

(quiet organ music)

- In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, amen. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, "whether it is right, in the sight of God, to hearken unto you rather than then unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen, and heard." That will be my text. Whether you can follow its exegesis or not. Increasingly it strikes me that our time is full of contrasts. The affluence of the great society is comfortable and deceptively comforting. It seems to hold out promise of ever more of itself. On the other hand, our time seems interminably out of joint. Collaborates here and collaborates there, hate-infested, strife-torn, imperiled by the sheer unmanageableness of magnitude, and threatened with the incomprehensibility of exploding knowledge that only computers can cope with. It is a time of insurgent forces resident, now and again erupted, latent and then manifest hostilities, and precarious civil and economic orders on able to contain and to direct, the explosive reaction of ancient wrongs, and the age old repressions. It is a time when everybody knows galloping technology, outstrips morally informed intelligence. And the man, distrustful of his real nature and destiny, appears to be the most probable victim of his own machine madness and technological ingenuity. Is it any wonder that we should be hearing obvious eschatological overtones in the songs of Peter Paul and Mary? Whether my daughter and her friends recognize them or not, or that these should become almost evangelistically emphatic in that recent hit refrain. And you tell me over and over and over again, my friend, you don't believe we're on the Eve of destruction. No, we can hardly believe it. The times are too plush. On the other hand, we can scarcely disbelief it. In this limbo of jungle light for intellectual profusion, and spiritual homelessness and expediency politics. I am sure that the whole world seeks for a sign. The whole world does ask, "Watchman tell us of the night, what the signs of promise are." Some part of it at least is not impressed, with the saving value of speaker ban laws, which plays confidence in the suppression of error, rather than the discovery of restorative vision and larger truth. The Megan old line mentality, was long since outflanked by the bill of rights, as long ago as 1791. And the bill of rights is the sanction for a much current agitation, where rights long ago assured, have nevertheless continuously been denied. Some think and not without cause, that this is the era of the angry young man, and in the face of this, many give thanks for such amusing distractions as are supplied by the Beatles. But the Beatles are obviously in protests too. And it is not I think just protest against the high price of haircuts. And then, the students demonstrate, truth it is in part simply self-assertion in the face of overwhelming anonymity, in the nameless labyrinth of vast educational processes and institutions. In part it is righteous indignation, but it is teed off I suspect, by a consciousness of impotence in the face of a general moral vacuum. If I get the pulse of student thinking these days, the students recognize about them, precious little moral and challenging and intellectually commanding leadership in places where it might be looked for. Hardly do they find it in the college and university empire, and almost not at all in the political one, what they find everywhere on the contrary is institutional aggrandizement self-maintenance and then empire building, whether this exists in the church as it does, or in the university, as it does, or in politics as it does, or in government as it does. It scarcely or less elicits loyalty that commands respect. It is only it seems big with itself, and points to know enabling and open

