

# Pope Paul's Message

## 'If You Want Peace, Defend Life'

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul in a message for the 10th World Day of Peace (Jan. 1, 1977) declared that peace was inextricably linked to respect for human life at all stages, beginning with its first stirrings in the womb.

Voicing the theme of the day, "If you want peace, defend life," the Pope said that "peace and life are the supreme values in the civil order; they are also values that are interdependent."

Arguing that the "close relationship" between peace and life "seemed to spring from the nature of things," the pontiff scored the arms race, organized crime, government repression and torture, and abortion.

The papal peace message was presented at a press conference at the Vatican by Archbishop Bernardin Gantin, vice-president of the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace.

In a commentary on the message issued by the commission it was noted that the Pope's "pro-life" thrust was meant as a reminder that abortion can lead to chain-reaction "exterminations."

The Pope's insistence on the respect due to life, said the commentary, stemmed from his concern for "the immense risk of a chain of exterminations contained

in forgetfulness of the sacred character of life. We are already familiar with the consequences of such forgetfulness: death camps, genetic manipulations, contraception, euthanasia, and all the many forms of discrimination."

"To be in favor of abortion and against war is a contradiction," the commentary also said. "But to be against abortion and to condone or promote war is likewise contradictory."

"Peace," he said, "has once more begun to suffer — first in people's feelings, then in partial and localized disputes, then in frightening programs of armament build-up, which coldly calculate the potential for terrifying destruction — destruction greater than our capacity to imagine."

Said the Pope: "Peace is a duty, peace is possible. It is a message of optimism, a presage of the future. . . . Is peace possible? Yes, it is. It must be. . . . But only with the concourse of many and not easy conditions. But there is one aspect, of basic importance. . . . This aspect is the relationship between peace and the concept that the world has of human life."

"Peace and life," he added, "they are supreme values in the civil order. They are also values that are interdependent. Do we want peace? Then let us defend life."

The pontiff said that the close relationship between peace and life seemed to spring from the nature of things. He said that if "in defiance of logic, peace and life could in practice be dissociated, there loomed on the horizon of the future a catastrophe, irreparable for both peace and life. Hiroshima is a terribly eloquent proof and a frighteningly prophetic example of this," he said.

"The key to truth in the matter," he insisted, "can be found only by recognizing the primacy of life as a value and as a condition for peace."

Pope Paul went on to denounce the policy of massive stockpiling of armaments. "With the forthright boldness of our principles, we thus denounce the false and dangerous program of the arms race, of the secret rivalry between peoples for military superiority. Even if through a surviving remnant of happy wisdom, or through a silent yet tremendous contest in the balance of hostile, deadly powers, war does not break out, how can we fail to lament the incalculable outpouring of economic resources and human energies expended in order to preserve for each individual state its shield of ever more costly, ever more efficient weapons, and this to the detriment of resources for schools, culture, agriculture, health and civic welfare? . . . Let us at least recognize that this con-

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stitutional challenge which the arms race sets up between life and peace is a formula that is fallacious in itself and which must be corrected and superseded."

The pontiff said he praised the efforts already begun, to reduce and finally to eliminate "this senseless, cold war resulting from the progressive increase of the military potential of the various nations, as if these nations should necessarily be enemies of each other, and as if they were incapable

of realizing that such a concept of international relations must one day be resolved in the ruination of peace and of countless human lives."

Turning to the problem of Abortion, Pope Paul said that it was not only war that killed peace. "Every crime against life is a blow to peace, especially if it strikes at the moral conduct of the people, as often happens today, with horrible and often legal ease, as in the case of the suppression of incipient life, by abortion."

## Letter on General Absolution

The following letter was sent to the Elmira Star-Gazette in an effort to clarify a story which appeared in that newspaper concerning general absolution. The letter was signed by Father Michael Conboy, secretary to Bishop Joseph L. Hogan; Sister Kathleen Kircher, SSJ, coordinator for the ministry to Divorced and Separated Catholics, and Father Robert Kennedy, director of the diocesan Office of Liturgy. They asked it be reprinted in the Courier-Journal for the benefit of this paper's readers.

