

“In pulchritudine pacis”  
“Pray for peace in Jerusalem”  
(Ps. 122,6)

on the Feast of Pentecost 1990

Why, O Lord, do you stand aside?  
Why hide in times of distress?  
Rise, O Lord! O God, lift up your hand!  
Forget not the afflicted!  
You do see, or you behold misery and sorrow,  
taking them in your hands.  
On you the unfortunate man depends,  
of the fatherless you are the helper (Ps 10,1.12.14).

To the priests,  
the religious,  
and laity of our diocese,  
to all those who love the truth, who desire the rule of justice as the road to the triumph  
of peace.

1- Peace to you in Christ, who has reconciled us with God our Father and with each  
of our brothers and sisters.

“Non of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the  
Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the  
Lord’s” (Rm. 14,7-8).

No text could be more appropriate to the situation of death and violence which we are  
undergoing. Together with St. Paul we discover the presence of the Lord in all things,  
in death and in suffering. We strive to discern his will in the unfolding of our history.

2- Dear brothers and sisters, we address our message to you on this day of  
Pentecost in this Holy City. Here the first Pentecost took place and as we contemplate  
“the love of God... poured out into hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given  
to us” (Rm. 5,5), we invite you to reflect with us on the three long years of conflict  
that have afflicted all of us here in the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, a  
subject of concern to us, but also a source of inspiration.

3- In the words of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council: “The joys and the  
hopes, the grieves and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially  
those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the

grieves and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts” (The Church in the Modern World, 1).

Dear brothers and sisters, you are suffering greatly in this conflict. We fully share your suffering. But you expect a word of light and encouragement from us. We have already spoken out on several occasions. In this message we continue to speak to you and share the hard trial you are undergoing. Together let us discover what our faith has to tell us about the dramatic situation we are experiencing. In addressing these words to you we are fulfilling our duty as shepherd, as a man and as a citizen of the Holy Land.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!... since all are my brother and friends, I say: Peace be with you!” (Ps 122,6.8). in the beauty of peace, “In pulchritudine pacis”, this was and continues to be the motto and theme of our episcopal service.

4- This conflict directly affects the faithful who live in the Occupied Territories. But in one way or another all the faithful of the diocese, wherever they might live, suffer the consequences, and feel that sense of solidarity which binds them to their brothers and sisters in their time of trial. We address ourselves to all of you and invite each of you to reflect upon our common faith.

We also direct this message to all those involved in this conflict, whosoever they are, whatever their religion or nationality.

## **I- A SITUATION OF CONFLICT AND SUFFERING**

### **An imposed tragedy**

5- This conflict between the Palestinian people and the Israeli people has lasted many years. Many of you were born into it, you first saw the light of day in the very midst of the tragedy imposed on your parents. They too had been fatefully drawn into this situation in their childhood. The situation has only worsened day by day.

### **Suffering an everyday experience**

6- My dear brothers and sisters, we are involved in this tragedy together with you. Every day there is the toll of the dead for whom we offer up our prayer. We have endeavoured to bring a word of comfort to the wounded and to those disabled for life. We would have liked to visit the prisoners, those under administrative detention. We have listened to those who have been tortured. We pity those who are obliged to carry out such orders, perhaps against their conscience and against their will. We lament the wound which will scar their soul, their human person.

We have seen people deported from their homeland, houses sealed or demolished, and whole families left without shelter.

### Economic sanctions

7- Economic sanctions continue to add to the hardship of life: water resources are seized, land is expropriated, trees are torn down, crops destroyed, access denied to markets, high taxes are imposed in an arbitrary manner, etc.

### Education

8- The field of education has been notably affected. Schools have been closed for long periods at a time, and classes are still seriously affected. The universities have remained closed for nearly three years. This long closure has serious implications both for the future of the thousands of youngsters who are prevented from continuing their studies, and for the future of the newly developing Palestinian society. There is a real need of all the moral and intellectual abilities of these young people if their society is to develop and organise itself adequately.

### Refugee camps

9- Like you we pass the many refugee camps and our thoughts dwell on them. They are surrounded by barbed wire and guards; transformed into enormous cages for human beings. Their very existence is a continuous appeal for justice, freedom, and human dignity, and at the same time they bear witness to the determination of a people to survive and find its own place among the peoples of the world.

## II- REPERCUSSIONS OF THIS SITUATION

10- The many repercussions of the situation, both positive and negative, are perhaps at present not clearly visible. They are nonetheless real and deep-rooted. They are all the more important since they are intimately bound up with the human formation of the new generations.

