



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO BANGLADESH, SINGAPORE, FIJI ISLANDS,
NEW ZEALAND, AUSTRALIA AND SEYCHELLES

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

*Christchurch (New Zealand)
Lancaster Park, 24 November 1986*

"Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever".

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. We are here today to praise the King of heaven, the God of grace, the everlasting King. I give thanks to God the Father that we gather here the day after the feast of Christ the King to praise him "who gently bears us ", "who is swift to bless".

Today I have the great joy of celebrating this liturgy with you - the clergy, religious and laity of the Diocese of Christchurch and the Diocese of Dunedin, together with representatives from the southern half of the Archdiocese of Wellington. I offer warm greetings to my brother bishops, particularly Bishop Hanrahan of Christchurch and his predecessor Bishop Ashby, and Bishop Boyle of Dunedin. And I greet most cordially all my brothers and sisters in the peace and love of Christ.

I know that next year the Diocese of Christchurch will celebrate its first centenary and that the Diocese of Dunedin is already into its second century. Everywhere there are clear signs of how God's loving providence has blessed you so richly, and I join you in giving praise to the Triune God for his great goodness to you here in southern New Zealand. Today during this Eucharist we keep before our eyes and in our hearts the French, Irish and English missionaries, especially of the Society of Mary, who evangelized these lands. We give thanks for them and for the fruits of their labours in the Church: the parishes, schools, hospitals; and even more the priests and

religious who offer their lives to Christ; and the Christian families and zealous faithful who build up the Church in daily living.

2. The praise we offer God is always made through our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Way to the Father. He is the One who teaches us how are to live so that we may be pleasing to the Father. He teaches us to conduct ourselves as "children of our Father in Heaven". We do this by following the command of Jesus: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . . Be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect".

Today in Christchurch, Jesus puts these words, this challenge to you and to me. The standard that is set before us is not merely to give to each one his due. The standard for the followers of Jesus Christ is "to be perfect" as God himself is perfect.

In the Ancient Near East, codes of retaliation were developed to protect people against injustice by guaranteeing retribution to those who had been wronged. The Jewish law refined these norms in order to protect against excessive vindictiveness in redressing injustices. But Christ takes these very laws and goes beyond them. He challenges his hearers and all of us to seek a deeper and richer justice by becoming perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, by making his justice, his mercy, his righteousness the measure and the standard of our own. To us and to all the world a new justice is given, the justice of God, the justice that is to be born in the hearts of all God's children who follow the example and the call of Christ.

In the psalm which we have just sung, we find a veiled reference to Jesus who establishes God's reign of righteousness for us. Even as the Psalmist prayed for a king who would embody all the righteousness that God alone would give, so we today pray that the righteousness that Christ established may reign on this earth. Yes, it is God's justice that we seek, his rule that we seek because "He will defend the poorest, he will save the children of those in need". Today we turn to him and ask for his justice, that he "may rule us rightly" and that this may be for us "the message of peace".

3. Dear people of New Zealand: you are living in a part of the world which seems to be a kind of paradise, a region which cannot be surpassed for its natural beauty. Throughout the whole area, you have two main cultures existing together in your society. On the one hand, there is the Polynesian culture - a culture which is often described as oral, land-based and communal. On the other hand, there is the culture which has come with European settlers, with the science and technology, the commerce and enterprise that marks Western Europe. The presence of these two roots of your civilization gives you a great, even a un1que, opportunity. For you can show in this land how these two cultures can work together with other cultures. And all of this can be done in the spirit of harmony and justice, with love and with the righteousness which the Psalmist prayed for and which our Lord taught us.

Yours is the noble task of understanding and evaluating all the many elements of your civilization. Yours is the opportunity of fostering the best in your traditions, and of refining and purifying those aspects which require it. You face the challenge of ensuring that your separate cultures continue to exist together and that they complement each other. The Maori people have maintained their identity in this land. The peoples coming from Europe, and more recently from Asia, have not come to a desert. They have come to a land already marked by a rich and ancient heritage, as a unique and essential element of the identity of this country. The Maori people in turn are challenged to welcome new settlers and to learn to live in harmony with those who have come from far away to make here a new home for themselves.

All of you are invited to share this land in peace and in mutual respect. You do this by recognizing the common bond of being members of one human family, created in the image of God and called to see one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. In this way, each culture is given the chance to contribute its talents and resources for the good of all. When you build a just society upon the foundation of mutual respect and fraternal love, then, justice is shown to be the path to peace.

4. This is not, however, easily achieved. It requires that you be open to the Holy Spirit "poured on you from above". It means that you "give to anyone who asks" and "do not turn away" from those in need.