"The place of the divorced, separated and re-married Catholic in the Church community is an area of deep concern to us. We have witnessed the personal suffering of the separated, divorced and re-married as they struggled with the religious issues surrounding their decision to divorce, separate or re-marry."

"We had hoped that our interview with Mr. Baumbach would have resulted in a sensitive attempt to treat a very complicated and

serious issue for so many of us in the Catholic community — bishops, clergy, divorced, re-married, married. It is the sense of false impressions resulting from Mr. Baumbach's reporting that prompts this letter of clarification."

"Ministry to the divorced, separated and re-married begins with accurate presentations on the Church's teaching related to divorce. Your choice of headline, 'Sacraments now offered to divorced Catholics' is the major

misimpression we strive to correct. The Canon Law Society of America in 1975 reiterated the traditional teaching of the Church that the mere fact of civil divorce does not alter a Catholic's status in the Church community. A divorced or separated Catholic remains a Catholic in good standing."

"Continuing study of the Canon Law Society on the status of the divorced/re-married (Catholics in irregular marriages) is one of the most hope-filled developments in the Church's contemporary pastoral concern for these men and women. It shows the Church looking into its life and tradition and searching for ways to help those who are alienated and to bring them into the reconciling peace of the life of the Church. Until the adoption of new pastoral and canonical directives, present guidelines will continue to be in effect. To suggest premature shifts in any pastoral or canonical guideline at this time creates false hopes for the remarried Catholics."

"The most recent controversy on these issues is prompted by the action of Bishop Carroll Dozier of Memphis, Tennessee, who celebrated a 'Rite of General Reconciliation' for alienated Catholics of his diocese, among whom were a large number of divorced, separated and re-married."

"The rite of general absolution is relatively new to the pastoral and sacramental practice of the Church. It is understood to be an exceptional practice, used only in those cases of grave need determined by the local Bishop and, in some cases, by the local priest in communication with the Bishop. Mr. Baumbach quotes incorrectly when he indicates that one of the conclusions of this Rite is that re-married Catholics may be returned to the sacraments. It is a possible application of the Rite, apparently deemed necessary by Bishop Dozier for the needs of his diocese."

"Bishop Hogan has issued clear guidelines for the use of the rite of general absolution in the Diocese of Rochester, based on diocesan resources and needs for pastoral ministry. Re-married Catholics who desire to return to the sacraments

are being encouraged to respond to the reconciliation efforts offered by the diocesan Marriage Tribunal, the Coordinator of Ministry to Divorced and Separated Catholics, and personal counselling."

"Since divorce touches almost every American family, we realize the confusion that can be generated by false implications and misrepresentations. It is our hope that this letter of clarification will foster a deeper understanding of the Church's reconciling efforts to those who have experienced the hurt of alienation."

### CHRISTMAS AT MOS

The Christmas Eve Family Mass at Mother of Sorrows will begin at 5 p.m., after a 15-minute concert by the junior choir directed by Mrs. Charles Stratton. The Midnight Mass will be preceded by a half-hour concert by the adult choir, under the direction of Mrs. John Effinger.

### Winter Wonderland At Good Shepherd

Photos by Ben Susso

Sister Mary Barker's fourth-grade class at Good Shepherd in Henrietta have spent the past three weeks collecting rocks, weeds, and various other materials. The result is a mammoth re-creation of the Nativity scene (below). This unusual Christmas creche is part of the student's Christmas program to be presented to their parents. From the left: Liz Fien, Beth Keim, Lisa Casciano, Paula Hoak, Mike Stevenson, Peter Ashe, Fred Gabriel, Peter Remenicky, and Richard Beikirch. At right, Liz Fien places an angel on a ledge to watch over the Christ child.



### Lung Association: No Collectors

The American Lung Association - Finger Lakes Region, currently engaged in its 70th annual Christmas Seal Campaign to raise funds for fighting pulmonary disease, has pointed out that no individuals are authorized to collect money in person for the association, and that there are no containers placed in public places for collection of money.

The Lung Association utilizes only one method of requesting funds — its direct mail appeal, which includes sheets of Christmas Seals and a letter from the association sent to homes and businesses in late October. This year's Christmas Seal Campaign began officially on Nov. 10. The association requests that persons approached by individuals claiming to be collecting funds for the Christmas Seal Campaign phone the office at 442-4260.