

VIOLENCE, THE “JUST” WAR AND THE PEACE OF CHRIST

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Everyday experience testifies of the interaction between the sinful and the world. This interaction occurs in two ways: from the sinful man who lives in the world toward it and from the world toward the sinful. This theme is very important for the moral theology on the one hand and to the pastoral dimension of the sin on the other. Of course, today there are a lot of very delicate issues the Christian conscience is being confronted with, which can be seen when our life is facing the evil's complex aspects.

Violence is not creative; it is only an illusion of force, a caricature of action. Its fake dynamism is more like an appetite for destruction rather than conquest, a desire for constraint rather than for possession.

Lucien Herr said violence is “the hate for all that is different”. Hate is right in the center of the violence and defines it. Evil is refusal, evil is sin, and evil is rupture. “The evil springs from the liberty bad use and has a transcendent nature. This is why it is not limited to everyday life’s concrete situations, nor does it maintain its exact aspects, but creates, in a very discrete manner, new situations and is disguised as an angel of light (angelon fotos)(II Cor. 11, 14). But not even the good itself stands permanently and totally at the real life level. At this level good is present only sporadically”.

Violence is heresy: it denies or breaks fruitful communication; denies or destroys the communication between men and God. The great Apostle Peter urges the Romans through the words: *Cooperatores Dei Summus*. The healthy condition, the real and strong condition is the person and God working with it in a creative and complete way. The Christians are called upon to accomplish the communion

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and the peace in The Holy Spirit first. The unity as an inner state, as an inner reality and as an ecclesiastic being represents the most important element of the spiritual life. Without this it is not possible to accomplish the communion and the peace in The Holy Spirit and among men. Of course, God's Holy Spirit lays everywhere and does not run from man to man; it is above the material dimension (topika). The one who sins puts a huge distance between him and The Holy Spirit in an existential way (tropika).

Violence breaks communication. It is very subtle when it is embellished with justifications and generosities. It moves forward under the mask of sacrifice and purity. It is a blend of "virtues" and hidden compensations, where the evil aspires. In the depths of "those beauties" we find hybrids. Violence, through the gap it creates between men and the world, which fosters two types of reasons: a rigid one, which generates lots of ideas, a twisted and closed one; the other one, humble and righteous. The core of violence is made of the close solidarity between the rigid reason and the rigid attitude. There is a violence of the idealism, having a twisted mind, which appreciates people only as deposits of ideas and for their ability to create.

The calm dementia of the religious fanatic replaces the personal, living God. The living man is hated since the moment when they start to worship the "principles" instead of persons, both divine and human. Christ's freedom is neither arbitrary nor despotic, but the unlimited completion in love and truth.

War

Centuries ago, Heraclit said that war is "everybody's father". This statement, with little aspects and variations, still influences our today's mentality.

Some people notice that peace is just another aspect of war which is strongly connected to politics and economy. As opposed to this, for the Orthodox Church "everybody's father" (patir panton) is not war, but The God of Peace.

War occurs as a consequence of the distance man put between him and God, between himself and his neighbor. And because this distance, this alienation, with its triple aspects, is somehow general, war becomes a phenomenon that appears in all societies, from the most primitive to the most evolved and modern.

The triple separation, of the divine, the natural and the human creates disorder. War divides and this division penetrates the most intimate mechanisms generating "double conscience" which is at the same time both the cause and the effect of the violence.

So, war is a tragic journey of the man, the one who was created to live in the love of peace and dignity. This distance between man and God is in fact the distance between man and love and peace, it is an alienation from the fundament of

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life itself. When man is going away from God, its soul shrinks and sinks in deep unrest and destruction.

No violence can be reduced to the simple destruction satisfaction but all kind of violence contains it. The fanatic actions we are facing shrank and modified our world. No one has perceived the void so accutely as those who lived during the two World Wars. Soulless century, but aware. The nowadays man perceives how both old faces, half crumbled and contours of future ones float in its inner chambers. There is too little conscience to help us to remove the fear inside us. Terrorism expands, and with it fear expands too. People are suffering more because of the outside desert analyzed by the inside masks. We as far from ourselves as we are from the most distant stars, said Chesterton. We are lonely in our essence, said Rainer Maria Rilke.

We do not have to use force, nor constraint, or violence, said the Fathers of the Church. But, neither The New Testament nor the Fathers of the Church contested the state authority’s right to use force to maintain order and to protect the state security: “for it is The God’s servant for your own good. And if you are doing evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vane; for it is God’s servant and responsible in front of His anger upon those doing evil”.

Christ Himself also condemned, as we know, the use of the force, when He said: “Put your sword back in its scabbard, for those using the sword will die by the sword”. A real Christian, as a person, prefers to be killed rather than to kill, but as a citizen, obeys the state authority for conscience reasons. “This is why you need to obey, not only for anger, but for conscience”.

