

UNHAPPY CHRISTMAS

Events in India and abroad have deeply marred the joy of Christmas. Conscience does not let us wish you a merry Christmas.

India's distinguished Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has been betrayed and murdered. The Non-Aligned Movement has lost the leader who offered it the greatest hope. The enemies of NAM can now rejoice with those who wished vendetta for the Golden Temple incidents of June.

The assassination was followed by a stupid and senseless murder of innocents, reminding us of the infants reported to be equally stupidly slaughtered by King Herod following the birth of Jesus. The political leaders who organized these mass murders and acts of arson should learn that such violence does not put a stop to the cycle of violence, which threatens to continue in our land.

And now the Union Carbide poison gas leak disaster in Bhopal! Thousands have died, and thousands disabled. Who is to blame but callous greed that is indifferent to human life and suffering?

India will be at the polls at Christmas time. Let us hope that no new spate of violence erupts at this time.

In neighbouring Sri Lanka, the Tamil-Sinhalese civil war is taking on frightening proportions. The victims are too often the innocent and the defenceless.

The repression of the majority Blacks in white-ruled South Africa is "fast becoming more ghastly than we can bear" and "unparalleled in the history of South Africa in this century", in the words of the white Acting General Secretary of the South African Christian Council.

And on the arms race front the news is far from cheering. Detente or relaxation of tensions is not yet in sight. President Reagan has moderated his language, but there is no indication that the arms race and the Star Wars preparations are slowed down. The world still sits on a powder-keg,

supplied with tons of T.N.T. for each of the 5000 million human persons in it, while more than 2000 million people live below subsistence level. And there is talk about a trillion dollars being spent on the arms race in the four years of the Reagan administration.

It is this context that we wish you a blessed new year. The new year has to be a time of prayer and fasting-not of mirth and merriment. It will be good, as a matter of discipline, to use the new year eve itself for worship and prayer rather than carousal and merry-making. And throughout the year 1985, there should be the group discipline of prayer and fasting, for the forces unleashed upon our world are demonic, and these kind do not come forth but by prayer and fasting.

If Christians would take less to blaming others for all the problems of the world and recognize their own ~~responsibility~~ complicity in the structures of injustice and oppression, that would be a good start. But we should go further than bemoaning our own sins. ~~We should fast and pray, that the ~~power of the Cross may dispel these demonic forces.~~~~
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So a blessed New Year, with prayer and fasting, to all of you.