



COMMUNIAM INTERPRETES DOLORUM

Encyclical of Pope Pius XII on April 15, 1945

To the Venerable Brothers, Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, other Ordinaries of Places in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brothers, Greetings and Apostolic Benediction.

As interpreter of the universal anguish by which almost every nation is grievously distressed, We desire to leave nothing undone within Our powers that may mitigate these numberless miseries or that may hasten the end of such great destruction. We know well that the resources of men are unable to heal these great injuries. We know that the human mind, especially when hate and rivalry have blinded it, cannot easily determine a just and equitable solution of affairs along with a fraternal agreement. It is therefore necessary to implore the Father of light and mercy[1] repeatedly. He alone, in the midst of such violent disturbances and tumults, can persuade those concerned that too many catastrophes and devastations have been piled up in a fearful mass, that too many tears have been shed, and that too much blood has been spilled. Therefore divine and human rights demand unequivocally that such hideous slaughter cease as soon as possible.

2. The month of May, sacred in a special way to the Blessed Virgin Mother of God, is approaching. We again exhort all -- but especially the very young and innocent children -- to humbly entreat the divine Redeemer, through the intercession of Mary, that the peoples who have been forced into discord, contention, and all kinds of misery, may be able to breathe again after their long-lasting distress and sorrow. But since it is our sins[2] which have turned us away from Him and have immersed us miserably in destruction, it is hardly enough to pour out many prayers to heaven; it is hardly enough to approach the altar of the Blessed Virgin to bring her an offering, flowers, and prayers. Additionally we must use Christian morals to renew both public and private life; in this way, we will lay a solid foundation on which a building of domestic and civil concord, not discord, and a strong, but not a tottering building, can stand. Let all remember those warnings of the sacred prophet and assimilate them in the conduct of their lives: "Turn to me,

says the Lord of hosts, and I will turn to you".[3] Also meditate upon those words of the most wise Bishop of Hippo: "Change the heart and the work will be changed. Eradicate cupidity and plant charity."[4] "Do you want peace? Do justice, and you will have peace. Justice and peace kiss one another."[5] If you do not love justice, you will not have peace, for these two love one another and kiss each other, so that if you practice justice, you will find peace kissing justice.If therefore you desire to come to peace, do justice; avoid evil and do good. This is to love justice; and when you have already avoided evil and done good, seek peace and follow it."[6]

3. When all faithful Christians follow this advice, their prayers most certainly please God. Then from a propitiated God, they will obtain both consolation and the gifts which are so necessary in these times.

4. But you know what gifts, what resources, what consolations we need most in these critical times. In the first place we must ask most humbly that minds and souls be illumined and renewed by the precepts of Christian doctrine, for from them alone private and public salvation must be awaited. Secondly, that the internecine strife of peoples and nations cease to rage and that all classes of citizens, joined in a friendly pact, strive peacefully to build from the heaped up piles of rubble -- under the auspices of justice and charity -- a new building for the human community. But something more must be sought from the divine Redeemer and His most holy Mother by prayer and penance. We must seek a true and sincere peace, that may quickly end this calamitous and bloody conflict.

5. In the midst of such great destruction and perturbation of affairs, while many are still angry and inimical to one another, it is certainly not easy to achieve such a peace. Peace must be tempered by the impartial scale of justice, which embraces in fraternal charity all peoples and all nations and which does not bear hidden germs of discord and strife. Therefore, those who must come to agreement in this most grave cause, and those on whose recommendations not only the fate of their nations depends, but also the relationships of all mankind and the future course of the ages, especially need celestial help. We therefore desire that the faithful pray humbly to God. We also desire that during the month of May, innocent children especially beg from the Mother of divine Wisdom expressly this heavenly light for those who will adjudicate the universal cause. Let them consider seriously and ponder before God whatever has transgressed the limits of justice and equity. If these matters are not resolved, it would be detrimental both for the victors and the vanquished, since then their solutions could themselves bear the seeds of future wars.

6. We desire moreover that those who heed Our exhortation, also pray for those who are fugitives banished from their homeland and longing to once again see their own homes; also for those in captivity who wait for their liberation after the war; and finally those who lie in numberless hospitals. To these miserable ones and to all others afflicted by this monstrous conflict, may the most merciful Mother of God grant heavenly solace and obtain for them the virtue of Christian patience by which illnesses of the most severe kind become bearable and lead to eternal beatitude.

7. It will be your part, venerable brothers, to communicate these paternal desires

and exhortations of Ours to the flocks entrusted to your care. To them -- but first to you individually and together -- as an auspice of heavenly gifts and a proof of Our good will, We bestow most lovingly in the Lord the Apostolic Benediction.

8. Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, Sunday, the 15 of April, sacred to the Good Shepherd Jesus Christ, 1945, in the seventh year of Our pontificate.

REFERENCES:

1. Cf Iac 1.17; 2 Cor 1.3.
2. Cf. Bar 6.1.
3. Za 1.3.
4. St. Aug., Serm. de Script.72, 4; PL., 38, c. 468.
5. Ps 84.11.
6. Idem In Ps. 84. 12; PPL., 37 C. 1078.