

Ps 116 Tape

"Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord
from Jerusalem - - - - -"

[Isaiah 2, 11 - from Prayers for Young Xmas p16]

The coming of God's promised Saviour was to start a new era for mankind. Christ came to bring peace - peace & communion first between God & man, and also, through His love, between men. That final peace has not yet been fully realised by us. Let us pray for its coming now; let's pray too for those who have it in their power to bring peace to the family of nations; let's pray that this Christmas the peace of Christ may come a little more fully into our world, into your heart and mine.

PRAYERS

Last Thursday I played for you part of an old Italian folk-song cycle telling about the birth of Christ. Here's another item from the same set of songs - so as not to anticipate Christmas too much, it's the Annunciation. A literal translation of the words reads: Q.

Did you notice that bit in last evening's paper, by the manager of an exporting plastics' factory: "The whole world is more Christmas-conscious than it's ever been before"? Commercially, I suppose he must be right, yes. Religiously? I very much wonder. O yes, there's to be a kind of Christmas truce in that awful running sore of enmity, hatred & destruction in Vietnam. But there was greater brotherhood between the fighting men of ~~both~~ ^{either} side in Christmas truces during the 1st - even the 2nd world war. This month, together with literally millions of people everywhere who regularly use the monthly ^{prayer} intentions proposed by the Apostleship of Prayer (intentions, by the way, which the Pope personally approves ^{for} each year), we've been praying and offering our daily lives for 'true brotherhood of peoples & nations'.

But what is this 'brotherhood of peoples & nations'? Is it realistic to speak in such terms at all? Is it just a nice unattainable ideal? ~~It is~~ ^{We} must face facts, & be realistic. But the facts, even, bring us to a dilemma. We know that all men, whatever their race, colour, nation, philosophy are made in the image & likeness of God. He is our Father, our common father: we are all his children & therefore brothers to each other. Even non-Christians believe that within the few years all men are brothers. That's the fact, not a mere theory or ideal

But the ideal hasn't yet been realized in practice, though some progress has been made. The United Nations, despite its many & glaring defects, is an attempt to ~~make~~ make the reality effective - and it has had some success in damping down the irrational, selfish, chaotic streak in men and nations which leads them to kill & hate their fellow-men. In this nuclear age, even self-interest suggests that there must be some form of brotherhood between nations.

Love for all men, which Christ preached, not only in his story of the Good Samaritan, but throughout his life & through his life & death is not an easy to learn or to practice. On the level of peoples & nations it's even more difficult, because it requires ~~trust~~ trust, which is something hard to come by. Pope John 23 did not think it was impossible to achieve such trust - and, from the world-wide reception given to his last letter about Peace on Earth, it seems that fundamentally mankind realizes this. As war begins in the minds of men, peace begins there too. And that means in my mind and your mind.

Christmas celebrates the birth of the Prince of Peace:
"Gloria to God on high and on earth peace to men of good will"
Let us pray that He will give to us peace and a true feeling of brotherhood - not only to us, but to all mankind so that peace & true brotherhood can come to our community, to this world of ours, a peace & brotherhood it so clearly needs & so sadly lacks.

In the words of St. Francis of Assisi, who is responsible for much of what we think of as the 'Christmas spirit':

"Lord make me an instrument of your peace ..."