



The Month Of May

Mense Maio

Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI On April 30, 1965

Venerable Brothers,

As the month of May draws near, a month which the piety of the Faithful has specially dedicated to Our Blessed Lady, We are gladdened at the thought of the moving tribute of faith and love which Catholics in every part of the world will soon be paying to the Queen of Heaven. For this is the month during which Christians, both in Church and in the privacy of the home, offer up to Mary from their hearts an especially fervent and loving homage of prayer and veneration. In this month, too, the gifts of God's mercy come down to us from her throne in greater abundance.

This pious practice, by which the Blessed Virgin is honored and the Christian people enriched with spiritual gifts, gladdens and consoles us. Mary remains ever the path that leads to Christ. Every encounter with her can only result in an encounter with Christ Himself. For what other reason do we continually turn to Mary than to seek for the Christ she holds in her arms -- to seek in her, through her and with her the Savior to Whom men, in the perplexities and dangers of life here below, must of necessity have recourse, and to Whom they feel the ever recurring need of turning as to a haven of safety and an all-surpassing source of life?

It is precisely because the month of May is a powerful incentive to more fervent and trusting prayer, and because during it our petitions find their way more easily to the compassionate heart of Our Blessed Lady, that it has been a custom dear to Our Predecessors to choose this month, dedicated to Mary, for inviting the Christian people to offer up public prayers, whenever the needs of the Church demanded it, or whenever danger hovered menacingly over the world. This year, We too, Venerable Brothers, feel the need of sending out a similar appeal to the whole Catholic world. When We look at the present needs of the Church or at the state of peace in the world, We have compelling reasons for believing that the present hour is especially grave; that it makes a call for united prayer from the whole Christian people more than ever a matter of urgency.

The first reason for this appeal is suggested to Us by this historic moment in the

life of the Church, the period of the Ecumenical Council. This momentous event confronts the Church with the immense problem of how to renew herself in accordance with the needs of the times. On its outcome will depend for a long time to come the future of the Spouse of Christ and the destiny of innumerable souls. It is God's great time in the life of the Church and in world history. In this regard, although the amount of work happily brought to completion is great, heavy tasks still await you in the next Session, which will be the final one. After that will follow the equally important period of implementing the Council's decisions which likewise will demand the united effort of Clergy and Faithful for the effective and beneficial development of the seeds sown during the Council. To obtain God's light and blessings on this great volume of work ahead of us, We place our confidence in Her whom We had the joy of proclaiming Mother of the Church in the last Session. From the beginning of the Council she has been unstinting in her loving help and will certainly not fail to continue her assistance to the final stage of the work.

The other reason for Our appeal comes from the international situation, which, as you are well aware, Venerable Brothers, is darker and more uncertain than ever, now that grave new threats are endangering the supreme benefit of world peace. Today, as if no lesson had been learnt from the tragic experiences of the two conflicts which shed blood on the first half of our century, we have the dreadful spectacle in certain parts of the world of antagonism on the increase between peoples, and see repeated the dangerous phenomenon of recourse to arms, instead of negotiation, to settle the disputes of the opposing parties. This means that populations of entire nations are subjected to unspeakable sufferings, caused by agitation, guerrilla warfare, acts of war, ever growing in extent and intensity, which could at any moment produce the spark for a terrible fresh conflict.

In view of these grave dangers to international life, and conscious of Our duty as supreme Pastor, We judge it necessary to make known Our anxieties and Our fear that the disputes will become so embittered as to degenerate into a bloody war. We beg all who hold responsibility in public life not to remain deaf to the unanimous desire of mankind which wants peace. We ask that they do all in their power to preserve the peace that is threatened, and continue at all times to foster and encourage conversations and negotiations at all levels, that the dangerous resort to force with all its lamentable consequences, material, spiritual and moral may be halted. Along the lines marked out by law, let efforts be made to single out for recognition every true and sincere yearning for justice and peace. Through this recognition let such yearnings find encouragement and fulfillment, and let confidence enrich every loyal act of good will so that the forces of order may prevail over those of disorder and ruin.

Unfortunately, in this painful situation We are forced to recognize with a heavy heart that all too often oblivion swallows up the respect due to the sacred and inviolable character of human life, and that recourse is had to methods and attitudes which stand in open revolt against the moral sensibilities and the customs of a civilized people. In this respect We cannot fail to raise Our voice in

defense of the dignity of man and of Christian civilization, We cannot fail to condemn acts of guerrilla warfare and of terrorism, the practice of holding hostages and of taking reprisals against unarmed civilians. These are crimes which not only reverse the development of the sense of what is fair and humane, but also embitter even more the hearts of those in conflict. These outrages can block the paths still open to mutual good-will, or at least can render negotiations more difficult, which, if conducted with openness and fairness could lead to a reasonable settlement.

These deep concerns of Ours, as you well know, Venerable Brothers, are dictated not by any narrow interests, but solely by the desire to protect all who are suffering, and to promote the true welfare of all peoples. We hope that awareness of personal responsibilities to God and to history will be powerful enough to impel governments to continue their generous efforts to safeguard peace, and to remove as far as possible those obstacles, real or imagined, which interfere with the achievement of secure and sincere agreement.

But peace, Venerable Brothers, is not merely of our own making; it is also, and particularly, a gift from God. Peace comes from Heaven, and it will truly reign among men when we finally deserve to receive it from Almighty God Who holds in His hands, not only the happiness and the destinies of peoples, but also their very hearts. Therefore, We shall do our utmost to obtain this incomparable blessing by prayer, praying, indeed, with constancy and watchfulness, as the Church has always prayed from her earliest days, and in a special way calling on the intercession and protection of the Virgin Mary, who is the Queen of Peace.

So, Venerable Brothers, let our prayers ascend to Mary in this month of hers, to implore her graces and favors with increased fervor and confidence. And if the grave faults of men weigh heavy in the scales of God's justice and provoke its just punishments, we also know that the Lord is 'the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort' (2 Cor. 1:3), and that Mary most holy is His appointed steward and the generous bestower of the treasures of His mercy. May she, who knows the sufferings and troubles of life here below, the weariness of everyday work, the hardships and privations of poverty, the sufferings of Calvary, bring help to the needs of the Church and the world, heed the appeals for peace rising to her from every part of the world, and enlighten those who rule the destinies of men. May she prevail on God, Lord of the winds and storms, to still also the tempests in men's conflicting hearts and 'grant us peace in our time,' true peace based on the solid lasting foundations of justice and love -- of justice granted to the weakest as to the strongest; and love which prevents egoism from leading men astray, so that each one's rights may be safeguarded without forgetfulness or denial of the rights of others.

Inform the Faithful in your charge, Venerable Brothers, in whatever way you judge best, of Our wishes and exhortation, and make provision for special prayers in each diocese and every parish during this coming month of May, devoting in a special

manner the Feast of Our Lady Queen of Heaven to solemn public prayers for the intentions We have mentioned. We would point out that We rely particularly on the prayers of the innocent and the suffering, for their voices more than any others reach Heaven and disarm God's justice. And since this is a fitting occasion do not fail to lay careful stress on the saying of the Rosary, the prayer so dear to Our Lady and so highly recommended by the Supreme Pontiffs. By this means the Faithful can most pleasingly and most effectively carry out our Divine Master's command: 'Ask, and it shall be given you: seek and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened' (Mt. 7:7).

With these thoughts and in the hope that Our exhortation will be readily received in the souls of all, We grant to you from Our heart, Venerable Brothers, and to all the Faithful in your care, Our Apostolic Blessing.