### Repercussions on the Palestinians

#### Negative repercussions

#### Destruction of the social fabric

11- The steady disintegration of the economic, agricultural and educational infrastructures is leading to the destruction of the social fabric. The lack of any

genuine open political life is a serious contributing factor. What political activity there is, is limited and underground. Moreover, there are no legislative, executive and judicial channels, no institutions commanding the respect of the people as belonging to them. As a result, people take the law into their own hands, with deplorable consequences.

In their struggle against the authorities oppressing their people, young people have revolted against those sectors of society that led to or prolong the tragedy of military occupation. This results in the risk that they could rebel against all forms of authority, at school and in the family.

#### The hardening of children's hearts

12- The children themselves, their elders, their parents have witnessed violence, suffering and humiliation. They have been victims of it. The harmful psychological consequences necessarily lead either to hatred and thirst for revenge, or to fear and despair of any human justice. Two apparently different paths that lead to the same disastrous result: both feed the foul, inhuman cycle of violence.

#### Radicalization

13- Extremist political stance and the hardening of ideological positions have prevented any progress in the peace process. The frustration caused by this has led to the development of an increasingly radical stance among adults.

#### Press censorship

14- The censorship of the press has contributed to this hardening of attitudes by preventing the publication of facts which often may be useful in the search for peace.

#### Exploitation of religious feelings

15- At the same time, religious feelings have been exploited or manipulated with a view to fostering fanaticism. Fidelity to the homeland and all hope of peace are stifled in fratricidal struggles and extremism. We can only deplore this assault on what is most sacred and intimate to the individual, and to human society.

#### Emigration

16- One of the most serious threats for the future is the accelerating pace of emigration, which deprives Palestinian society and the local church of vital human resources. In our message for Lent this year, 1990, we drew attention to the

lamentable affects of emigration on the Church and the homeland. We said that difficult times are not a time for flight, and precisely when there are difficulties all brothers and sisters must remain here to support one another. To live in the Holy Land is a grace and a particular vocation; it is a vocation to a hard life. The grace given must be understood, and the vocation, with the mission it brings with it, welcomed bravely.

17- The Palestinians are overwhelmed by all these negative repercussions. They seem to be left with no alternative but to cast off this oppression or to submit to a regime which their occupation would never accept for themselves.

#### Positive repercussions

This suffering has not been without its positive aspects.

#### Awareness

18- We perceive the desire of a people to take its responsibilities into its own hands. We observe that the young are developing an awareness that they have a role to play in building peace and the future of their country. We can only regret that confusion is inevitable in such situations. Nonetheless we must also take note of the discipline and solidarity at all levels of society born out this very suffering. A fraternity as new as it is old has been discovered and reaffirmed in the shared experience of the curfew, the strike-, days, the incidents of daily life, in summer and in winter, and especially in imprisonment.

#### Religious awakening

19- A further positive fruit of these difficult times is the religious awakening revealed in a more personal development of the faith, finding its expression in renewed fidelity of the homeland and to the values of peace and justice.

We have also observed the beginning of a Christian reflection on the role of the laity, the role of the Christian and the whole local church. On more than one occasion we have been asked to further this reflection and to cast some light which will contribute to the maturing of faith in these circumstances.

#### Fraternity and reconciliation

20- This conflict has also led to the fostering of fraternity between the leaders of the Churches of Jerusalem. The faithful welcomed this development with joy, because

they have long felt the need for unity in the face of the very real problems in their life and the necessity to respond to them as Jesus himself would have done.

Equally welcomed is the consolidation of relations between Muslims and Christians, and the deepening understanding that is developing. Faithful to their own faith, both communities wish to serve the same society and homeland and their co-operation is based on the same spiritual values.

The appearance of the peace movements in Israeli society has opened up new channels of communication with Jewish representatives. Courageous contact with these men and women of good-will is a means of breaking down the traditional positions of fear, violence and oppression and of opening up the possibilities of sincerely working together for justice and peace.

### The Birth of a Nation

21- The harsh reality with which it is confronted is forcing a people to become aware of its own capabilities, and a nation is being forged. This people is determined to establish a just peace in which both it and its present adversary can flourish. More than the birth of a nation, it is a people's coming of age. A people has taken the measure of the negative forces which seek to limit its growth and the exercise of its rights and responsibilities, and has determined to reject them.

This marks an important stage in the life of a people seeking recognition for its state. It demands independence for its community, the right and to choose its political system and to elect its own leaders.

### Desire for peace and justice

22- Among the Palestinians this situation has also produced a desire for peace and justice for themselves and for their enemy. This is what we constantly hear both from private individuals and from those who bear public responsibilities. Of the positive aspects born in the Intifada, this desire is perhaps the most important. It has favoured a new readiness for the initiative a dialogue for peace.

