

# Text of Supreme Pontiff's Christmas Message

Vatican City, Dec. 25. Following is a complete English translation of the 1942 Christmas Message of His Holiness Pope Pius XII, entitled "The Holy Season of Christmas and Blessing Humanity."

My dear children of the whole world:

As the Holy Christmas Season comes round each year, the message of Jesus, Who is light in the midst of darkness, comes once more from the Crib of Bethlehem in the ears of Christians and reaches in their hearts with an ever new freshness of joy and piety. It is a message which lights up with heavenly truth a world that is plunged in darkness by fatal errors. It infuses exuberant and fruitful joy into mankind, torn by the anxiety of deep, bitter sorrow. It proclaims liberty to the sons of Adam, shackled with the chains of sin and guilt. It promises mercy, love, peace to the countless hosts of those in suffering and tribulation who see their happiness shattered and their efforts broken in the tempestuous strife and hate of our stormy days.

The church bells, which announce this message in every continent, not only recall the gift which God made to mankind at the dawn of the Christian Era; they also announce and proclaim a consoling reality of the present, a reality which is eternally young, living and life-giving. It is the reality of the "True Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world," and which knows no setting. The Eternal Word, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, began His mission of saving and redeeming the human race by being born in the squalor of a stable and by thus ennobling and hallowing poverty.

He thus proclaimed and consented a message which is still, today, the word of Eternal Life. That message can solve the most tortuous questions, unsolved and insoluble for those who bring to their investigations a mentality and an apparatus which are ephemeral and merely human; and those questions stand up, bleeding, imperiously demanding an answer, before the thought and the feelings of embittered and exasperated mankind. The watchword "I have compassion on the multitude" is for us a sacred trust which may not be abused; it remains strong, and impelling in all times and in all human situations, as it was the distinguishing mark of Jesus.

The Church would be untrue to herself, ceasing to be a mother, if she turned a deaf ear to children's anguished cries, which reach her from every class of the human family. She does not intend to take sides for either of the particular forms in which the several peoples and States strive to solve the gigantic problems of domestic order or international collaboration, as long as these forms conform to the Law of God. But, on the other hand, as the "Pillar and Ground of Truth" and guardian, by the will of God and the mandate of Christ, of the natural and supernatural order, the Church cannot renounce her right to proclaim to her sons and to the whole world the unchanging basic laws, saving them from every perversion, obfuscation, corruption, false interpretation and error.

This is all the more necessary for the fact that from the exact maintenance of these laws and not merely by the effort of noble and courageous wills, depends in the last analysis the solidity of any national and international order, so fervently desired by all peoples.

We know the qualities of courage and sacrifice of those peoples, and we also know their straitened conditions and their sorrow, and in this hour of unspeakable trial and strife we feel ourselves bound to each and every one of them without exception, by a deep, all-embracing, unmovable affection, and by an immense desire to bring them every solace and help which is in any way at our command.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ORDER WITHIN THE NATIONS

In Our last Christmas Message, We expounded the principles which Christian thought suggest, for the establishment of an international order of friendly relations and collaboration such as to conform to the demands of God's Law, today We shall with the consent, We feel, and the interested attention of all upright men pause to consider very carefully and with equal impartiality, the fundamental laws of the internal order of States and peoples.

International relations and internal order are intimately related. International equilibrium and harmony depend on the internal equilibrium and development of the

individual States in the material, social and intellectual spheres. A firm and steady peace policy towards other nations is, in fact, impossible without a spirit of peace within the nation which inspires trust. It is only, then, by striving for an integral peace, a peace in both fields, that people will be freed from the cruel nightmare of war, and the material and psychological causes of further discord and disorder will be diminished and gradually eliminated.

## DOUBLE ELEMENT OF SOCIAL LIFE

Every society worthy of the name, has originated in a desire for peace; and hence aims at attaining peace, that "tranquil living together in order" in which St. Thomas finds the essence of peace.

Two primary elements, then, regulate social life: a living together in order and a living together in tranquility.

