

# Pontiff's World Day of Peace Homily

Vatican City (NC) — Following is the Vatican's English-language text of the homily given in Italian by Pope John Paul II during a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica Jan. 1, the World Day of Peace and the feast of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

We find ourselves at the beginning of the new year 1984 and we cry out: "May God have pity on us and bless us."



(Ps. 67:2) The whole Church cries out in the liturgy of the first day of the new year, which is, at the same time, the day of the octave of Christmas.

Through the mystery of the birth of God in time, through the events of Bethlehem, we separate ourselves from the "old" year and enter into the "new" year. The octave of Christmas links, so to speak, these two edges of human time and human existence on earth. The Church wishes in this way to show the fact that our existence on earth, in the visible

world, is linked to the invisible God and that in Him "we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

Furthermore, God has entered into our human time, because, as son of the very substance of the father, he became man by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born on Bethlehem night of the Virgin Mary. From that moment our human time has become His time; and so it is filled not only by the history of man and humanity, but it is likewise filled by the saving mystery of the redemption, which takes effect precisely in this human history.

Today, on the last day of the Christmas octave, the attention of the Church — filled with the highest veneration and love — concentrates on the maternity of the mother of God (Theotokos), that is, on the one who gave the son of God His human nature and human life.

It is the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, Mother of God. Thanks to her we pronounce today the name of Jesus, because on this day that name was given to the son of Mary.

Through her too and together with her we cry out in this name at the beginning of the new year: "May God have pity on us and bless us." We desire with this cry, in union with the mother of God, to implore all God's gifts for the great human family, and to prevent evil — every evil. So we cry out in the name of Jesus, which means "savior," and we cry in union with the mother, whom the Church's tradition calls omnipotentia supplex.

We cry out in this way during the period of the special jubilee, as the Church's year of redemption and grace continues, which began on the Feast of the Annunciation last year.

Motherhood is explained always in relation to fatherhood. Parents, the father and the mother, initiate a new human life on earth, cooperating with the creative power of God Himself.

The motherhood of Mary is virginal. Through the power of the Holy Spirit she conceived and gave to the world the son of God, "not knowing man."

Paul explains this mystery of the divine motherhood of

Mary making reference to the eternal fatherhood of God:

"When the time had fully come, God sent forth His son, born of woman." (Gal. 4:4)

The virginal maternity of the mother of God is related to the eternal fatherhood of God. It is, in a certain sense, along the way of the mission of the son, who comes to humanity from the father through the mother. The motherhood of Mary opens this way — it opens the way of God to humanity. In a certain sense, it is the culminating point of this way.

We know that the way of this mission — once opened in man's history — remains forever. It always makes possible, throughout the history of humanity, the saving mission of the son of God: the mission, which is consummated with the cross and the resurrection. And together with the son's mission there remains in the history of humanity the saving motherhood of His earthly mother: Mary of Nazareth.

We venerate this motherhood on the first day of the new year. We desire that at this new stage of human time Mary may open to Christ the way to humanity, just as she opened it on the night of God's birth.

In the mystery of today's solemnity is contained the following call for all people:

Behold, in Jesus Christ all of us have received the father.

In His earthly birth, Christ has brought us the same divine fatherhood: He has directed it to all people and has given it to everyone as an inviolable gift.

In reference to all of us the maternity of the virgin mother of God bears a particularly eloquent witness of this fatherhood of God.

The fatherhood of God tells us that we are all brothers and sisters.

The motherhood of Mary for all humanity adds to this relationship a special family dimension.

We have a right to think and to speak of ourselves as "the human family." We are all brothers and sisters in this family.

Has not St. Paul clearly said all this in today's liturgy?

● "God sent forth His son, born of woman... so that we might receive adoption as sons." (Gal. 4:4-5);

● "God has sent the spirit of His son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba!' ('Father!')." (Gal. 4:6);

● "So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir." (Gal. 4:7).

Our adoption as children of God is the great heritage left us by the birth of God. It is the reality of the grace of the redemption. At the same time, it is a fundamental and central point of reference for the whole of humanity, for all peoples, if it is true that we must think and speak of the universal brotherhood of individuals and of peoples.

And what is the reality that we find on our great planet on the first of January 1984? Is it not perhaps in deep contrast with the truth about the universal brotherhood of individuals and peoples?

Today's world is ever more marked by contrasts, trapped by tensions which are manifested in lacerations and in crossed directions, in the relations between East and West, and North and South.

The relations between East and West have reached a radical opposing of positions, with the interruption — which we all hope is temporary and as brief as possible —

of the negotiations on the reduction of nuclear and conventional weapons. Meanwhile, mutual distrust increases the fateful effects of ideological struggles and exacerbates already grave local conflicts, by which various nations, some of which are very small, are daily stained with blood.

In the other direction, between North and South, the gap that separates the rich countries from the poor countries, already serious for many years, has been further widened with the recent economic crisis. According to experts, with a slackening of 1 percent in the economic expansion of the industrialized nations there would be an impoverishment of at least 1.5 percent in the developing countries. The deficit of these latter nations, which has reached catastrophic dimensions, gives the measure of the spreading deterioration of such-economic contrasts. But the most worrisome feature is represented by the resulting contrasts in the condition of humanity. In the rich countries health and nourishment improve, whereas in the poor countries the means of nourishment for survival are lacking and the mortality rate soars, especially among infants.