23- The awareness of having experienced oppression goes deep, but accompanying it there is a clearer, more just understanding of the oppressor. This has given rise to a new perception, a human and objective vision both of the adversary and of the peace that must be built together with him.

We must testify to this desire for peace. It is our duty of all peoples of good will, to promote this message of peace proposed by the Palestinians.

## Repercussions on the Israelis

### Negative repercussions

#### Moral loss

24- The Jewish people in the West were overwhelmed by the menace of death and sought refuge in this land, amongst Palestinians. They are still haunted by this obsession for survival, and fear often dictates their attitudes in specific situations.

In Israel the individual and national conscience has suffered a human and moral degradation in the repression of the Intifada. The greater part of Israeli society seems unable to face reality and grasp the meaning of the Israeli military repression and the refusal to dialogue with the Palestinians. Nonetheless, a growing number feel, as it were, wounded at the thought that they are colonisers of another people. They morally suffer from presenting to humanity those among them who beat, torture or kill others because they are demanding their freedom and their rights.

In Israel there is a deep split in the consciousness of the Jewish people. Two different outlooks are developing into opposing ideologies. This opposition has paralysed every step towards peace. We are aware of their share of suffering. They have their victims, their wounded: wounded in body, heart and conscience.

#### Tragedy of the Israeli soldier

25- We observe and we live the tragedy of the Israeli soldier. He is a father, a brother, a husband, not only a soldier subject to orders, not only an instrument of repression who is required to be indifferent to the killing, the crushing and violation of the dignity of his Palestinian brother.

### Positive repercussions

#### Peace Movements

26- There is an extremist hard line which rejects any dialogue for peace and sees violence as the means of suppressing every Palestinian demand. At the same time, we observe diverse peace movements springing up among the Israelis. Though still few in number and unable as yet to shift the general political outlook, a growing number of Israeli voices are beginning to express solidarity with the Palestinians and declare their trust in the latter's proposals of peace with Israel.

Mention must also be made of the growing number of Jews in the Diaspora who see the true dimensions of the conflict. They are beginning to work towards an equitable solution for the two peoples based on justice.

### Palestinians and Israelis

27- For more than 22 years the Palestinians have been subject to Israelis military occupation. Like every human being and all people of the world, they are claiming their rights, their freedom and independence.

The Israelis long for freedom from fear. They claim the right to a secure future. The Palestinian demands are opposed by repression precisely because a continuing occupation is seen as the only guarantee for this security.

On both sides of the conflict there are human beings, created and loved equally by God. This is the divine and human consideration that inspires our message. On both sides of the conflict it is the human person who suffers, who need to be saved. The Palestinian longs for freedom and independence. The Israeli longs to be emancipated from fear. He needs reassurance that he can survive in peace.

There is a tendency to paint the blackest possible picture of our opponent, showing only the other's faults, real or imagined. We must firmly resist this temptation. If we believe that our own freedom is necessarily opposed to the freedom of others, we have lost faith in the human community. Our freedom is found in the freedom of others, not in its denial. It is essential for us to see that a fruitful, joyful future lies ahead for those who embrace each other in a truly human encounter.

### III. GENESIS AND MEANING OF THE SITUATION

28- The roots of this conflict lie far back in history. Different and even opposing historical interpretations have, on both sides, fostered the positive virtues of patriotism and fidelity to a set of values. At the same time, however, they have regrettably led to acts of violence clearly opposed to the values of peace and justice which both sides are seeking.

#### The Palestinians

29- The Palestinian people considers that its history has been "confiscated", that it is prevented from expressing its own view of how it has lived this history. The unjustified confusion of any act of resistance or legitimate self-defence with acts of terrorism has led to the labelling of the Palestinian people as "terrorist". This people has thus been stripped of all credibility in the eyes of international opinion. As



a result, the world has made no objection to all the despoilment to which it has been subjected.

Christian and Muslim Palestinians equally are deeply conscious that they have always lived in this land. Palestine is their country, their political and cultural patrimony. They wish for no other.

This is why they gradually perceived the increased immigration of Jews to Palestine in the first half of the 20th century as a growing threat to their Palestinian identity and to their autonomous presence in their own land. The formation of a new majority with its origins abroad would have left them with no alternative but to submit or leave, and so was opposed by all means available. Western governments frequently seemed to be deeply involved in this undertaking. The Palestinian national resistance took on all possible forms: political conscientization, international appeals, armed intervention.

