salvation by the faith" (Cfr. John 3, 3; 1 Peter 1,5).

LIMITS OF HUMAN POWER

33. Besides, how could the individual, even a non-Christian, left to himself, reasonably believe in his own autonomy, completeness and stability, if reality confronts him on every side with limits within which nature restricts him, and which could indeed be extended, but not entirely demolished?

34. The law of limitation is proper to life on earth, nor would Jesus Christ as man withdraw Himself from its rule, for there were fixed limits to His actions, according to the inscrutable designs of God, and in conformity with the mysteriously linked working of Divine grace and human freedom. Nevertheless, while the Christ-Man, limited during the period of His earthly life, consoles and strengthens us in our limitations, Christ as God fills us with a higher freedom for He has the fullness of wisdom and power.

35. On the basis of this reality, the Christian who prepares himself boldly with all the natural and supernatural means for building the world, according to the natural and supernatural order willed by God, will constantly raise his gaze to Christ and will confine his actions within the limits fixed by God. Not to recognize that would be to will a world contrary to the Divine plan, and hence disastrous for social life itself.

36. We have just now indicated the damaging results which flow from the false over-valuation of human power and from the undervaluing of the objective reality which, with the sum of its principles and laws—religious, moral, economic and social,—establishes limits and points out the true path of human actions. Now the same errors with the same results are being repeated in the field of human labor, and

particularly in that of economic activity and production.

37. In the face of the astonishing development of technology and, more often, by means of suggestions received, the worker feels himself absolute master and lord of his existence, completely capable of pursuing every objective, of giving actuality to every dream. By confining the whole of reality within the limits of tangible nature, he discerns in the vitality of production the way for man to become ever more perfect. Productive society, which forever appears to the worker as the sole living reality and as the power which keeps all in existence, gives the measure to his whole life: It is therefore his one sure support for both the present and the future. In it he lives and moves and has his being: It grows in the end for him into a substitute for religion. In such manner—the thought goes—there will arise a new type of man, that, namely, which surrounds his work with the aureole of the highest ethical value, and worships the workers' society with a kind of religious fervor.

THE HIGH MORAL VALUE OF WORK

38. There is now being asked the question whether the creative power of work truly constitutes the steady support of man independently of other values not purely technical, and if, consequently, it deserves to be, as it were, worshipped by modern man. Certainly not; for no power whatsoever or other activity of an economic nature can be so regarded. Even in the technical era, the human person, created by God and redeemed by Christ, remains elevated in its being and in its dignity, and therefore its creative power and its work have a very much higher permanence. Thus firmly established, human work is also a profound moral force, and the human race of workers is a society which not only produces objects, but also glorifies God. Man can consider his work as a true instrument of his sanctification because by working he makes perfect in himself the image of God, fulfills his duty and the right to gain for himself and his dependents the necessary sustenance, and makes himself a useful unit of society. Bringing this order into existence will obtain for him security, and, at the same time, the "peace on earth" proclaimed by the angels.

THE QUESTION OF PEACE

39. And yet it is precisely against him, the religious and Christian man, that the charge will be brought by some of being an obstacle to peace, of opposing the peaceful co-existence of men, of nations, of different systems, because he does not keep his religious convictions unspoken in the privacy of his conscience, but makes them effective even in traditional and powerful organizations, in all the activities of life both public and private. It is asserted that this kind of Christianity makes a man overbearing, biased, oversure and satisfied with himself; that it leads him to defend positions which no longer have any significance, instead of being open to everything and everybody, and having confidence that, in a general co-existence, the interior living faith, like "spirit and love" at least in the Cross and the Sacrifice, would furnish a definite contribution to the common cause. In this false idea of a religion and Christianity have we not once more before us that erroneous worship of the human subject and of his positive life-force carried over to the supernatural plane? Man, face to face with opinions and systems opposed to the true religion, is, of course, always bound by the limits established by God in the natural and supernatural order. In obedience to this principle, our peace program cannot approve of an indiscriminate co-existence at all costs with everybody; certainly not at the cost of truth and justice. These irremovable boundary marks, in effect, demand complete observance. Where this is so, including today in the question of peace, religion is in a sure manner protected against abuse from the political quarter; whereas when it has been restricted to purely interior life, religion itself is more exposed to that danger.

NUCLEAR ARMS AND ARMAMENT CONTROL

40. This thought of its own accord leads Us on to the ever acute question of peace which constitutes an object of solicitude always present to Our heart and at this moment one of its partial problems begs for special consideration. We propose to direct Our attention to a recent proposal which aims at putting a check on experiments in nuclear weapons by means of an international agreement. There has been talk also of taking further steps toward conventions through which the use of those weapons would be renounced and all

states subjected to effective arms control. Thus there would be a question of three steps: renunciation of experimentation with atomic weapons, renunciation of the use of such, and general control of armaments.

41. The supreme importance of these proposals is tragically illustrated if one stops to consider what science thinks it can predict about such actions, and which We think it useful to sum up briefly here.

42. As for the *experiments* of atomic explosions, the opinion of those who fear the effects produced if they are multiplied would seem to be finding greater acceptance. Too many such explosions would in time cause an increased density of radioactive products in the atmosphere, whose diffusion depends on elements not under man's control; thus would be generated conditions very dangerous for many living beings.

43. Concerning the *use*: in a nuclear explosion an enormous amount of energy equivalent to several thousand million kilowatts is developed in an exceedingly short time; this energy is composed of electromagnetic radiations of very great density distributed within a vast gamut of wave lengths even to the most penetrating, and of tiny bodies produced by nuclear disintegration which are hurled at nearly the speed of light. This energy is transferred to the atmosphere and within thousandths of a second increases the temperature of surrounding air masses by hundreds of degrees; their displacement is violent, propagated at the speed of sound. On the earth's surface, in an area of many square kilometres, reactions of unimaginable violence take place, materials volatilized and utterly destroyed by direct radiation, by heat, by mechanical action, while an enormous amount of radioactive materials of varying life-span completes and continues the destruction through their activity.

