

PERENNIAL IMPORTANCE OF THE ENCYCLICAL "PACEM IN TERRIS"

Vatican City, 30 April 2012 (VIS) - The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences has been holding its eighteenth plenary session in Rome over recent days, during which participants focused their attention on the contribution Blessed John XXIII's Encyclical "Pacem in Terris" has made to the social doctrine of the Church.

"At the height of the Cold War, when the world was still coming to terms with the threat posed by the existence and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Pope John addressed what has been described as an "open letter to the world". It was a heartfelt appeal ... for the cause of peace and justice to be vigorously promoted at every level of society, nationally and internationally". These words were expressed by Benedict XVI in a message to Mary Ann Glendon, president of the academy. The message, written in English, was made public today.

"While the global political landscape has changed significantly in the intervening half-century, the vision offered by Pope John still has much to teach us as we struggle to face the new challenges for peace and justice in the post-Cold-War era, amid the continuing proliferation of armaments", the Pope writes. "Pope John's Encyclical was and is a powerful summons to engage in that creative dialogue between the Church and the world, between believers and non-believers, which Vatican Council II set out to promote. It offers a thoroughly Christian vision of man's place in the cosmos, confident that in so doing it is holding out a message of hope to a world that is hungry for it, a message that can resonate with people of all beliefs and none, because its truth is accessible to all.

"In that same spirit, after the terrorist attacks that shook the world in September 2001, Blessed John Paul II insisted that there can be "no peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness". The notion of forgiveness needs to find its way into international discourse on conflict resolution, so as to transform the sterile language of mutual recrimination which leads nowhere. If the human creature is made in the image of God, a God of justice Who is "rich in mercy", then these qualities need to be reflected in the conduct of human affairs. ... Forgiveness is not a denial of wrong-doing, but a participation in the healing and transforming love of God which reconciles and restores".

"Historic wrongs and injustices can only be overcome if men and women are inspired by a message of healing and hope, a message that offers a way forward, out of the impasse that so often locks people and nations into a vicious circle of violence. Since 1963, some of the conflicts that seemed insoluble at the time have passed into history. Let us take heart, then, as we struggle for peace and justice in the world today, confident that our common pursuit of the divinely established order, of a world where the dignity of every human person is accorded the respect that is due, can and will bear fruit", the Holy Father concludes.

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