

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

COMMITTEE ON JERUSALEM

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" In Multiplicibus "

23 October 1948

On 23 October 1948, His Holiness Pope Pius XII addressed to all catholic Archbishops and Bishops an encyclical letter concerning Jerusalem and the Holy Places. The official English text as reproduced in the New York Times of 24 October 1948 is circulated herewith for the information of the Committee on Jerusalem.

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Amidst the many worries which beset us in these days, so fraught with consequences decisive for the life of mankind and which make us feel all the more the burden of the Supreme Pontificate, that caused by the war now convulsing Palestine occupies a special place.

We can say with all truth, Venerable Brethren, that neither joyful nor sorrowful events can lessen the sorrow which sears our soul at the thought that the blood of men continues to flow freely on the soil on which our Saviour Jesus Christ shed his blood to bring to all humanity without distinction redemption and salvation; that under those skies through which echoed, on that prophetic night, the evangelical message of peace, fighting continues, the misery of the poor and the fear of the affrighted are increasing, while thousands of refugees straying and driven from their homes wander from their country in search of shelter and food.

And what makes our grief even more intense are not only the reports which continually come in to us of the destruction and damage suffered by Holy Places, but also the anxiety which these reports arouse in us for the fate of the same Holy Places which, scattered through all of Palestine and especially on the soil of the Holy City, were sanctified by the birth, life and death of Our Saviour.

It is not necessary to assure you, Venerable Brothers, that surrounded by the spectacle of so many evils and envisaging even greater evils, we did not close ourselves up in our grief, but we have done everything in our power to find a remedy for them.

Speaking even before the armed conflict began to a delegation of distinguished Arabs come to render us homage, we manifested our lively solicitude for peace in Palestine and, condemning every recourse to acts of violence, we declared that this peace could not be brought about except in truth and justice, that is, in respect of everybody's rights of the acquired traditions, especially in the religious field, as also in the strict fulfillment of the duties and obligations of each group of the inhabitants.

Once war was declared, without abandoning the attitude of impartiality imposed on us by our apostolic mission, which places us above the conflicts which agitate human society, we did not fail to bend our efforts in so far as seems feasible to us and according as the occasion offered for the triumph of justice and peace in Palestine and for the respecting and safeguarding of the Holy Places.

At the same time, although beset by the numerous and pressing appeals which daily reached this apostolic see, we have endeavoured to come to the aid of the unhappy victims of the war and we have sent to our representatives in Palestine, in the Lebanon and in Egypt, the means at our disposal. We have also encouraged the launching and extension by the Catholics of various countries, of charitable enterprises for the same purpose.

Convinced too, that human means will not suffice to find an adequate solution to a problem, the exceptional complexity of which is apparent to everybody, we have had above all recourse to the great means of prayer. In our recent encyclical letter "Auspicia Quaedam" (certain tokens) we invited you, Venerable Brothers, to pray and to get the faithful entrusted to your pastoral care to pray so that, under the auspices of the Most Holy Virgin, differences may be settled with justice and peace and concord return to Palestine.

We know that our appeal was not addressed to you in vain. Nor are we unmindful that while we in union with the whole Catholic world were exerting ourselves for peace in Palestine by our prayers and efforts, men of good will, to whom we gladly pay a tribute of praise, were multiplying their noble efforts for the same purpose without regard for the dangers and sacrifices which they incurred.

Nevertheless, the continuance of the conflict and the increasing growth of the moral and material losses which inexorably accompany it, induce us to renew our appeal to you with still greater insistence, in the hope that it may be hearkened to by the whole Christian world.

As we stated to the members of the Sacred College of Cardinals on June 2nd last, in acquainting them of our anxiety for Palestine, we do not believe that the Christian world could look on with indifference or with barren indignation, while the Holy Land, to which all approached with the greatest reverence and kissed with the most ardent love, is still being trodden by troops at war and subject to air bombardments. We do not believe that it could allow the devastation of the Holy Places to become complete, the great sepulchre of Christ to be destroyed.

We are confident that the fervent appeals arising to the omnipotent and all-merciful God from the Christians scattered throughout the world, together with the hopes of so many noble hearts ardently solicitous for what is true and good, will serve to render less arduous for the men who governed the destinies of peoples the task of giving to Palestine the real benefit of justice.

We are convinced that these supplications and hopes, indicative of the value which such a large number of people attribute to the Holy Places, will deepen the conviction in the high assemblies in which the problem of peace is being discussed that it would be expedient, as a better guarantee for the safety of the sanctuaries under the present circumstances, to give an international character to Jerusalem and its vicinity where so many and so precious reminders of the life and death of our Saviour are to be found. It is also necessary

to assure with international guarantees both the right of free access to the Holy Places scattered throughout Palestine and the freedom of religion and the respect for customs and religious traditions.

And may the day soon come when men will again have the possibility of going in pious pilgrimages to the Holy Places to find there again revealed, in those living monuments of the love which exalts itself in the sacrifice of life for others, the great secret of the peaceful co-existence of all peoples.

With this hope we impart from our heart to you, Venerable Brothers, to your faithful and to all those who will take our appeal to their hearts, our apostolic blessing as a pledge of divine favours and in token of our benevolence.