



# The Holy See

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## *HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II*

*Sunday, 19 November 2000*

1. *"Then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory"* (Mk 13: 26). On this last Sunday of Ordinary Time, the liturgy speaks to us of *Christ's second coming*. The Lord will appear in clouds, clothed in power and glory. He is the same Son of man, merciful and compassionate, whom the disciples knew during his earthly journey. When the moment comes for his manifestation in glory, he will come to give human history its definitive fulfilment. Through the symbolism of cosmological upheavals, the Evangelist Mark recalls that God will pronounce *his last judgement on human events* in the Son, putting an end to a universe corrupted by falsehood and torn by violence and injustice.

2. Who better than you, dear soldiers and members of the police, young men and women, can *testify to the violence* and to the disruptive forces of evil present in the world? You fight against them every day: indeed, you are called to defend the weak, to protect the honest, to foster the peaceful coexistence of peoples. The *role of the sentinel*, who scans the horizon to avert danger and promote justice and peace everywhere, befits each of you. I greet you all with deep affection, dear brothers and sisters, who have come to Rome from many parts of the world to celebrate your special Jubilee. You are the representatives of the armies who have faced one another down through history. Today you are meeting at the tomb of the Apostle Peter *to celebrate Christ "our peace*, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph 2: 14). You have come to offer to him, mysteriously and really present in the Eucharist, your resolutions and your daily commitment as peacemakers. To each of you I express my deepest appreciation of your dedication and generous commitment. I first of all extend my greeting with fraternal esteem to Archbishop José Manuel Estepa Llaurens, who has expressed your common sentiments. My greeting is extended to the dear Archbishops and Military Ordinaries, whom I congratulate for the dedication with which they provide pastoral care for you. With them, I greet the military chaplains, who generously share in the ideals and efforts of your arduous daily activity. My respectful thoughts also turn to the officers of the armed forces, to those in command of the police forces and of the various security agencies, as well as to the civil authorities who have wished to share in the joy and grace of this solemn Jubilee celebration.

3. Your daily experience brings you face to face with *difficult and sometimes dramatic situations*, which

jeopardize human security. However the Gospel comforts us, presenting the victorious figure of Christ, *the judge of history*. With his presence, he brightens the darkness and even man's despair, and offers those who trust in him the comforting certainty of his constant assistance. In the Gospel just proclaimed we heard an important reference to the fig tree, whose branches, when their new leaves sprout, announce that springtime is near. With these words, Jesus encourages the Apostles not to give up before the difficulties and uncertainties of the present. Rather, he urges them to *know how to wait* and to *prepare themselves* to welcome him when he comes. Today, dear brothers and sisters, you too are invited by the liturgy to "read the signs of the times", an expression coined by my venerable predecessor, Pope John XXIII, who was recently beatified. However complex and difficult situations may be, do not lose trust. *In the human heart, the seed of hope must never die*. Indeed, always be attentive to discovering and encouraging every positive sign of personal and social renewal. Be prepared to further the courageous building of justice and peace with every possible means.

4. *Peace is a fundamental right of every man and woman*, which should be continuously promoted taking into account that "insofar as men are sinners, the threat of war hangs over them and will so continue until the coming of Christ" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 78). At times this duty, as recent experience has also shown, involves concrete initiatives to disarm the aggressor. Here I wish to refer to the so-called "humanitarian interference", which, after the failure of efforts by politics and the instruments of non-violent defence, is a last resort in order to stay the hand of the unjust aggressor. Thank you, dear friends, for your courageous work of peacemaking in countries devastated by senseless wars. Thank you for the help you offer, heedless of risks, to people struck by natural disasters. How numerous are the *humanitarian missions* in which you have been involved in recent years! In carrying out your difficult duty, you frequently find yourselves exposed to dangers and demanding sacrifices. Ensure that all your interventions always cast light on your authentic vocation as "custodians of the security and freedom of your fellow-countrymen", who "are contributing to the maintenance of peace", according to the felicitous expression of the Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 79). *Be men and women of peace*. And to be so to the full, welcome into your hearts Christ, the author and guarantor of true peace. He will enable you to exert that evangelical strength that overcomes the alluring temptations of violence. He will help you to put force at the service of the important values of life, of justice, of forgiveness and of freedom.

5. Here, I would like to offer a tribute to your many friends who have paid with their lives for fidelity to their mission. Forgetting themselves and despising danger, they rendered the community a priceless service. Today, during the Eucharistic celebration, we entrust them to the Lord with gratitude and admiration. But where did they find the strength necessary to do their duty to the full, other than in total adherence to the professed ideals? Many of them believed in Christ, and his words illumined their existence and gave an exemplary value to their sacrifice. They made the Gospel their code of conduct. May the example of your colleagues, who in faithfully doing their duty reached the heights of heroism and, perhaps, of holiness, be an example to you. Like them, you also look to Christ who also calls you "to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity". He calls you to be holy. And to be able to achieve your vocation, according to the Apostle Paul's well-known expression, "Take the whole armour of God.... Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace above all taking the shield of faith ... take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6: 13-17). Above all, "pray at all times" (Eph 6: 18). May Mary, the *Virgo Fidelis*, support and help you in your difficult activity. *May your hearts never be troubled*: rather, be ready, watchful and firmly anchored to the promise of Jesus, who in today's Gospel has assured us of his help and protection: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Mk 13: 31). In invoking Christ, may you continue to carry out your duty generously. Countless people look to you and trust in you in the hope of

