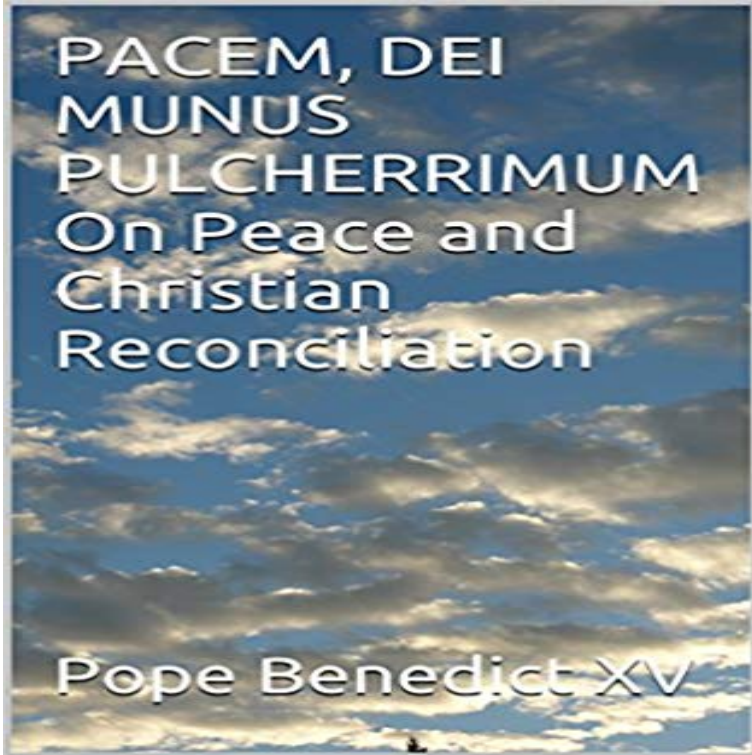


PACEM, DEI MUNUS PULCHERRIMUM On Peace and Christian Reconciliation



Excerpt: Peace, the beautiful gift of God, the name of which, as St. Augustine says, is the sweetest word to our hearing and the best and most desirable possession; peace, which was for more than four years implored by the ardent wishes of all good peoples, by the prayers of pious souls and the tears of mothers, begins at last to shine upon the nations. At this We are indeed the happiest of all, and heartily do We rejoice. But this joy of Our paternal heart is disturbed by many bitter anxieties, for if in most places peace is in some sort established and treaties signed, the germs of former enmities remain; and you well know, Venerable Brethren, that there can be no stable peace or lasting treaties, though made after long and difficult negotiations and duly signed, unless there be a return of mutual charity to appease hate and banish enmity. This, then, Venerable Brethren, is the anxious and dangerous question upon which we wish to dwell and to put forward recommendations to be brought home to your people. 2. For Ourselves, never since, by the hidden designs of God, We were raised to the Chair have We ceased to do everything in Our power from the very beginning of the war that all the nations of the world might resume cordial relations as soon as possible. To that end We never ceased to pray, to repeat exhortations, to propose ways of arrangement, to try every means, in fact, to open by divine aid, a path to a just, honourable and lasting peace; and at the same time We exercised all Our paternal care to alleviate everywhere that terrible load of sorrow and disaster of every sort by which the immense tragedy was accompanied. 3. And now, just as from the beginning of Our troubled pontificate the charity to Jesus Christ led Us to work both for the return of peace and to alleviate the horrors of the war, so now that comparative peace has been concluded, this same charity urges Us to exhort all the children

of the Church, and all mankind, to clear their hearts of bitterness, and give place to mutual love and concord. 4. There is no need from us of long proof to show that society would incur the risk of great loss if, while peace is signed, latent hostility and enmity were to continue among the nations. There is no need to mention the loss of all that maintains and fosters civil life, such as commerce and industry, art and literature, which flourish only when the nations are at peace. But what is even more important, grave harm would accrue to the form and essence of the Christian life, which consists essentially in charity and the preaching of which is called the Gospel of peace. 5. You know well, and We have frequently reminded you of it, nothing was so often and so carefully inculcated on His disciple by Jesus Christ as this precept of mutual charity as the one which contains all others. Christ called it the new commandment, His very own, and desired that it should be the sign of Christians by which they might be distinguished from all others; and on the eve of His death it was His last testament to His disciples to love one another and thus try to imitate the ineffable unity of the three Divine Persons in the Trinity. That they may be one as we also are one . . . that they may be made perfect in one 6. The Apostles, following in the steps of the divine Master, and conforming to His word and commands, were unceasing in their exhortation to the faithful: Before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves. But above all these things have charity which is the bond of perfection. Dearly beloved, let us love one another for charity is God. Our brethren of the first Christian ages faithfully observed these commands of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. They belonged to different and rival nations; yet they willingly forgot their causes of quarrel and lived in perfect concord, and such a union of hearts was in striking contrast with the deadly enmities by which human society was then consumed. 7. What has.....

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