According to the statistics of UNICEF, every day 40,000 children under 1 year of age die in the Third World, while FAO estimates that each day more than 15,000 people die from hunger or poor nutrition.

The threat of nuclear disaster and the plague of hunger appear on the horizon as terrifying as the deadly horsemen of the apocalypse: each of them the fruit of complex phenomena of the economic, political, ideological and moral order, which, at their root, are also the sources of constantly interacting violence.

What — we ask ourselves — are the deep causes of these phenomena? And why does the level of the threats and calamities not diminish but increase?

Humanity asks these questions with ever greater anxiety. The experts in different branches of science try to explain the specific mechanisms that in a direct or indirect way influence them. But, at the basis of the various causes and the complex mechanisms which accompany the processes of development and contemporary civilization is there not a basic and ultimate cause?

And is this basic cause not explained perhaps by the fact that the awareness of the fundamental brotherhood of individuals and peoples is being lost?

This brotherhood is linked to a common filiation. Through filiation it is linked to the fatherhood of God Himself.

The more we lose, or try to eliminate, the awareness of this fatherhood, the more we cease to be brothers and sisters, and, consequently, the more we remove ourselves from justice, peace and love of neighbor.

The message of this year for the World Day of Peace bears the title: "From a new heart, peace is born."

With this message the Apostolic See adds its word to all those efforts — sometimes desperate efforts — which are performed by people of good will throughout the world, as well as by the various national and international groups, to ensure peace in the modern world.

Today we wish to develop thoroughly, in a certain sense, the content of this message, reaching to that light which Christmas brings to humanity.

So in the course of this holy sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the Church, we cry out to God and, at the same time, we cry out to all people, asking for:

A renewed effectiveness of universal brotherhood in the hearts of all people;

A renewed effectiveness of the presence of the father in the various dimensions of life and society.

Only in a new heart can this power generate a sure peace on earth.

In all humility and confidence we entrust to the mother of Christ the gift of such peace.

Yes. We link the hope of peace, justice and love on earth to the motherhood of Mary, the mother of God!

## Vatican Unit Pushes Service For Non-Sacramental Penance

Washington (NC) — If there are not enough priests to hear confessions, a non-sacramental penance service "is more suitable than general absolution" in most cases, says a report by the Vatican's International Theological Commission.

The conclusion marks a rejection of recent trends in church thinking and practice under which general absolution has increasingly been seen as the primary way of dealing with those extraordinary situations when they arise.

The theologians acknowledged "the difficult and even somewhat dramatic pastoral situations in many parts of the church today" that may make it difficult for Catholics to confess individually because of a lack of priests.

But they suggested that the "possibility of a Christian

obtaining the forgiveness of grave sin by perfect contrition" provides a pastorally better framework for dealing with those situations than general absolution without individual confession.

A non-sacramental penance service in which persons with grave sins are urged to perfect contrition "is more suitable than general absolution, because in this way the obligation to the later personal confession can be made psychologically more understandable to most of the faithful," the commission said.

The church's tradition on perfect contrition, it commented, holds that this act "also always implies the desire ('votum') of receiving the sacrament of penance as soon as possible" and that it "probably is a sufficient disposition for receiving the Eucharist" when there are not enough confessors available.

The report, "Penance and Reconciliation," was released in English translation in the United States in January. It was the product of a 1982 work session by the commission in preparation for the 1983 world Synod of Bishops, but approval for general publication was granted only in late November 1983 by Cardinal

Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Vatican's doctrinal congregation and president of the commission.

In the report the international team of papally appointed theologians gave an overview of the biblical, theological and anthropological dimensions of penance. They also tackled a number of contemporary issues such as the relation between personal and social sin, the difference between grave and non-grave sins, and the place of confessions of devotion in Catholic life.

Rejecting an individualistic view of penance and reconciliation, the commission noted that "conversion to God is irrevocably connected with conversion to one's brother."

Recognition of the integral relationship between a "personal act" and its "social dimension" is also important in order to understand "the ecclesial and sacramental aspects of penance," the commission said.

Discussing the relative seriousness of different kinds of sin, the theologians reaffirmed the "difference between grave and non-grave sins...taught by the entire tradition of the church."

It said that objectively there are "commandments

which are of grave obligation, with the obligation to an act in which one gives himself entirely, and...commandments which only impose a light obligation."

The theologians noted different emphases in different periods of church history regarding the sacrament of penance, from the stress on public penance and satisfaction in the early church, to the stress on private penance and contrition in the Middle Ages and modern period, to the accent on confession in recent times. They called for an integral understanding of the relationship between confession, contrition and satisfaction in the renewal of the sacrament.

They also called for more attention to "the wealth and multiplicity of the forms of penance," including both the sacramental and the non-sacramental forms of reconciliation.

While affirming that the Eucharist "forgives daily sins," in accord with the church's conviction from ancient times, they also pointed to the equally ancient church tradition of excluding from the Eucharist those who were guilty of grave sins. "Therefore the Eucharist is no alternative to penance in the church," they said.

### Women's Retreat

Canandaigua — Sister Mary Lynch, SSJ, will join the Redemptorist Fathers in leading a women's retreat, Jan. 27-29 at Notre Dame Retreat House. Further information and registration is available by contacting the facility, P.O. Box 342, Canandaigua; (716) 394-5700.



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