## LIVING TOGETHER IN ORDER

Order, which is fundamental in an association of men (of beings, that is, who strive to attain an end appropriate in their nature) is not a merely external linking up of parts which are numerically distinct. It is rather, and must be, a tendency and an ever more perfect approach to an internal union; and this does not exclude differences founded in fact and sanctioned by the will of God or by supernatural standard.

A clear understanding of the genuine fundamentals of all social life has a capital importance today as never before, when mankind, impregnated by the poison of error and social aberrations, tormented by the fever of discordant desires, doctrines and aims, is excitedly toasting about in the discord which it has itself created, and is experiencing the destructive forces of false ideas, that disregard the Law of God or are opposed to it. And since disorder can only be overcome by an order which is not merely superimposed and fictitious (just as darkness with its fearful and depressing effects can only be driven away by light and not by will of the wisps); so security, reorganization, progressive improvement cannot be expected and cannot be brought about unless by a return of large and influential sections to correct notions about society.

It is a return which calls for the Grace of God in large measure, and for a resolute will, ready and prepared for sacrifice on the part of good and far-seeing men. From these influential circles who are more capable of penetrating and appreciating the beauty of just social norms, there will pass on and infiltrate into the masses the clear knowledge of the true, divine, spiritual origin of social life. Thus the way will be cleared for the re-awakening, the growth and the fixing of those moral principles without which even the proudest achievements create but a babel in which the citizens, though they live inside the same walls, speak different and incoherent languages.

## GOD, THE FIRST CAUSE AND ULTIMATE FOUNDATION OF INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL LIFE

From individual and social life we should rise to God, the First Cause and Ultimate Foundation, as He is the Creator of the first conjugal society, from which we have the society which is the family, and the society of peoples and of nations. As an image, albeit imperfect, of its Exemplar, the One and True God, Who through the Mystery of the Incarnation redeemed and raised human nature, life in society, in its ideals and in its end, possesses by the light of reason and of revelation a moral authority and an absoluteness which transcend every temporal change.

It has a power of attraction that, far from being weakened or lessened by delusions, errors, failures, draws irresistibly the noblest and most faithful souls to the Lord, to take up with renewed energy, with added knowledge, with new studies, methods and means, the enterprises which in other times and circumstances were tried in vain.

## DEVELOPMENT AND PERFECTION OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The origin and the primary scope of social life is the conservation, development and perfection of the human person, helping him to realize accurately the demands and values of religion and culture set by the Creator for every man and for all mankind, both as a whole and in its natural ramifications. A social teaching or a social reconstruction program which denies or

distorts the relation to God of everything that regards man, is on a false course; and while it builds up with one hand, it prepares with the other the materials which sooner or later will undermine and destroy the whole fabric. And when it disregards the respect due to the human person and to the life which is proper to that person, and gives no thought to it in its organization, in legislative and executive activity, then instead of serving society it harms it. Instead of encouraging and stimulating social thought, instead of realizing its hopes and expectations, it strips it of all real value and reduces it to a utilitarian formula which is openly rejected by constantly increasing groups.

If social life implies intrinsic unity, it does not, at the same time, exclude differences which are founded in fact and nature. When we hold fast to God, the Supreme Contender of all that relates to man, then the similarities no less than the differences of men find their allotted places in the fixed order of being, of values, and hence also of morality.

When, however, this foundation is removed, there is a dangerous lack of cohesion in the various spheres of culture; the frontiers of true values becomes uncertain and shifting even to the point where mere external factors, and often blind instincts come to determine, according to the prevalent fashion of the day, who is to have control of this or that direction. After the fateful economy of the past decades, during which the lives of all citizens were subordinated to the stimulus of gain, there now succeeds another and no less fateful policy which, while it considers everybody and everything with reference to the State, excludes all thought of ethics or religion. This is a fatal masquerade, a fatal error. It is calculated to bring about incalculable consequences for social life, which is never nearer to losing its noblest prerogatives than when it thinks it can deny or forget with impunity the eternal source of its own dignity: God.