### The Israelis

30- The Jews look on this same land as their holy land, the land of the prophets, promised to their fathers in anticipation of a blessing for all mankind. Scattered throughout the world they have frequently been victims of all kinds of discrimination and persecution, culminating in the Nazi project of genocide against the Jewish people: the Holocaust or Shoah. This crime against humanity is a great open wound on the history of the 20th century. It is a warning for all time that we must be on our guard against the presence of evil in the human heart, and against the potential for evil that can develop in any human grouping of whatever ideology, when it loses sight of the truth about man and his divine origin.

Zionism sought to free the Jewish people from these threats by the establishment of an autonomous existence in Palestine. But the realisation of this nationalist ideology inevitably clashed with the aspiration of the Palestinian people living in this same land.

### Confrontations

31- This conflict led to violent outbursts from the 1920s onwards, and the situation quickly deteriorated tragically. As a peaceful solution seemed more and more impossible, Great Britain renounced her mandate over Palestine, and in 1947 the United Nations Organisation voted for the partition of Palestine into a Palestine State, a Jewish State, and an internationalised City of Jerusalem. At that time the Palestinians rejected that decision. They denied the right of the international community to dispose of their country and grant over half of it to a recently arrived minority, without seeking the agreement of those who formed the great majority.

The armed clashes that followed left 77% of mandatory Palestine in the newly proclaimed State of Israel (1948).

## 1967 War

32- The resulting situation of neither open war nor peace provoked numerous armed conflicts. The occupation of the whole of Palestine by the Israeli army in the course of the 1967 war the cause of further deep upheavals.

## Regime of military occupation

33- In the Occupied Territories and the Gaza Strip the Israeli regime of occupation increasingly weighs heavily on the Palestinians, who see a progressive deterioration in their living conditions. The expropriation of land, seizure of water resources, expulsions, the multiplication of settlements, numerous and arbitrary arrests, the restrictions imposed on building, travel and the Palestinian economy... all this has fostered a sense of marginalization among the Palestinians. They are treated as foreigners and are oppressed in their own land.

## The Intifada

34- The protests and appeals to the international and regional communities received no effective response. An explosive situation gradually developed. The outburst of the Intifada in December 1987 was the result. This uprising is a cry of protest against a situation which is unbearable. It proclaims that the humiliation is unacceptable, that the occupation cannot continue, and a solution must be found.

The uprising is the language in which a people can formulate its demands for justice and peace to the Israeli neighbour and brother who has become an occupying power and oppressor. The Palestinians have proclaimed that they will not be satisfied by a status that reduces them to a kind of appendix to another people, or a human reservoir for the work force.

## Two people, two histories, a common future

35- There is then one land, with two confronting histories, peoples and cultures. There are two outlooks, several ideologies and so many prejudices. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the two situations. One nationalism has already created the State of Israel, the Palestinian nationalism is still struggling to establish its own.

The danger is that each will seek refuge in exclusivism and refuse to recognise the other. At the moment the problem has not been resolved. In its meeting in Algiers in November 1988 the Palestine Liberation Organisation declared in the name of the Palestinians that they were prepared to initiate a dialogue and recognise the other, that is, the State of Israel. Israel's reply to the hand stretched out by the Palestinians is still awaited.

Every right has its beginning in the cry of the new-born, of the widow, the orphan, the oppressed. That cry seeks a sincere human response. In the name of this truly human truth we have a future to build together. We must talk to one another and share outlooks and ideas. We have choices to make, agreements and alliances to formulate as a means of sharing our history.

#### IV. PRINCIPLES ON WHICH A SOLUTION MUST BE BASED

##### Christian involvement in the conflict

36- On both sides of the conflict Christians are involved. The Occupied Territories are part of our diocese. They are at the forefront of our concerns, our anguish and our humble efforts to build faith in God and in man. The main fruit of this faith will be justice and peace.

This Christian presence, the presence of a "small flock", has a special meaning. As the basis of our reflection and our Christian understanding of the situation, we turn to Sacred Scripture and the teaching of the Church to find the principles on which a solution must be based. These principles are: love, truth and justice as a condition for freedom, the dignity of the poor and the oppressed, and co-operation with others.

##### Love as the pathway to justice

37- Love is the first pathway to justice. Jesus says: "Love you enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your Father in heaven"(Mt 5,43). Such a love, true and sincere, in which each sees oneself and one's adversary as brothers and sisters, because are children of God, above all hostility and conflict, will lead the enemy and the persecutor to negotiate in order to establish justice.

