

# worldview

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## POPE JOHN XXIII

After a reign of less than five years John XXIII has died. Yet, as a result of what he accomplished in this brief span, neither the Church of which he was the Supreme Pontiff nor the world in which that Church plays out its earthly mission will be quite the same. The final outpouring of appreciation and affection from people of all faiths and of no faith was proof, if proof were needed, that he spoke directly to all men of good will.

But, of course, the final proof was not needed. Almost from the day of his election he astounded and delighted, and sometimes disconcerted, those who followed his reaction to the great burden and responsibility that had become suddenly his. The response to his last, great encyclical *Pacem in Terris*—with which this issue of *worldview* is almost entirely concerned—is but the last tribute offered during his lifetime. Each of the contributors to this issue concerns himself with some particular portion, some single aspect of the encyclical. Taken together they show something of the range of the responses that greeted *Pacem in Terris*. (None, it must be admitted, parallel the comment of a well-known German who declared the Pope incompetent in political matters and warned of great danger to the Church because of his policies.) The encyclical is remarkable in itself, surveying as it does the major problems which afflict a distressed and divided world today, and suggesting specific actions that might reduce if not overcome these problems. But it would not have gained the attention it did if it had not flowed from and seemed part of the thought and feeling of John XXIII, a remarkable man who won, so readily it seems, the affection of the world—of Christians and Jews, of people of other faiths and people with no faith.

The most remarkable act of John's reign is, of course, his decision to convoke the second Vatican Council. There had been only twenty Ecumenical Councils in the two-thousand-year his-

tory of the Church and the last had been held under unhappy circumstances almost one hundred years earlier. Among these, the Council summoned by John is unique, for it met not to issue definitions or condemnations, nor to counter threats from without, but to renew and reform itself from within. The Pope himself spoke of restoring "the lines that the face of the Church of Jesus had at its birth."

To fulfill its purpose he knew that the Council would have to break through a crust of outmoded customs and conventions, that it would have to strip off accretions that inevitably gather around an institution as venerable as the Church. Under his gentle guidance the first session of the Council took great steps in this direction. Fresh winds swept through the Church and new ideas are now in ferment.

John's efforts, it becomes increasingly clear, were intended to make the "good news" of salvation more readily available to the modern world. Beyond this, he attempted to show that the Church and its teachings are relevant to the urgent, troubling issues which beset mankind today, that it has something pertinent and helpful to say about such great world-wide problems as poverty, racism, communism, and the threat of devastating war. He showed further that the Church could cooperate with all, whatever their proclaimed formal commitments, who are seeking the goals of peace, justice, order and freedom. In all this, though he clearly spoke as the head of the Church, he spoke as a partisan only for the family of man.

For all of these reasons *Pacem in Terris* was eagerly awaited by peoples around the world and, when it proved more than equal to their expectations, warmly accepted. The encyclical is not simply an "idealistic, devotional statement," as one Catholic termed it; it is a profound document which never loses sight of the realities with which it deals. In contrast to many com-

mentaries on our present world situation, however, it is permeated with a serenity that is based on certainty, an optimism that is based on a firm belief in the value and goodness of each imperfect person.

*Pacem in Terris* represents a breakthrough in our reactions, which tend to be static and rigid. As such it is welcome to all those who recognize the need to break through their own particular

patterns of thought. What is needed now, of course, is the effort to apply what are, after all, not free-floating generalities but concrete suggestions. The most fitting tribute to the remarkable man who was John XXIII, to this sweet and beautiful spirit, is to accept with gratitude and apply with diligence what he has so generously offered, in order that man and the conditions in which he lives may be uplifted.

from *Pacem in Terris*

"Beginning our discussion of the rights of man, we see that every man has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are necessary and suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services. Therefore a human being also has the right to security in cases of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other case in which he is deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of his own."

"Every human being has the right to honor God according to the dictates of an upright conscience, and therefore the right to worship God privately and publicly."

"The right to private property, even of productive goods, also derives from the nature of man. This right, as We have elsewhere declared, is an effective aid in safeguarding the dignity of the human person and the free exercise of responsibility in all fields of endeavor. Finally, it strengthens the stability and tranquility of family life, thus contributing to the peace and prosperity of the commonwealth."

"However, it is opportune to point out that there is a social duty essentially inherent in the right of private property."

"... the conviction that all men are equal by reason of their natural dignity has been generally accepted. Hence racial discrimination can in no way be justified, at least doctrinally or in theory. And this is of fundamental importance and significance for the formation of human society according to those principles which We have outlined.... For, if a man becomes conscious of his right, he must become equally aware of his duties. Thus he who possesses cer-

tain rights has likewise the duty to claim those rights as marks of his dignity, while all others have the obligation to acknowledge those rights and respect them."

"... the relations of the citizens with each other, of citizens and intermediate groups with public authorities, and finally of the public authorities with one another, are often so complex and so sensitive that they cannot be regulated by inflexible legal provisions. Such a situation therefore demands that the civil authorities have clear ideas about the nature and extent of their official duties if they wish to maintain the existing juridical structure...."

"... one must bear in mind that, even though the monstrous power of modern weapons acts as a deterrent, it is to be feared that the mere continuance of nuclear tests, undertaken with war in mind, will prove a serious hazard for life on earth."

"Justice, then, right reason and humanity urgently demand that the arms race should cease; that the stockpiles which exist in various countries should be reduced equally and simultaneously by the parties concerned; that nuclear weapons should be banned; and that a general agreement should eventually be reached about progressive disarmament and an effective method of control."

"Requirements of the common good are necessarily connected with the structure and function of political authority. The moral order not only indicates the need for political authority, but requires that this authority be effective for the goal in view. Today the universal common good poses problems of world-wide dimensions. There is need, therefore, for a public authority which can operate effectively on a world-wide basis, coping with situations beyond the capacity of individual countries or regions."