

VATICAN CITY, JULY 1, 2001

Dearest Brothers and Sisters!

1. The month of July begins today, which popular tradition dedicates to the contemplation of the most precious Blood of Christ, unfathomable mystery of love and mercy.

In today's Liturgy, the Apostle Paul states in the Letter to the Galatians that "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1). This freedom has a dear price: the life and blood of the Redeemer. Yes! The blood of Christ is the price that God has paid to deliver humanity from the slavery of sin and death. The blood of Christ is the irrefutable proof of the love of the heavenly Father for every person; no one is excluded.

All this was clearly underlined by Blessed John XXIII, devoted to the blood of the Lord from his childhood, when he heard the special litany recited by the family. Once elected Pope, he wrote an apostolic letter to promote the cult ("Inde a primis," June 30, 1959), inviting the faithful to meditate on the infinite value of that Blood, of which "only one drop can save the entire world from every fault" (hymn: "Adoro Te Devote")

2. May meditation on the sacrifice of the Lord, pledge of hope and peace for the world, encourage and stimulate the construction of peace, including there where it seems unattainable. On this day, my thoughts turn especially to Sri Lanka where, on the occasion of the feast of Our Lady of Madhu, the Catholic community is gathering in prayer in that famous shrine to implore for the much longed for gift of peace. The parts involved in the tragic ethnic conflict, which for almost 20 years has sown violence and terrible atrocities in that dear nation, try with difficulty to find the way of dialogue and reconciliation. A negotiated solution is the only way to address the serious questions that are at the root of this present conflict.

3. May Mary, Mother of him who has redeemed the world with his blood, bless the persevering efforts of all those in Sri Lanka and elsewhere who promote a climate of impartiality and relaxation, indispensable premises to obtain concord and peace.

*John Paul II*