

Children of the Lord
(in Love 1²)

On his current visit to Japan, it was no surprise that Pope John Paul yesterday spoke so vigorously at Hiroshima about the nuclear threat that hangs over the world today, even more ominously than it did in August 1945. He has pleaded for peace: not for the first time, spoken for the deepest fear and anxiety that so many people feel today, and so often unheeded by the powers of the world, governments and interests that are caught up in power-politics and arms and security obsession. He spoke of those same anxieties and fears a few months ago, in a long section of his letter about the Mercy of God, describing the worries and aspirations of people all over the world in the face of the progress and problems of humankind approaching the end of the 20th century since Christ lived in Galilee. Last week at this time, and on Monday, I quoted very clearly from the Pope's letter: continuing today is ^a timely echo of similar concern that he's been voicing these past 10 days on his visits to the Philippines & Japan. The threats to the world and to humanity that people have been becoming more aware of and fearful about, are happening (he suggests) against a background of a gigantic reversal that people are feeling more acutely now — a reversal caused by the fact that, side by side with wealthy and well-fed people and societies, living in plenty and ruled by consumerism and pleasure, the same human family contains individuals and groups that are suffering from hunger. There are babies dying of hunger under their mother's eyes. In various parts of the world, in various socio-economic systems, there exist entire areas of poverty, shortage and underdevelopment. This fact is universally known. The state of inequality between individuals and between nations not only

still exists: it's increasing. It still happens that side by side with those who are wealthy and living in plenty, there are those who are living in want, suffering misery, and often actually dying of hunger: and that number reaches even hundreds of millions. This is why moral uneasiness is bound to become even more acute. It's obvious that a fundamental series of defects is at the root of contemporary civilisation, which does not allow the human family to break free from such radically unjust situations. This picture of today's world explains the uneasiness felt by people today, a world where there's so much evil, so many tensions and contradictions, so much threat to human freedom, conscience and religion. The uneasiness is felt not only by those who are themselves oppressed or disadvantaged, but also by those who possess the privileges of wealth, progress and power. Though there's no lack of people trying to understand the causes of this uneasiness or to react against it, still (in the depths of the human spirit) it's stronger than the means we have available to counteract it. For it really concerns the fundamental problems of all human existence. It's an uneasiness for the future of humanity; and demands decisive solutions, which now seem to be forcing themselves upon the human race. . . . These thoughts from Pope John Paul's recent letter on God's mercy. Pray about it today, and now as we listen to this prayer for mercy: Kyrie Eleison, from Mass for 2 choirs & 2 organs by Charles Widor

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13

MUSIC - PRAYERS

It's not difficult to see that in the modern world, the sense of justice has been re-awakening on a vast scale: justice between individuals, social groups and "classes":

between individual peoples and states, between whole political systems, and "worlds". This deep and varied trend, given proof of the ethical character of the tensions and struggles pervading the world. The church shares with the people of our time this profound and ardent desire for a life that's just in every aspect. The development of the church's social doctrine has been leading towards the education and formation of human consciences in the spirit of justice: it's also led to individual undertakings developing in this spirit. And yet it would be difficult not to notice that very often programmes that start from the idea of justice and ought to assist its fulfillment, in practice suffer from distortions. Experience shows that other, negative, forces can gain the upper hand over justice, such as spite, hatred and even cruelty. The abuse of the idea of justice and the practical distortion of it show how far human action can deviate from justice itself, even when undertaken in the name of justice. Not in vain did Christ challenge his listeners for their attitude manifested in the slogan 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'. This was the form of distortion of justice at that time: and today's forms continue to be modelled on it, when (in the name of justice) neighbours are destroyed, killed, deprived of liberty, stripped of fundamental human rights. Experience, from the past and of our own time, shows that justice alone is not enough: that it can even lead to the negation and destruction of itself if that deeper power which is love is not allowed to shape human life in its various dimensions. It is necessary to draw from the power of the spirit that cry for justice, powers that are still more profound.