future. So as I dig them, the students see empire building as no viator of a better world. It is rather a cul-de-sac. And students and others recognize a blind alley when they smell one. So they fall into minor skirmishes everywhere with any representatives of the establishment, or things as they are always supposed to be. And perhaps understandably, their frustration is decisively released in protest against an undeclared executive war with no plainly declared ends other than those, they may just possibly read between the lines. Namely containment of the potential enemies of the great and the affluent society. Meanwhile, the thrust of the future is not this and the students perceive it, they surmise it. On the contrary the thrust of the future is acknowledgement of and devotion to the realization of the world's common humanity, under the rule of law. This is what the United Nations stands for, whether it fully knows it or not, whether it fully advances it or not, whether or not it encounters obstacles formidable as it does or not. The United Nations, is the predecessor of the parliament of nations in the Federation of the world. And this, some people surmise today. When we are having they call to live and to live responsibly in an era of agony and uncertainty. In the time of the birth trauma of the one world, whatever it may be, the seeming imperatives of power politics, and they are always hypothetical and never categorical, and if you don't know the difference, then study comp. The agony of our time is that these hypothetical imperatives are grossly at odds with a future, in which the wellbeing of mankind as a whole must supersede the special claims and sovereign prerogatives of individual nation. An attendant feature of our history, which surely intensifies our perplexity is that the age of nationalism is dying in the very moment of the long delayed awakening of emergent peoples to their manifest destiny. In such a time and I say it with utmost soberness, it is hardly distinguished leadership I think in world affairs, for the land of the free and the home of the brave recurrently to be sitting, and to be found in the posture of sitting on the lid. Self-maintenance is not enough, it never was. It is tragically inadequate, and it contradicts our own inner history. And the students rightly perceive it. For many therefore it is a matter of deep gratitude that October 4th just past, Pope Paul VI the spiritual leader of 500 million Roman Catholic Christians around the world. Spectacularly through the ways of his great moral authority behind the United nations, he channel challenged the assembled representatives of over 100 countries to fulfill the manifest obligation of the world organization, to assure peace for the nation, by becoming the vehicle and instrument of enlarging mutual assistance, mutual understanding, and world order. The Pope's moral challenge was a clear voice, submits the clamor of claims and counterclaims. It was a summons to the United nations, to fulfill its mission, and to be an inspiring light amidst our globe, but the Pope's mission and message was also in the broadest sense, a daring ecumenical venture. Its aim as John K Jessup wrote last week, in "Life" magazine, was not just to expand Christendom, but to link Christendom with mankind. This is surely an extension of the ecumenical thrust of the current Catholic reformation. It was John the XXIII, who in the greatness of his Christian charity, viewed as did John Wesley, the whole world as (indistinct). Ecumenism is not just Christian unity or aspiration after it, it is the community of mankind under God. It's political and humanitarian counterpart. You can find if you will look engraved on stone near the entrance of this campus, the words read "above all nations is humanity." At a minimum this is what Paul VI meant to affirm in New York. Jessup is right, the Pope spoke for the nascent sense of oneness of the human nation. So divided still, but so obviously interdependent that mankind must have a common destiny or none at all. It is the vision of the one human nation, that the United nations must surely struggle tirelessly to establish, in the abiding structures of international order. As in fact, this one human nation exists already in the divine plan of the world. Plus I think it was the Pope's message an ecumenism of the world, not just to please the acoustical ecumenism, but the reunion of mankind under the fatherhood of God, this is his

concern. And I think nothing is plainer than that the principle instrument of this reunion, faulty and fallible as it is, is the United Nation. Thus, that cardno was not quite wrong, nor simply whimsical, who commented that the Pope practically canonized, the United nations. We need to recover we Protestants. The understanding that so-called secular powers are not separable from the divine purpose, even if they suppose they are by definition or if they presume so to be. We need to understand that the work of God is not alone the work of his church. In New York I think I perceive a magnificent new venture on the part of Roman Catholicism. The Pope's visit was a profound effort to align the church with the world, and the agonized, but common search for the one humane world, the world of our common humanity under God. So I see behind the papal visit to the United Nations, a far more magnificent risk, that I believe John K Jessup quite takes note of in last week's "Life" magazine. There was really, but a small risk, in calling for the vote of the Vatican council on religious Liberty, September 21st, among many observers of the council. I stated months ago that when the vote was finally taken, the declaration would be overwhelmingly adopted, it was 10 to one. Nevertheless, it is true that Paul VI could not usefully carry his message to the United Nations on the unity of mankind. While the issue of religious Liberty remained publicly unsettled in the council. So he called for the vote, and broke through the foot dragging of the powerful minority. Perhaps, just perhaps, you do not fully comprehend yet that on that day of September 21st, in the year of our Lord, 1965, a very ancient order of things, at least in principle passed away. In principle, the era of Constantine over 1600 years of it passed away. It was the era of the official establishment of the Christian religion. The declaration of religious Liberty is in principle disestablished, and with it, the largest segment of Christendom, ventured forth into the unknown future of ultimate risk, supported hence forth only by faith in the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it's truth and capacity to win its own way. This is the magnificent risk, which a minority of Catholic bishops made every possible effort to avoid and debate. But this ultimate risk Paul VI forced, and the council over an overwhelmingly approved. It was I think, the most powerful blow, at the policy of institutional self-maintenance, which has been struck since Luther's reformation in Germany. And it is it's legitimate successful. We Protestants in America, who since 1620, and 1791, have been accustomed to disestablishment of religion, do not easily comprehend the contrary European tradition, which survives today in diverse forms and modes in very different places. Hardly also do we Protestants understand that Liberty of worship, according to the dictates of conscience was not in principle conceited by the greater part of Christendom, until September 21st just past. This is true, however, axiomatic it is that the Pilgrim fathers cross the trackless sea to enjoy and vindicate that right more than 400 years ago. What then is affirmed in the declaration on religious Liberty? It is I think, just about what Luther acted upon and championed, namely the Liberty of the Christian man. This is Liberty from all cohesion and freedom to be answerable, to raise an unconscious law in this judge of religious duties and commit convictions. It is the Liberty to be responsible to God only. It is however, the Liberty of responsibility. It is not to remember Saint Paul, the Liberty of license. This Liberty says the declaration is grounded upon human dignity, as this dignity is known both by reason and by the revealed Word of God. And since this Liberty is grounded upon human dignity, it is not confined to the Christian man at all. In point of truth it belongs to man as such, whatever his religion. For he is man under God. It was this standpoint too, that had to be secured by the declaration of the council, before Paul VI could carry his message of universal peace to the nations. For with this standpoint has been banished once for all, the age old presumption of all political, and ecclesiastical absolutisms namely this, that possession of presumed truth or presumed possession of the truth also gives the right to enforce the presumed truth upon others. With this insidious claim and