##### The Truth

38- "The truth will set you free" (Jn. 8,32 ). The truth is an essential condition to any solution. To know the truth and to accept it, a spirit of detachment, of ascetics and faith in God is required. For this reason Jesus declares that the Spirit of God alone can "guide you to all truth" (Jn 16,13). God alone can renew the face of the earth (Ps

104,30). God is the source of the maturing of every human conscience when he enlightens it by his truth, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3,17). Filled with the Spirit of God, the faithful is capable of respecting all human dignity. The Spirit of God within the Christian is the source of courage, daring and generosity.

### Dignity of the poor and the oppressed

39- “By revealing to man his condition as a free person called to enter into communion with God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has evoked an awareness of the hitherto unsuspected depths of human freedom” (Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation, 5). Hence the poor, the oppressed and the humble or “little ones” must be shown that they are objects of the infinite love of God, and of the solicitude of the Church. Each of them can say: “I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me” (Gal 2,20b). none of the “great ones” of the world can deprive them of the dignity that flows from the love of God for them (cf. Ibid.21).

### Co-operation

40- “Furthermore, every individual is oriented towards other people and needs their company. It is only by learning to unite one’s will to the others for the sake of true God that one will learn rectitude of will. It is thus harmony with the exigencies of human nature which makes the will itself human. This in fact requires the criterion of truth and a right relationship to the will of others. Truth and justice are therefore the measure of true freedom. By discarding this foundation and taking himself for God, man falls into deception, and instead of realising himself he destroys himself”.

“Far from being achieved in total self-sufficiency and an absence of relationships, freedom truly exists only where reciprocal bonds, governed by truth and justice, link people to one another. But for such bonds to be possible, each person must live in the truth” (Ibid. 26).

### Truth and justice

41- Truth and justice are therefore the measure of true freedom, and hence of a stable, definitive peace. Consequently, the full development of a free personality and a free people is a duty and a right for each individual and each people. It must be furthered, not impeded, by society or by any ruling power.

### Appeals by the Sovereign Pontiffs

42- From the beginning of the conflict the Catholic Church has constantly sought to point out and follow the line of justice and equity between two peoples in dispute. The Sovereign Pontiffs have been untiring in their calls for mutual recognition and acceptance. They have stressed the equality of rights to a homeland, to self-determination, and to security. They have appealed for an end to violence and urged recourse to negotiation. They continue to do every thing possible to further these ends, longing for that day when peace based on truth and justice will finally be established between the two peoples, the Palestinians and Israelis.

Declarations of the Leader of the Christian Communities in Jerusalem.

43- In company with our brothers, the leaders of the Christian Communities in the Holy City of Jerusalem, we have on more than one occasion expressed our solidarity with those who suffer, deplored the use of all forms of violence, and urged a recourse to dialogue.

Common religious values

44- All the religions involved in this conflict, Islam, Judaism and Christianity, share those same values which can and must form the basis of any solution.

The value of the human person as a free being created in the image of God, and master of his own destiny is the basis of his dignity, of his right to exercise his freedom and to be respected, both as an individual and as member of a community.

God's justice and forgiveness are two values emphasised in all the holy books. They are an invitation to every believer involved in this conflict to see in forgiveness and reconciliation a way towards justice and the obtaining of all rights. When the believer demands justice for himself, he should demand it also for his neighbour. When he sees his own sees of forgiveness, he should be prepared to forgive his neighbour. God has taught us to ask him to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive all those who trespass against us (cf. Matt 6,12).

The religious values of the East, the traditions of welcome, hospitality and generosity can contribute to the humanising of this conflict, which day by day becomes increasingly brutal. All those involved, particularly those entrusted with authority, should allow themselves to be guided by this aspect of the Eastern spirit when consider the demands of justice and the restoration of rights. On the one hand, we are witnesses to signs of humanity which promise a future of good neighbourliness, in which everyone can enjoy all his rights and respect the rights of others. On the other hand, we observe a radicalisation in the course of which each side is reduced to bring

out the worst in oneself and in the other, and is setting aside the values that have been the glory of one's religion, civilisation and history.

### Mystery and sign

45- In their history and in their destiny each human being and each people reveals a mystery and a sign of the divine will. Each must raise himself above the evil he bears within himself, above the "structures of sin" in his history, and acknowledge the mystery within himself and within the other and recognise the fact that God watches over him.

We appeal to both sides to acknowledge the presence of the other and its rights, and to respect God's will for one another. In the consideration of his own rights and freedom, let each acknowledge the rights and freedom of the other, a participation in that of God, who has revealed himself as Creator and Father of all. Let each grant the other the same recognition he demands for himself: "Do to others whatever you would them do to you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets" (Matt 7,12. Cf. Deut. 15,13; Tob 4,15).

