

5 October 1965

“Never again war”

On 24 October, the United Nations celebrated the 68th anniversary of its Charter, an enduring keystone in international relations. For a reflection by Chiara Lubich on this theme, we turn to her diary entry for 5 October 1965, in which she comments on the first visit of a Pope, Paul VI, to the Assembly of the United Nations and his call to heed the words of John F Kennedy: “Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind”.

The Holy Father has returned home from the United Nations.

The “holy pride” we felt in him, the Vicar of Christ, reached new heights when he spoke before the Assembly. Have we ever seen anything like it before? He shone like a star on the pilgrimage of humanity, a guide for men and women who most of the time seem not to know how to be brothers and sisters to each other. He, humble like the carpenter of Nazareth, finds himself at the forefront of the world stage, a universal father and maestro, elevating human knowledge through his all-pervading wisdom.

We saw him, one of the “little ones” of the children of God, as great and universal. With a heart filled with divine charity, he set the raindrops of grace – as does the Heavenly Father - to fall on the just and unjust alike. In this atomic era, in which the whole earth can be destroyed by what man has invented, the Vicar of Christ launches the whole of humanity towards a new perspective, a new future, a new world, shedding those ideologies with their rose-tinted promises, and claiming for Christ, source of all good and of all clear light, the highest aspirations of the world of today.

We can see how his predecessor Pope John prepared the way for this, sweetening the air with the scent of universal charity.

Pope Paul, acting as “another Christ”, is able to operate within this atmosphere, and is understood and admired by anyone who has even a fibre of goodwill within themselves.

“All thanks and honour to you” Paul VI said to those Assembly members striving to give all their best for a cause which can never be achieved with human resources alone.

All thanks and honour to you, Holy Father, who can make our hearts beat faster, and take hold of our spirit, as it must have been in the times of Jesus.

(from Diario 1964/65 , Città Nuova Editrice, 1967, p.245)