presumption, modern political totalitarianism of every kind, has despoiled man's dignity in our generation, by obliterating his freedom and suppressing his conscience, in declaring for the inviolable right of all man, to discharge the obligations of conscience, according to the dictate of conscience under God. The Catholic church is finely and decisively relinquish the claims historically inherent an established religion. It has done so at least in principle. In this advocacy of right, may be seen I believe that a refreshing reaffirmation of the dignity of our, of man, of the light of reason, and of the probity of the human conscience under God. With such a declaration of rights and therefore the dignity of man, Paul VI in an unprecedented way, had his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. He could now speak peace unto the nations, but at what magnificent risk to cease and desist from all that in European history, was almost taken for granted as the right of established religion. Is this not indeed bringing the church up to date in the modern world? Now many things may be said concerning the declaration on religious Liberty, we shall be hearing them and of them, for many years, as the meaning and the import unfolds in life and action. One or two implications I can mention in closing. First, it seems to me that the Catholic church has in the declaration, invited modern man, to take a loftier view of his own nature. It has addressed the spirited modern man, often profoundly distrustful about his nature and his destiny, where the word of faith, of hope, and of cheer. It has called him to repossess and reaffirm his God given dignity. It has itself affirm confidence in man, not an ingenious toolmaker, but man as the image of God. Lastly it is not, self-determining autonomous man that is reaffirmed here in the declaration. Not man who makes the law for himself and who in the end knows no law, but himself. It is quite another man. It is a man under God. Under higher command made responsible by the notices of conscience, in the measure that he hears them. Without attention to such notices or heedless of them, modern men have progressively lost a sense of their own identity, and they are with the meaningfulness of their own existence. But secondly, when men reaffirmed their dignity by accepting responsibility, in conscientious action, they also reaffirm, reliable and trustworthy community among themselves. Freedom under God is the basis of honest and abiding community. And Christians think there is no other. So indeed with the declaration adopted, Paul VI could speak peace unto the nations for peace and (indistinct) where men mutually accept responsibility for one another under responsibility to God. Its basis is a mutual acknowledgement of a higher obedience. And the declaration therefore invites all man to accept this obedience, as their human calling. It is a magnificent risk and on September 21st 1965, the Catholic church revised after centuries, it's answer to the question of Peter and John, which was, whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye. On that day, September 21, the second Vatican council accepted the answer of Luther, unless I am vastly mistaken. A man is ultimately responsible, and answerable only to God, in so far as he is conscientiously engaged in dialogue with God. This is a magnificent risk, but it is the risk of Christianity itself. Amen. Let us pray. (coughs) oh God, receive these frail words, forgive where they may fail in truth. And in thy wisdom, make us wise, unto the wisdom which is in Christ our Lord. Now, unto God's gracious care I commit you. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.