Reason, enlightened by faith, assigns to individuals, and to particular societies in the social organization a definite and exalted place. It knows, to mention only the most important, that the whole political and economic activity of the State is directed to the permanent realization of the common good. It is to create those external conditions which are needed for the mass of the citizens, to bring their natural virtues to maturity, to fulfill their duties and develop fully their material, intellectual and religious life. This is inasmuch as, on the one hand, the family and other associations (to which nature has given precedence over the State) may be physically and morally insufficient for their needs; and on the other hand, God's redeeming will has not established in the Church another and universal society to direct the human individual to the attaining of his supernatural destiny. In a conception of society which is pervaded and sanctioned by religious thought, the influence of economics and of every other sphere of cultural activity represents a universal and most exalted center of activity, very rich in its variety and coherent in its harmony, in which men's intellectual equality and diversity of occupation come into their own and secure adequate expression.

When this is not so work is depreciated, and the worker is belittled.

## JURIDICAL ORDER OF SOCIETY AND ITS AIMS

That social life, such as God willed it, may attain its scope, it needs a juridical order to support it from without, to defend and protect it. The function of this juridical order is not to dominate but to serve, to help the development and increase of society's vitality in the rich multiplicity of its endeavors, leading all the individual energies to their perfection in peaceful competition, and defending them with appropriate and honest means against all that may militate against their full evolution. Such an order, that it may safeguard the equilibrium, the safety and the harmony of society has also the power of coercion against those who only by this means can be held within the noble discipline of social life. But in the just fulfillment of this right, an authority which is truly worthy of the name will always be painfully conscious of its responsibility in the sight of the Eternal Judge, before Whose Tribunal every wrong judgment, and especially every revolt against the order established by God, will receive without fail its sanction.

The precise, bedrock, basic rules that govern society cannot be prejudiced by the intervention of human agency. They can be denied, overlooked, despised, transgressed, but they can never be overthrown with legal validity. It is true indeed, that, as time goes on, conditions of life change. But there is never a complete break or a complete discontinuity between the law of yesterday and that of today, between the disappearance of old powers and constitutions and the appearance of a new order.

In any case, whatever be the change or transformation, the scope of every social life remains identical, sacred, obligatory. It is the development of the personal values of man as the image of God, and the obligation remains with every member of the human family to realize his unchangeable destiny, whatsoever be the legislator and the authority whom he obeys.

In consequence, there always remains, too, his inalienable right, which no opposition can nullify—a right which must be respected by friend and foe—in a legal order and practice which appreciate and understand that it is their essential duty to serve the common good.

The juridical order has, besides, the high and difficult scope of insuring harmonious relations both between individuals and between societies, and within these. This scope will be reached if legislators will abstain from following those perilous theories and practices, so harmful to communities and to their spirit of union, which derive their origin and promulgation from false postulates.

Among such postulates we must count the juridical positivism, which attributes a deceptive majesty to the setting up of purely human laws, and which leaves the way open for a fatal divorce of law from morality; there is, besides, the conception which claims for particular nations, or races, or classes, the juridical instinct as the final imperative and the norm from which there is no appeal. Finally, there are these various theories which, differing among themselves, and deriving from opposite ideologies, agree in considering the State, or a group which represents it, as an absolute and supreme entity, exempt from control and from criticism even when its theoretical and practical postulates result in, and offend by, their open denial of essential tenets of the human and Christian conscience.

Anyone who considers with an open and penetrating mind the vital connection between social order and a genuine juridical order, and who is conscious of the fact that internal order in all its complexity depends on the predominance of spiritual forces, on the respect of human dignity in oneself and in others, on the love of society and of its God-given ends, cannot wonder at the sad effects of juridical conceptions which, far from the royal road of truth, proceed on the insecure ground of materialist postulates. But he will realize at once the urgent need of a return to a conception of law which is spiritual and ethical, serious and profound, vivified by the warmth of true humanity and illumined by the splendor of the Christian Faith, which bids us seek in the juridical order an outward refraction of the social order willed by God, a luminous product of the spirit of man which is in turn the image of the Spirit of God.