44. This is the spectacle offered to the terrified gaze as the result of such use; entire cities, even the largest and richest in art and history, wiped out; a pall of death over pulverized ruins, covering countless victims with limbs burnt, twisted and scattered while others groan in their death agony. Meanwhile the spectre of a radioactive cloud hinders survivors from giving any help and inexorably advances to snuff out any remaining life. There will be no

song of victory, only the inconsolable weeping of humanity, which in desolation will gaze upon the catastrophe brought on by its own folly.

45. Concerning *control*: Inspection by properly equipped planes has been suggested for the purpose of watching over any atomic activities in large territories. Others might perhaps think of the possibility of a worldwide network of observation posts, each one staffed by experts of different countries and protected by solemn international pacts. Such centers would have to be equipped with delicate and precise meteorological and seismic instruments, with equipment for chemical analysis, with vast spectographs and such like; they would render possible the real control of many, unfortunately not of all, of the activities which antecedently would be outlawed in the field of atomic experimentation.

46. We do not hesitate to declare, as We have in previous allocutions, that the sum total of those three precautions as an object of international agreement is an obligation in conscience of nations and of their leaders. We said, sum total of those precautions, because the reason they are morally binding is also that equal security be established for all. If, however, only the first point, concerning experimentation, were put into effect, the result would be that that condition would not be verified, the more so that there would be given sufficient reason to doubt a sincere desire to put into effect the other two conventions. We speak so frankly because the danger of insufficient proposals concerning peace depends in large part on the mutual suspicions that often trouble the dealings of the powers concerned, each accusing the other in varying degrees of mere tactics, even of the lack of sincerity in a matter basic to the fate of the whole human race.

PREVENTIVE PACIFICATION

47. For the rest, efforts toward peace must consist not only in measures aimed at restricting the possibility of waging war, but even more in preventing, eliminating or lessening with time the quarrels between nations which might lead to war.

48. To this kind of preventive pacification statesmen must devote themselves with great vigilance, imbued with a spirit of impartial justice and also generosity, within the

limits of the course of a healthy realism. In last year's Christmas message We indicated the points of dispute noted in relations between Europeans and those non-Europeans who aspire to full political independence. Can those disputes be allowed to run their course, so to speak—a procedure which might easily increase their gravity, sow hatred in men's souls and create so-called traditional enmities? And might not a third party come to profit from such enmities, a third party which neither of the others really wants, and cannot want? At any rate, let not those peoples be denied a fair and progressive political freedom nor hindered in its pursuit. To Europe, however, they will give credit for their advancement; to that Europe without whose influence, extended to all fields, they might be drawn by a blind nationalism to plunge into chaos or slavery.

49. On the other hand, the Western peoples, especially those of Europe, should not, in the face of such problems, remain passive in futile regret over the past or in mutual recrimination over colonialism. Rather they should set themselves constructively to work to extend where it has not yet been done those true values of Europe and the West which have produced so many good fruits in other continents. The more Europeans strive for this the more help will they be to the just freedom of young nations which in turn will be saved from the pitfalls of false nationalism. This, in truth, is their real enemy, which would pit them one day against each other, to the advantage of third parties. Such a forecast, not unfounded, cannot be neglected or forgotten by those who handle their problems of peace at congresses where, unfortunately, there gleams the splendor of a unity that is external and predominantly negative. We think that in such considerations and in such modes of procedure there is a valuable assurance of peace, in some respects even more important than an immediate prevention of war.

CONCLUSIONS

50. Beloved sons and daughters: If even today the birth of Christ spreads through the world rays of joy and quickens profound emotion in the heart, it is because the immense yearnings of generations of men are contained in the lowly crib of the Incarnate Son of God. In Him, with Him and

through Him is the salvation, the security, the temporal and eternal destiny of humankind. To each and every man the way is clear to approach that crib to attain through the teaching, the example, the goodness of the God-Man his proper share of grace and the things necessary for this life and the life to come.

51. Where that is not done, either because of individual sloth or because of other hindrances, it would be useless to seek it elsewhere, for on all sides the darkness of error, of selfishness, of vanity and sin, of disappointment and uncertainty weighs heavily. The disappointing experiences of peoples, of systems, of individuals, who were unwilling to seek from Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life, should be seriously studied and meditated on by whoever thinks he can do all by himself. Today's humanity, cultured, powerful, dynamic, possesses perhaps a greater title to earthly happiness in security and peace, but will not be able to realize that happiness as long as there does not enter the loftiest and most influential factor into its plans and discussions: God and His Christ. Let the God-Man return among men, their Lord acknowledged and obeyed, as, at every Christmas He returns in spirit to the crib and offers himself to all. Such is the wish We express today to mankind's great family in the certainty that We are showing it the path to salvation and happiness.

52. May the Divine Infant deign to hear Our fervent prayer so that His presence in today's world be felt almost sensibly, as in the days of His dwelling on earth. Living in the midst of men, may He enlighten the minds and strengthen the wills of those who rule over nations; to these latter may He assure justice and peace; may He encourage the zealous apostles of His Divine message, sustain the good, draw the errant to Himself, console those persecuted for His Name and for His Church, succour the poor and oppressed, assuage the pains of the sick, the imprisoned, the exiled. May He give to all a spark of His divine love so that everywhere on earth His peaceful kingdom may triumph. Amen.



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