The believer cannot be unresponsive to the injustice around him. As Saint Ambrosius observes, talking about Moses’s example, the one who does not fight against injustice done to his neighbor is as sinful as the one who does it, that means he becomes accomplice through his silence, indifference, ignorance or omission. The Church never presented its teaching about “the just war”, because war has always had among its roots certain injustices, but it has been forced to resign, understanding the defense war as “a smaller evil”(elattoon kakon), in order to save what can still be saved.

Though, this smaller evil is so relative. Actually, there is no bigger sin than war, because it has ghastly consequences, with atrocities and crimes and blood sheds. War is the most absurd part of the history.

The nowadays “just war” problematic and ambiguity

The “just war” theory might be the interface of a system of political intentions concerning the world domination and planetary resources possession. The just war might be the secular imperialism “human face”. Thus, on January 27th

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2003, the US President G. W. Bush exposed the reasons to attack Iraq: Saddam Hussein's regime is inhuman to his own Iraqi population, it destabilizes the entire region, it already attacked two neighbor countries (i.e., Iran and Kuwait), it is one of Israel's enemies, it holds mass destruction weapons, and it certainly supports international terrorism.

The intervention was done and led by a "supreme legitimate authority" in order to reestablish the regional peace and stability, which is to be found through the democracy "infusion" in the Middle East. Apparently we have here all the just war "ingredients"; it might be enough that during the military operations we use proportional means to the objective and do not target noncombatant personnel and innocent civilians (to reduce "collateral damage" to a minimum).

The just war idea does not work by itself (it is forced) because the theory comes from the Christian Republic spiritual matrix, while the United States' political system is "perfectly neutral on this matter", even if the American society's religiousness is a constitutive reality.

"The return to the just war doctrine general context is in fact the one of the end of the European citizens' right", whose basic characteristic is "to recognize the enemy as a legitimate one, because the instrument enemies were using, the war, was considered as a normal instrument to solve the disputes".

The European relations' primary element was the state sovereignty: the state was the prominent political entity comprising the territory and applying the principle described by Max Weber as "the legitimate violence monopoly". The just war idea in the nowadays modern context generates problems because it rises questions to the international law and the international courts beyond the states' frontiers. The interference of an authority inside of a sovereign state might be justified by "humanitarian reasons". But the national sovereignty principle disrespects by the international community often comes from the lack of national authority in those territories. The countries in which the political authority is contested and which are about to create anarchy or civil war are named "declassified states" or states in collapse, thus justifying the outside intervention. This is the international intervention paradox of a "legitimate supreme authority": the intervention is legitimated by the absence of the state under outside aggression "declassified state" and the international court is meant to judge the crimes done by the state clerks and the members of a system whose unrecognition caused the foreign intervention.

Michael Walzer wrote that "the war limitation is the beginning of peace". This statement is the just war doctrine's very core, in which the theological justification regards both the use and the limitation of the force. Thomas Aquinas stated the three conditions for the just war to exist:

1. it has to be decided by a legitimate authority;

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2. it has to have a right cause (the evil must be punished in the name of God);

3. it has to be declared with a just intention.

In our modern age, “the right cause” is not linked anymore to the Western Church authority but is replaced by the states’ equal sovereignty.

The war became a limited business through the strong connection between sovereignty and territories – the legitimate authority holds the legitimate violence use monopoly.

The European citizens’ juridical right comprised the enemy recognition as a legitimate enemy, the states’ juridical relations were regulated through war, but each state inside its boundaries use the legitimate violence monopoly in order to maintain the political order and authority.

The Gulf War (1990 - 1991) was considered “just” because the coalition force had been endorsed by the UN and the invasion was regarded as a response to the Iraqi international law violation when it invaded Kuwait. The 1999 NATO intervention in Kosovo did not have the UN mandate, but was subsequently considered as legitimate due to the presupposed human rights violations displayed by the media. “This intervention generated a precedent and an argument in favor of the humanitarian war – presented somehow similar to a crusade”, wrote Stephen Launay, although “the crusade” war against the Serbian orthodox population and their desire to defend their history and territory – their civilization’s cradle – and favored the muslim population, creating an international terrorism nursery in the heart of Europe. The US is practicing a kind of a “missionary idealism”, by justifying their offensive strategy in the Middle East by the democracy distribution. “Democracy” is the new “crusade” goddess, and in her name one can do everything: the old attempts to free Jerusalem from the muslim occupation were replaced by the American sovereignty “export” beyond the American boundaries, in the name of “humanism”.

UN experts have said however that the Kosovo region remains a hotbed of tension and inter-ethnic hatred, and Iraq is facing a resurgence of anti-American and anti-Western violence. Humanitarian grounds are not confirmed. You cannot give the strategic and tactical errors the name of "humanitarian war".

