

Midday Prayer - 155

8.1.70  
7.1.71  
6.1.72  
8.1.73  
14.1.74 35f

A Christmas night carol, from France.

Minut some...  
Silent night  
(RS 228)

"Heavenly peace": Peace on earth was the angels' good news to the Shepherds on the first Xmas night...

Next Sunday, in our churches, will be observed as a day of special prayer for Peace.

This is in keeping with the desire expressed by Pope Paul, in recent years, that there should be a 'Peace-day' at the beginning of each new year. <sup>Jan 1st or this Sunday</sup> <sup>Over this past weekend</sup> <sup>Also far, though he himself</sup> has become recognised as a man intensely concerned about peace in the world, <sup>there's also been an exhibition at the Ocean Terminal on the theme that peace is possible</sup> the Pope's plea for others, of all religions and none, to join with him in a united effort of prayer and reflection on peace at the start of a fresh year, has met with only limited response. There may be many good reasons for this: but surely the idea of peace in the world is not so out of harmony with the Christmas season and the festival we've just been keeping. <sup>as well as ordinary feelings of humanity</sup> Even in Vietnam, the shaky truces around Christmastime are some sign of good-will, however far from real peace they may be.

→ It's all very well singing 'Silent Night' and sending greetings of 'Peace on earth': perhaps one of the things that's wrong about the way we celebrate Christmas is that it tends to be too sentimental, too superficial and basically too selfish. It's nice to hear about the Child 'sleeping in heavenly peace', to be remembered by one's friends and given presents, to see the general happiness and good will - but how deep does it all go? What does this 'peace' mean which we recall was the angels' message of Christmas night? One of our difficulties, I think, is that we take it for granted that we know what peace is, and seldom reflect on it. Christ left us His peace, and He said it was not peace as the world gives it - the peace the Jews His apostles didn't make life easy for them or preserve them from violent death. Nor do I imagine that the peace Pope Paul prays for is quite the same as John Lennon means by his antics or <sup>what others have in mind.</sup> that anti-war demonstrators

get so violent about. Today 'Peace' has become something of a catch-cry, an 'in'-word to use, and as has happened with words like democracy, freedom, commitment and so on, what it really involves and means has become obscured in simplifications and partisan propaganda. There is danger of its becoming a formula, while its substance is let go unnoticed. What do you think peace is? Is it merely the opposite of active <sup>fighting</sup> ~~war~~? a merely negative idea, the absence of war? Or is there a much more positive meaning in the notion of peace? St Augustine I believe it was defined peace as the 'tranquility of order' - is this an adequate description today? Has there perhaps been too much emphasis, in the way we think of peace, on the tranquility aspect - the peaceful quiet of some travel brochures appealing to the instinct of modern harassed city-folk to "get away from it all"? <sup>Makarna Gandhi, you recently, desperately wanted peace, but not, he said, 'There's a will, the peace of the graveyard.'</sup> Known like of Dante, taken up by a modern poet again: in his (God's) will is our peace. Is this your idea, and what does it involve? Again, as one's outlook and approach to the world we live in is tempered by what one really believes in, a Christian's understanding of peace must surely show some sign of his faith and trust in God and what he knows of God's relationship with the world. Why did St Benedict choose as the motto of his order the simple word 'Pax', peace? What does that word written up on a monastery gate, over the sanctuary in a monastic church, convey or imply? There is plenty to think about in that simple word, peace; and in preparation for next Sunday's prayer for peace, it wd. be good today & for the next few days to reflect on what we really pray for, what Pope Paul has asked the world to pray for. <sup>If you want peace, seek justice</sup> There is a prayer for peace in the Agnus Dei of every Mass: here's an Argentinian modern version of it, with a reminder that S. America too needs peace today: MUSIC. PRAYERS

Misa Criolla

The Christmas message of peace is the beginning of the Gloria at Mass — for prayer in music today,  
 here's part of the Gloria, from Carpenter's Christmas-night Mass which uses the tunes of old French carols & folk-songs.  
 MUSIC - PRAYERS

All the recent Popes, and the Vatican Council, have spoken about Peace. They have not been merely repeating one another, for there has been development in understanding of what peace involves for mankind in this latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an understanding based on new insights into man's life and needs, and the peculiar circumstances (which haven't occurred before) of how we live in today's world. The key ideas in this developed understanding of peace are justice, order and freedom, for it's clear that peace worthy of mankind or of the very same cannot be assured without human dignity or without the respect for one another that's demanded in living so closely together. There may not be people actually fighting each other, but if there is resentment and hatred in some hearts, selfishness and <sup>greed</sup> meanness in others, how long can such a situation continue without violence, how can one call a community peaceful under such conditions? Order, which appears you remember in that definition of St Augustine I gave you a few minutes ago, (wh. seem to be the modern) stress in understanding what peace is: this still leaves room for disagreement about what kind of order, how much order, how any order is achieved. But one thing is clear, and that is that order is still that has to be made, by human effort — not merely imposed from outside. Few of us have influence in the places of power, so that we can feel our active contribution to the achievement of international peace, or peace in our own community: but order and peace really begin in our own hearts. There is where to make a start in making Christ's presence. His love, His justice are God's order, <sup>His peace</sup> real in our world.