

EDITORIAL

It's Christmas. Christ, the Prince of Peace has come again into a world devoid of peace. His heralds, the angels, proclaimed peace to men of good will. But are we men of good will?

In coping with international problems, we have no right to expect that there will be no difficulties. All men are children of the same first parents, and we have inherited not only our humanity from them, but also a propensity to sin. We all have this inclination, and so when we see men sin, it should be no surprise to us. But some men, by their habitual rejection of grace and abuse of those other men who can help them, find themselves in such a position that they have no appreciation of the higher life of the soul in communion with God. The wonder of this is not that there are these individuals, but that there are not more of them. Especially should we be in wonder if we examine our own lives and example.

But our wonder about the perversion of those who attack us should not prevent us from providing for our own security. We are certainly allowed, and even commanded, to take care of our own lives. We are then permitted to take the necessary steps to protect ourselves. Thus, in the physical order, it seems that we are allowed to build missile bases and arm them with what we need to preserve our own existence. But this is not all. Arms are fine, but if they are our only concern, we will indeed miss the spiritual targets in plotting our missile trajectories. The Israelites of the Old Testament had this concept clearly in view, although they expressed it in other terms. They sang about some of their enemies who trusted in their chariots, others who trusted in their horses, "but we have trusted in the name of the Lord, our God." This is a concept that we can well afford to ponder. In the same way that people become neurotic and fretfully consider impending evils, so can we become spiritual neurotics by failing to consider all the means and helps provided for our use. If we concentrate only on arms, we become like soldiers who think of fighting only with their fists; we neglect the basic weapons given us. Our answer to fear lies in our confidence in God's help. If we recall the words of the Sermon on the Mount, we of little faith know that we are of much more value than many sparrows, and yet our heavenly Father takes care of them. Why should we be over-concerned now? Is Christ's reassurance any the less consoling now because it was spoken centuries ago? Is Christ's rebuke

of the apostles when they were sailing in the storm-tossed boat any the less applicable to us? Why are we fearful, we of little faith?

What we soldiers in this age of armed intimidation need is three simple but powerful weapons. "For," as St. Paul tells his Ephesians, "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the Principalities and the Powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness on high." These weapons are faith, hope and charity: faith to unite us to our source and final end; hope to manfully carry on the battle against a devil much more intelligent and wily than we are; and love to unite us directly to God Himself and to help our created brothers to achieve their divinely ordained end. These weapons will overcome the enemy, will manifest God's glory, and will bring us to our predestined level of perfection and happiness.

But faith, hope and charity are outright gifts; there is nothing we can do to earn them. That we have them is the effect of God's loving us; that we can, in return, love is also the effect of His loving us and sharing His gifts. God joins us directly to Himself by His gifts, and He gives us the means to preserve and cultivate them. But even this is not the total gift, for when He gives us faith, hope and charity, He always gives us the whole battery of the supernatural virtues to elevate our natural dispositions. It is for us to use God's gifts by praying, by helping those in need, by being neighbors after the example of the Samaritan who helped the victim who had been robbed and beaten. This is our cooperation with God, this is our contribution to His glory in the world, this is our destiny. We will never adequately comprehend the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God. "How incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!" But when we are united eternally to God, as He is Three in One, we will know the magnitude and sublimity of our calling and our utter insignificance in relation to Him. We, and all with whom we in any way deal, are to mirror the goodness, majesty and wisdom of God, and we are to do it with divine virtue. What a vocation for these turbulent times!