On this organic conception which alone is living, in which the noblest humanity and the most genuine Christian spirit flourish in harmony, there is marked the Scripture thought, expounded by the great Aquinas: *Opus Justitiae Pax*. The work of justice shall be peace—a thought which is as applicable to the internal as to the external aspect of social life. It admits of neither contrast nor alternative such as expressed in the disjunction, love or right, but the fruitful synthesis, love and right.

In the one as in the other since both radiate from the same Spirit of God, We read the program and the seal of the human spirit; they complement one another, give each other life and support, walk hand in hand along the road of concord and pacification, while right clears the way for love and love makes right less stern, and gives it a higher meaning. Both elevate human life to that social atmosphere where, even amid the failings, the obstacles and the difficulties of this earth a fraternal community of life is made possible.

But once let the baneful spirit of materialist ideas predominate,

it sends the direction of affairs, you shall then find its disruptive effects appearing daily in greater measure; you shall see law and justice disappear, all this as the sad forebode of the catastrophes that menace society when it abandons God.

## LIVING TOGETHER IN TRANQUILITY

The second fundamental element of peace towards which every human society tends almost instinctively, is tranquility.

O blessed tranquility, thou hast nothing in common with the spirit of holding fixedly and obstinately, unrelentingly and with childish stubbornness, to things as they are, nor yet with the reluctance—child of cowardice and selfishness—to put one's mind to the solution of problems and questions which the passage of time and the succession of generations, with their different needs and progress, make actual, and bring up as burning questions of the day. But for a Christian who is conscious of his responsibilities even towards the least of his brethren, there is no such thing as slothful tranquility; nor is there question of flight, but of struggle, of action against every inaction and desertion in the great spiritual combat where the stakes are the construction, may the very soul, of the society of tomorrow.

## HARMONY BETWEEN TRANQUILITY AND ACTIVITY

In the mind of Aquinas, tranquility and feverish activity are not opposed, but rather form a well-balanced pair for him who is inspired by the beauty and the urgency of the spiritual foundations of society, and of the nobility of its ideals. To you, young people, who are bent to turn your backs on the past, and to rely on the future for your aspirations and your hopes, We address Ourselves with ardent love and fatherly anxiety, enthusiasm and courage do not of themselves suffice, if they be not as they should be, placed in the service of good and of a spotless cause.

It is vain to agitate to weary yourselves, to bustle about without ever resting in God and His eternal law. You must be inspired with the conviction that you are fighting for truth, that you are sacrificing in the cause of truth your own tastes and energies, wishes and sacrifices that you are fighting for the eternal laws of God, for the dignity of the human person, and for the attainment of its destiny.

When mature men and young men, while remaining always at anchor in the sea of the eternally active tranquility of God, coordinate their differences of temperament and activity in a genuine Christian spirit, then if the propelling element is joined to the restraining element, the natural differences between the generations will never become dangerous, and will even conduce vigorously to the enforcement of the eternal laws of God in the changing course of times and of conditions of life.

## THE WORLD OF LABOR

In one field of social life, where for a whole century there was agitation and bitter conflict, there is today a calm, at least on the surface. We speak of the vast and evergrowing world of labor, of the immense army of workers, of breadwinners and dependents. If we consider the present with its wartime exigencies, as an admitted fact, then this calm may be called a necessary and reasonable demand but if we look at the present situation in the light of justice, and with reference to a legitimately regulated labor movement, then the tranquility will remain only apparent, until the scope of such a movement be attained.

Always moved by religious motives, the Church has condemned the various forms of Marxist Socialism, and she condemns them today, because it is her permanent right and duty to safeguard men from currents of thought and influences that jeopardize their eternal salvation. But the Church cannot ignore or overlook the fact that the worker, in his efforts to better his lot, is opposed by a machinery which is not only not in accordance with nature, but is at variance with God's plan and with the purpose He had in creating the goods of earth. In spite of the fact that the ways they followed were and are false and to be condemned, what man, and especially what priest or Christian, could remain deaf to the cries that rise from the depths and call for justice and a spirit of brotherly collaboration.