What a wonderful perspective this is! How blessed is your nation if it makes justice and compassion the way for its future! If, however, there are attitudes among you of racial and cultural superiority, exploitation or discrimination, such attitudes will obstruct justice. They will destroy harmony and peace. For true peace begins in the human heart, and it takes root when the heart has been cleansed and renewed by the mercy of God.

The Sacrament of Penance is the privileged means for this cleansing and renewal to take place. It is truly the Sacrament of peace. In our contemporary world, we can easily be deceived by an illusion of sinlessness, by the loss of a sense of sin which runs directly contrary to the Gospel. Saint John counters this error very openly when he says: "If we say we have no sin in us, we are deceiving ourselves and refusing to admit the truth".

As followers of Christ, we can never forget that fundamental truth which Saint Paul insisted upon when he wrote: "Here is a saying that you can rely on and nobody should doubt: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". Jesus is the Prince of peace precisely because he conquered sin, that sin of the world which turns brother against brother, sister against sister, and which is the great destroyer of harmony and peace

When we go to Confession, when we bring our sins to Christ in the Sacrament of Penance, we meet our Saviour in one of the most personal encounters available to us on earth. He receives us with gentleness and mercy and grants us the pardon we seek. He grants us the grace of

conversion and renews our minds and hearts with his light and peace. In this way, he prepares us to be peacemakers in the world.

He who "reconciled all to the Father" is brother and Lord of all. He calls us to replace hostilities with friendship. He calls us to have sensitive respect for each other's customs and practices. Instead of misunderstanding, mistrust and even hatred - which in the past may have divided peoples and poisoned societies - he asks us to forgive as our heavenly Father has forgiven us. With strong faith in the Lord, and through the practice of God's justice towards one another, we can travel together along the path that leads to peace.

5. With a sense of God's mercy, and in a spirit of fraternal love and mutual respect, New Zealand will grow in strength and harmony. Thus you will be able to face up to the problems that beset modern societies and communities in transition: the problems of unemployment and shifts in the labour market, the question of new markets for New Zealand's products, the models of education and the social needs of the people, especially the poor. All these and other questions can be resolved because you have within you the harmony that is born of reconciliation with God, which bears fruit in justice and truth. Justice between individuals, and in all the interlocking relationships of modern society, is an indispensable requirement for achieving such peaceful harmony. Accordingly, as I said in the Message for the World Day of Peace this year: "If social justice is the means to move towards a peace for all peoples, then it means that we see peace as the indivisible fruit of just and honest relations on every level - social, economic, cultural and ethical - of human life on this earth".

This social justice, this sense of human solidarity, must be experienced in the home, in the families of this country. It must be expressed in the lives of your communities, your towns and cities, and thus become the way of life for your nation. In this way you travel together, eager to promote true justice for everyone. In this eagerness for justice you will find the path of peace.

6. You will also discover the role New Zealand can play in the Pacific and in the world. Today we are becoming increasingly aware of the interdependence of all peoples and nations. The social and economic problems of one country have an impact far beyond that country's borders. The fruits and achievements of more advanced nations give rise to a greater responsibility towards citizens of poorer and needier nations.

My predecessor John XXIII, with truly prophetic vision, emphasized this point twenty-five years ago. In his famous Encyclical "[Mater et Magistra](#)", he wrote: "The solidarity which binds all people together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary human rights. The nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another, and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist".

Peace in the world can never be won so long as injustice controls the relationships among peoples, and social and economic imbalances are allowed to continue. The antidote to these problems consists in building a justice that incorporates the ideals of social solidarity and that patterns itself on the righteousness of God.

The Fathers at the Second Vatican Council expressed it this way: " Peace cannot be obtained on earth unless personal values are safeguarded and people freely and trustingly share with one another their spiritual riches and their talents. A firm determination to respect other individuals and peoples and their dignity, and the assiduous practice of human solidarity, are absolutely necessary for building peace. Hence peace is likewise the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can provide".

Dear friends gathered with me here today to praise the Lord: let us respond to Christ's call to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect so that we may truly be "children of our Father in heaven". Let us help each other for we are fellow pilgrims on the path of justice. Let us walk that "extra mile" with one another and "give to anyone who asks", so that he or she may not be turned away, but may find in each of us a true brother or sister. So will it be that the justice we practise with one another will become the path to the peace we all yearn for.

Now we can see that the vision of Isaiah begins to come true. Righteousness and peace will spring forth in this land and in this whole area of the world. For here "justice will come to live, and integrity". This "integrity will bring peace" . . . and you "will live in a peaceful home, in safe houses, in quiet dwellings". Your justice, born of the desire "to be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect", will "give lasting security" to you and to all whose lives are touched by your love.

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