



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN SIXTH FLEET**

Monday, 4 January 1988

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to welcome you to Rome. It is always a joy for me to meet with young people in the service of their country and who wish to visit the Pope when their duties bring them overseas. It is a special joy for me to meet with members of the American Sixth Fleet today, when the Church in the United States commemorates the first native born American saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton.

During this season we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of Peace. The world is filled with joyful hope at the prospect of true and lasting peace for all. Peace is the message proclaimed by the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem. But as the Sacred Scriptures quickly remind us, our Redeemer is born into a world overshadowed by sin and death, as we see in King Herod's massacre of the Innocents and in the prophecy made to the Mother of Jesus: "And you yourself a sword will pierce" (*Luc. 2, 35*).

It is only after the death and resurrection of Jesus that we come to understand the peace that he brings to the world. By accepting the cross with perfect love, Jesus revealed the path to reconciliation with God and neighbour. By forgiving even his executioners, he conquered hatred in the world.

You yourselves know that the light of Christ continues to shine in the darkness of sin and death, in the darkness of human suffering and senseless acts of violence. We must be believers in peace – for ourselves and for the world – the peace that begins in our own hearts when we renounce hatred and evil and seek to overcome evil with good. Yes, when it comes to peace we must be true believers. We must not lose hope in the message of Christmas. We must recognize that

peace is the heritage that Christ won for us, and that it is therefore possible.

I know that during this season your thoughts and prayers are with your loved ones at home and with the young men from among your ranks who recently suffered death or injury, and with their families. I join with you in prayer for them and for all those who are suffering in the world today.

Upon each of you I invoke God's gift of peace, so that like Christ you may overcome evil with good. May peace be in your hearts and in your homes, and throughout all America.

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