### Possible Solutions

#### Dialogue between the two adversaries

46- As a first step towards a solution, there must be an end to violence on every side and the beginning of dialogue: direct negotiations between the two adversaries, each designating its own representatives. If a friend is a choice that one can make, an enemy is a fact with which one must come to terms. The two adversaries opposing each other are the State of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

The Arab, international and religious dimensions of the problem require the presence of the Arab and international communities in this face-to-face dialogue between the two adversaries.

The goal of this dialogue must be the establishment of a just and lasting peace; it cannot be used as a delaying tactic, a smokescreen for ulterior motives which would destroy peace.

### Mutual recognition

47- a solution to the conflict presupposes the mutual recognition of the two adversaries, and of their human equality, both as individuals and as peoples, and consequently the recognition of their equal rights and duties individuals and peoples.

## Integration in the Middle East

48- Any solution implies the full integration of these two peoples in the future of this part of the world, the Middle East, and must take into account and respect its peculiar character. First of all, it is the East with its own traditions and values. It is also a meeting place between East and West, a place of dialogue between cultures, peoples and religions, whilst remaining firmly part of the East.

## The Status of Jerusalem

49- Jerusalem occupies a central place in this conflict by virtue of what it means for the three monotheistic religions, Muslim, Jewish and Christian, and its importance as a symbol for each of them. In satisfying the aspirations of the Palestinians and Israelis, the two peoples concerned, account must also be taken of the deep attachment to this city and the surrounding land, of the believers of these three religions throughout the world.

A special status must be found for Jerusalem in view of its position as a Holy City, enabling it to become the city of justice and fraternity. Free, unhindered access must be guaranteed to all those who believe in its message. If all those concerned act in good faith, we are convinced that it is not impossible to draw up a practical, concrete formula that will satisfy the dual demands of the national and spiritual character of the city.

“I think of and long for the day on which we shall all be so ‘taught by God’ (Jn 6,45), that we shall listen to his message of peace and reconciliation. I think of the day on which Jews, Christian and Muslims will greet each other in the city of Jerusalem with the same greeting of peace with which Christ greeted the disciples after the Resurrection: ‘Peace be with you’ (Jn 20,19)”.

“Indeed, there should be found, with good will and farsightedness, a concrete and just solution by which different interests and aspirations can be provided for in a harmonious and stable form, and be safeguarded in an adequate and efficacious manner by a special Statute internationally guaranteed so that no party could jeopardise it” (John Paul II, Apostolic Letter “Redemptionis Anno”).

## The urgency of the situation

50- This appeal for recognition and dialogue is particularly urgent at this time. An extremely dangerous situation has been created by the impasse in the peace process. The lack of any immediate hopes plays into the hands of the fanatics and extremists on both sides. At any time an uncontrollable explosion of violence could occur. There

have been too many victims, too much suffering . the responsibilities of the political leaders at this time are therefore of particular importance. No one can be unaware of the vital need for a swift decision, for rapid action to be taken before it is too late.

## **V. ADVICE TO THE FAITHFUL**

A difficult and complicated situation

51- My brothers and sisters, the situation in which you find yourselves is difficult and complicated. It has repercussions on a local, regional and international level.

Your first duty is to be equal to the situation. However complicated or difficult it is you should try to understand it. Take all the facts into account. Consider them objectively, calmly but courageously, and resist any temptation to fear and despair. Listen to what St. Paul tells you: “Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition... make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4,6-7).

Your duty is to have a clear, precise idea of what your rights and duties are. Then, whatever the sacrifices required, you will be able to demand all of them and avoid neglect in carrying them out.

Contribute to finding the solution

52- You are an integral part of your society, a party to the conflict. You therefore should contribute to the solution. You cannot evade your responsibilities. You have no right to survive thanks to the sacrifices of others. Each must offer up one's own sacrifice.

The rights of peoples

53- We are often asked, does the Church approve of the demonstrations, the protests of the young, the violence and the Intifada?

We have always replied that the question any sincere man or woman of good will must ask is the following: does a people have the right and duty to claim its rights? If it has, then it has the right and the duty to put forwards its claims and the right to make its request heard, with a view to obtaining its rights.

No one has any power, under any pretext, to require the oppressed to remain silent, to forego claiming their rights. At the same time, no one has the right to fill the hearts of



the oppressed with hatred and sterile rancour. The goal is not hatred of the adversary. It is the obtaining of justice.

