PEACE THE PURPOSE OF WAR

THE Holy Father, Pope Pius XII., in exhorting Catholics to renew their prayers for peace during our Lady's month of May, began his letter with these words: 'Wherever we turn our eyes and heart this murderous and fratricidal war shows us nothing but sorrow, destruction and immense ruin. . . . Now that we have seen it grow with ever increasing frightfulness, we have tried with all our means to mitigate it, or render it more merciful.' To the Father of the universal Church the war is necessarily fratricidal and it is an appropriate occasion for recalling our thoughts to the Christian attitude, the attitude of the Catholic, to a war which by now might otherwise be taken for granted.

The Christian is easily overcome by the non-Christian atmosphere in which he lives. The ideals and mode of life common to those around him become, through ceaseless repetition, imperceptibly his own ideals. The world in which the Catholic lives is organized for war and war standards become the measure of all things. Destruction and slaughter are made matter for praise and congratulations. Many Catholics may pride themselves on being able to take the same view; but they should beware. Where human passions are concerned the true Christian must inevitably be at variance with 'the world,' and the passions of war include all the lowest and the least controllable. Without qualification the Head of the Church calls the war 'murderous and fratricidal,' and he deplores its destructive progress.

War may be justified, but it can never be more than an unfortunate necessity (except to the Nazi or the Fascist). The men who are engaged in the war are of the bravest and the best, with a spirit of sacrifice often carried to the heights; but the core of their heroism lies in the fact that they are performing a distasteful duty, necessary for the common good of mankind, but the worst of all jobs. We pity the miners squatting at the coal face; the soldier's job is more unhealthy. If the cause is a just one he is obliged to bend all his powers in the direction of destruction and slaughter. We must honour him with deep and enduring gratitude, and especially since he has taken on this job for a noble end.

We may however gather from the Pope's frequent expressions of detestation for the war a certain grave warning. It is easy to forget the just end of a war, and to adopt the attitude of 'the world.' to glory in fractricide and destruction. War, this worst of human

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evils, as it proceeds stirs up all these other evils—lust, murder, rapine, swindling, pride and uncontrolled selfishness, anger and hatred. As the war continues we can notice these evils increasing in this country. The situation must be far worse abroad. In the *New English Weekly* for May 4th General Fuller has drawn a gloomy picture of the dissolution of civilization on the Continent. 'The new and rising middle class is composed of war profiteers and black marketers. . . Extortion, bribery, cheating and thieving are the elements of the new morality, consequently the honest and law-abiding go to the wall. . . The Partisans—the rising aristocracy—are violent men, men of a new feudal order, whose castles are the forests and the mountains. To them might is unquestioned right. What they want they take. Should the peasants refuse their demands they are shot. . . What kind of a future do you expect when young people are trained to think of killing, etc.? . . .'

The consequence of all this is that the longer the war continues the less likely is it to be a just war. A just war demands a dynamic spirituality capable of controlling and directing these evils, and as the evils increase so must the spiritual power rise proportionately in strength to prevent the justice of the cause being overwhelmed by the subsidiary evils. There is little sign of spiritual vigour in our day. The majority of those who wage it are poor enough Christians if Christians at all. The complacency of *The Times* on Stalin's estimate of religion reveals the pagan beast beneath the Christian hide worn thin: 'Marshal Stalin does not under-estimate the value of true faith as a buttress of the spirit of national resistance to German imperialism.' The longer the war the less secure its justice.

The Holy Father is constantly reminding us that peace is the purpose of a just war. Perhaps this seems obvious. Yet completely to crush the enemy, to hold him down by force of arms, is not peace. Peace comes from a harmony of wills, not from the enforced domination of one set of wills over another. And if the victorious tyrant is not animated by specifically Christian virtues his defeat of the enemy will only be war suppressed, the preparation for further devastation as soon as the defeated can gather strength to rise again.

Christ's victory is the model for all true Christians in whatever wars they wage. Christ's victory was gained not by inflicting but by sustaining wounds, torture and death.

These are principles which the Holy Father has often set before us. They are principles which every Catholic must turn over and over in his mind—for the madness around him is highly infectious.

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