



The Holy See

Among the multiple preoccupations which beset us in this period of time, so full of decisive consequences for the life of the great human family, and which make Us feel so seriously the burden of the Supreme Pontificate, Palestine occupies a particular place on account of the war which harasses it. In all truth We can tell you, Venerable Brethren, that neither joyous nor sad events diminish the sorrow which is kept alive in Our soul by the thought that, in the land in which our Lord Jesus Christ shed His blood to bring redemption and salvation to all mankind, the blood of man continues to flow; and that beneath the skies which echoed on that fateful night with the Gospel tidings of peace, men continue to fight and to increase the distress of the unfortunate and the fear of the terrorized, while thousands of refugees, homeless and driven, wander from their fatherland in search of shelter and food.

2. To make Our sorrow more grievous, there is not only the news which continually reaches Us of the destruction and damage of sacred buildings and charitable places built around the Holy Places, but there is also the fear that this inspires in Us for the fate of the Holy Places themselves scattered throughout Palestine, and more especially within the Holy City.

3. We must assure you, Venerable Brethren, that confronted with the spectacle of many evils and the forecast of worse to come, We have not withdrawn into Our sorrow, but have done all in Our power to provide a remedy. Even before the armed conflict began, speaking to a delegation of Arab dignitaries who came to pay homage to Us, We manifested our lifelong solicitude for peace in Palestine, and, condemning any recourse to violence, We declared that peace could only be realized in truth and justice; that is to say by respecting the rights of acquired traditions, especially in the religious field, as well as by the strict fulfillment of the duties and obligations of each group of inhabitants.

4. When war was declared, without abandoning the attitude of impartiality which was imposed by Our apostolic duty, which places Us above the conflicts which agitate human society, We did not fail to do Our utmost, in the measure which depended upon Us, and according to the possibilities offered to Us, for the triumph of justice and peace in Palestine and for the respect and protection of the Holy Places.

5. At the same time, although numerous and urgent appeals are received daily by the Holy See,

We have sought as much as possible to come to the aid of the unhappy victims of the war, sending the means at Our disposal to Our representatives in Palestine, the Lebanon, and Egypt for this purpose, and encouraging the formation among Catholics in various countries of undertakings organized for the same purpose.

6. Convinced, however, of the insufficiency of human means for the adequate solution of a question the complexity of which no one can fail to see, We have, above all, had constant recourse to prayer, and in Our recent Encyclical Letter, *Auspicia Quaedam*, We invited you, Venerable Brethren, to pray, and to have the faithful entrusted to your pastoral care pray, in order that, under the auspices of the Blessed Virgin, matters may be settled in justice and peace, and concord may be happily restored in Palestine. As We said on June 2nd to members of the Sacred College of Cardinals, informing them of Our anxieties for Palestine, We do not believe that the Christian world could contemplate indifferently, or in sterile indignation, the spectacle of the sacred land (which everyone approached with the deepest respect to kiss with most ardent love) trampled over again by troops and stricken by aerial bombardments. We do not believe that it could permit the devastation of the Holy Places, the destruction of the great sepulcher of Christ.

7. We are full of faith that the fervent prayers raised to Almighty and Merciful God by the Christians throughout the world who, together with the aspirations of so many noble hearts, are ardently inspired by truth and good, will render less arduous to the men who hold the destinies of peoples the task of making justice and peace in Palestine a beneficial reality and of creating, with the efficient co-operation of all those interested, an order that may guarantee security of existence and, at the same time, the moral and physical conditions of life conducive to spiritual and material well-being, to each of the parties at present in conflict.

8. We are full of faith that these prayers and these hopes, an indication of the value that the Holy Places have for so great a part of the human family, will strengthen the conviction in the high quarters in which the problems of peace are discussed that it would be opportune to give Jerusalem and its outskirts, where are found so many and such precious memories of the life and death of the Savior, an international character which, in the present circumstances, seems to offer a better guarantee for the protection of the sanctuaries. It would also be necessary to assure, with international guarantees, both free access to Holy Places scattered throughout Palestine, and the freedom of worship and the respect of customs and religious traditions.

9. And God grant that the day may soon dawn when Christians may resume their pilgrimages to the Holy Places, there to see more clearly revealed, as they contemplate the evidence of the love of Jesus Christ, Who gave His life for His brethren, how men and nations may live harmoniously together, at peace with their world and themselves.

10. With reliance, then, on this hope, as a pledge of heavenly favors and in token of our affection, gladly in the Lord do we impart to you, Venerable Brethren, and to your flocks, as to all who will

take this appeal of Ours to heart, Our Apostolic Benediction.

Given at Castel Gandolfo, near Rome, on the 24th day of October, in the year 1948, the tenth of Our Pontificate.

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