54- An occupied people has the right to claim its rights and to organise itself politically in the way it sees fit, in the way it has already expressed: that is, as an independent state. This is a right of natural law, and no one can take this right away. The Vatican Council document we have already quoted states: "It is therefore obvious that the political community and public authority are based on human nature and hence belong to an order of things divinely foreordained. At the same time, the choice of government and the method of selecting leaders is left to the free will of citizen" (The Church in the Modern World, 74).

No to violence

55- The choice of the Church, listening to the voice of the Gospel, is very clear: no to violence. The Church favours all those means that will bring the hearts of adversaries closer together and lead them to accept justice for them both. The choice of the Church is for a dialogue of peace, a dialogue between the two adversaries. The leaders of the Palestinian people and many Israelis continue to proclaim their readiness to accept this dialogue.

Violence will never be included in our instructions or advice. As we wait for the powerful of this world and the citizens of this land to build peace with the means available to them, our response to all oppression, to every display of violence, is to condemn all oppression, all violence and all terrorism wherever it comes from, from the State, from groups or from individuals.

But we must also make clear that violence is not limited to that which proceeds from the use of weapons of destruction. It can take on a multiplicity of forms, physical or moral. On occasion a greater, more destructive violence is wrought by the use of mass media to conceal or to falsify the truth.

The work of the Church will always be to uphold the truth, to support the poor, the weak, the victims of violence, whoever they may be.

We must also point out that the use of violence by the powerful encourages and even forces the weak to resort to the same means.

Furthermore, in any conflict between peoples, it is not simply a question of the body, but of the soul of the people. The violence that can destroy the body cannot destroy the soul. On the contrary, it will only be a source of greater vigour and moral strength.

For all these reasons we declare that the end to all violence and the recourse to dialogue is the only road to peace and guarantee of security.

Fidelity to the faith, fidelity to the homeland

56- My brothers and sisters, you are Christians. Remain faithful to your faith, to your Church. In the difficult situation you are undergoing, fidelity to your faith will better enable you to fulfil your duties to your homeland and to your society.

You live in this land which is holy for all believers throughout the world, and for all Christians. Together with all the inhabitants of the Holy Land you have a vocation on a world-scale. As Christians sharing in a real ecumenical spirit, you have a vocation that must live up to the demands of Christianity. A greatness of soul, a particular promptness to be equal to your mission is required of you. Reaffirm your local identity as citizen, and as Christians in the Church of Jerusalem. At the same time, develop an awareness of the universal mission of your Church and the mission of your land has to play in the life of the world.

Involvement in public life

57- Hence, you must be ever more firmly rooted in your Church and your homeland. You must be increasingly involved in all spheres of public life, in order to build the society of tomorrow and foster fraternity and freedom in co-operation with believers of other religions. Henceforth you must work together for a free society in which there is a place for every individual to live in dignity, respect and love. These are times that call for unity, reminding believers that love and union is the truth at the heart of their faith. Only in this love and union can Christian witness be genuine and strong, and bring its spiritual influence to bear on the conflict.

Your Muslim compatriots

58- The Muslim faithful are your fellow compatriots. You share the same future, the same country, the same patrimony. The friction that arises in the course of ordinary everyday life cannot be allowed to destroy your sense of fraternity, or make you forget that you share the same homeland, the same patrimony and culture.

The incidents of daily life require great efforts and constancy on the part of everyone if a true coexistence is to be established in which there is mutual respect and co-operation in building a shared society.

In this respect we repeat we said in our message for Lent this year. Be on your guard against those who sow discord and fear among you. Resist fear and all incitement to

discrimination between Christians and Muslims. Faith, lived sincerely and bravely, will eventually bring all God's children together in the same love. That love will be the real builder of society. You will triumph through your patience and through your love. Much time and determination is required. It is important to persevere in the long journey along the road towards a true understanding of our Muslim brothers and sisters.

## The Jewish People

59- It is true that in the present situation, the Palestinians perceive the Jewish people as having a different history and as carrying out policies unfavourable to them. Nonetheless many factors can favour and contribute to reconciliation. The Word of God addressed to the Jewish people is also the Word of God for us Christians, and we preserve it in our Scriptures.

We love the God who speaks to men and women, and we love his divine choice. We desire for the people of our Fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all the benefits which God wills to grant them. For we firmly believe that the love of God for one people cannot imply injustice for another people. Politics and the evil in man cannot be allowed to disfigure the love of God for all his children.

Abraham is the father of all believers. Faith in God should bring all peoples together, notwithstanding their political differences. The believers should be able to maintain a constructive dialogue with the believers of any other religion. The hearts of believers must be taught to accept that reconciliation and coexistence are essential if peace and justice are to be established.

## Solidarity and love for our brothers

60- My brothers and sisters, you yourselves must maintain this solidarity, this unity. You must love one another. Together we must share our suffering and our hope. Whatever we have at this time we must share, be it much or little. The well-provided-for must take care of the brothers and sisters in need. Those in need will find time for those in greater need, with greater problems. This sharing inspired by God's love for each of us, will enable us to strengthen and support one another.

Our love cannot be restricted to our own community. Our love should be as universal as God's love, reaching out to every individual. It admits no exceptions, or shows no discrimination. It seeks no personal interest, but rather imitates our Saviour who said: "I came so that they might have the life and have it more abundantly"(Jn 10,10).such is Christ's commandment and such must be our commandment: love God and love

our neighbour as ourselves, as God loves him. Jesus tells us: “Love one another, as I have loved you”(Jn 15,12).

### Solidarity among the Churches

61- We are pleased to share the sympathy and solidarity of our Christian brothers and sisters from abroad. They do not limit their love to Christians alone. They embrace, without exception all those oppressed by this conflict, all those in need.

We thank all the organisations involved in social or charitable aid. We thank all the Christian delegations, Catholic and others, who have visited our land during this conflict to learn the truth at first hand and to co-operate in the building of justice and peace. We thank all the pilgrims who, in spite of the difficulties, have by their presence and their prayers shown us their support and sympathy.

### The witness of our small flock

62- Our flock is small, but this smallness does not lessen our mission or responsibilities, but it increases and deepens them. You bear within you the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, whom the Father sent to the believers in this very city, on this day of Pentecost.

This Spirit dwells in each of you. He dwells in the Church of his land and in the churches throughout the world. In the name of this Spirit through whom “you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, Abba Father!” (Rm. 8,15), we also say, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Ap. 22,20).

### Our prayers will be heard

63- We are strong in the World of God and in his Spirit. We trust in the goodness within man, in spite of the evil we have endured for so long, and seems to have no end. We have no doubts that our prayers and our efforts will be heard. We believe in God and we invite you to persevere in the work for that peace which will come, the peace for which so many men and women around us have given their lives.

## CONCLUSION

### Blessed are the meek

64- Jesus says “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land..., Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are

persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5,9-10)

### The Peacemakers

65- Throughout the ages and in all civilisations the history of mankind has been filled with wars and recourse to violence. Today there are signs that peace is being established between the great powers of the world. Nonetheless, no end is in sight to the wars in many parts of the Third World. These wars are all in some way related to the great powers and the arms dealers. The great powers have had a role in these wars and have a role in bringing them to an end. They cannot shrug off their responsibilities.

War is an evil from which mankind must be set free. Peace is a risk, a challenge that the two sides in the conflict, the arms dealers and the great power should accept.

At all times and in all civilisations there have been men and women of peace. Furthermore, sooner or later every conflict. We must continue to hope that here too peace will one day be established. The birth will be difficult, but will be born.

We must not lose hope. By favouring the birth of hope, we shall contribute to the birth of peace. This we can do by a steadfast appeal for justice, and a steadfast condemnation of injustice, from whatever side it comes.

### Jerusalem, a sign of hope

66- Jerusalem is at present a sign of contradiction and conflict. Nonetheless, she continue to be a sign of hope, since she is the means by which the divine message have been transmitted to a believing mankind, believers of all peoples must meet together to hear the voice of God here. If they listen to his voice they will be able to restore to Jerusalem her sacred character and her power to bring peace, to humanise.

No one has the exclusive right to appropriate Jerusalem. Such an appropriation could only be the cause of dispute and hatred. Every believers has the right to make Jerusalem his spiritual homeland; the place where peace and love can be found, from where one can call all men and women to peace with God.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem... Since all are my brothers and friends,  
I say ‘Peace be with you’  
Since the Lord our God lives here,  
I pray for your happiness” (Ps 112,6,8-9).

## Prayer

67- At the outset of human history the Tower of Babel was a symbol of the confusion of languages and minds. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit enabled the believers of Jesus who were gathered in Jerusalem, to overcome the language differences and to understand one another. We ask God to send his Spirit upon us and renew his Pentecost among us. We pray that every man and woman should begin to understand his brothers and sisters in love and justice. We ask that each and everyone of us be inspired by love, not hatred, by peace, not oppression or injustice.

Lord, on this day, in this land, you sent you Spirit to renew the face of the earth and reconcile man with you and with one's brothers and sisters. Today in this Holy Land we are in need of reconciliation. Send your Spirit upon us to renew us, to bring us reconciliation.

+ Michel Sabbah, Patriarch