It seems that "morality" is the exclusive privilege of the man with the gun, so he has the power to impose himself. Raymond Aron said that "in a world of armies, disarmed states cannot be among the history actors. And Zbigniew Brzezinski designated Europe as "an American protectorate." The idea of "just war" was dragged into the idea of "humanitarian war" and then to that of "preventive war" or "preventive strikes" against an alleged threat. The preventive

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war idea is part of the secularization of the just war doctrine and aims to loose the conscience of those firing the first shot in an armed conflict.

"One of the major principles contained in the Helsinki Final Act is the noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries. This principle was not respected either during the Cold War or afterwards. The current doctrine change is merely waiving hypocrisy in favor of justification worthier to be taken in consideration. The question of armed intervention within a particular state, even against the wishes of the Government of that State, with the stated purpose of preventing the spread of death and suffering within the population of the region, claimed the development of a doctrine "with human face".

Modern Pacifism and the peace of Christ

In "Justice, peace and the Creation integration" Gennadios Limouris says that without peace with God there can be no true peace among the people: "the salvation has two dimensions to the Christian: transcendence and immanence. Where there is no peace with God there can be no true peace with humanity. There can be no new humanity until there are no new people. Thus, the vertical dimension of Christianity may be described in terms of faith and prayer, Church and Sacraments, death and eternal life - as we already did. However, we cannot forget the horizontal dimension. We should unite with the people in their struggle to transform their lives and their research for justice, peace, disarmament and environmental health.

George Dragas says that in the Orthodox tradition there is no peace without justice: "It is clear that in the Orthodox tradition there is no peace without justice, also, that peace is a gift of unconditional love and mercy, even when suffering and innocent death are involved. Thus, such a sacrifice, suffering and death are leading to reconciliation, resurrection and eternal life. As before the cross precedes the resurrection or as the resurrection follows the cross, so the justice of unconditional offering and suffering precedes the actual establishment of peace or the real peace establishment precedes the unconditional offering or sacrifice."

The Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios said: "There is disorder and theaters of war, as we seek peace independently of its assumptions: love, truth, freedom and justice; these conditions are so essential to peace so that where they are present, true peace occurs by itself. So that peace can come to Earth, we, its inhabitants must learn righteousness."

Paul Tarazi provides grounds of biblical truth that "only God decides the peace" (Shalom) (Isaiah 26.12). In the Old Testament prophetic writings horizon is an obvious correlation between peace (Shalom), on the one hand, and fair trial (Mishpat), righteousness (Sedaqah) and truth (Emet), on the other. In this total

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parallelism, peace (Shalom) is the one that depends on the fair trial (Mishpat), and not vice versa. Thus, the righteousness effect will be peace and the justice outcome – the everlasting peace and confidence (Isaiah 32, 17). To the earthly king the Peace from above is offered but justice is claimed from the ground. Peace is guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus, which is the divine Eschatological act by excellence.

Serbian Orthodox bishops in the Memorandum on the situation of Kosovo reveal the flagrant breach of fairness and justice - to the detriment of the Orthodox Christian population, which is still persecuted and prepared for complete annihilation.

Kosovo (literally: "Blackbird Plain") is the cradle of Serbian civilization, the Serbs' Jerusalem. "Kosovo is for the Serbian people what Jerusalem is for the Jews. As Jerusalem, Kosovo is not only geography and demography. It is a question of identity: national, spiritual, christian, cultural, human to the Orthodox Christians related to the God the Man".

The Serbian Orthodox Church criticized the radical Serbian President Milosevic's arrogance and abuse of international politicians who decided on political configurations without taking into account the history of spiritual, cultural or national identity, crushing everything through the threat of an increasingly aggressive external pressure. The 1992 Memorandum rejected the international accusations of the Church compromise with communist states authorities and reaffirms the reality of the Serbian Jerusalem: "the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian people were never supporters of communism, nor of any other totalitarian ideology. The Serbian Church marks openly its distance toward the actual power and its rulers. We will remember all those who are in power, especially in Serbia, that no job is more important than the people's destiny and freedom and than our children's future. We remind equally to all the authorities in power in Serbia, in Europe and worldwide to respect the rights and responsibilities of all those living in Kosovo and Metochia. We ask that no solution be imposed under external pressure, but made as a genuine support for the democratic, human and fair order, such as to protect all the people and all peoples in this region, which is for the Serbian people, according to reason, spiritual, national and cultural significance, what Jerusalem is for the Hebrews."

In the Muslim Albanians' aggression condition, many Serbs have resorted, in despair, to the Islamization "of form": this terrifying compromise of apostasy brought into discussion the so-called „crypto-Serbs".

After burning the buildings of the Peci Patriarchate by the Albanians, 21 priests and monks have signed a "call to defend the Serbian people and holy places in Kosovo and Metochia." The "new Serbian Golgotha" study shows that the

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Washington Post investigation discovered that the CIA and NATO had worked with the Albanian KLA (Albanian Muslim militias) since April 1948.

The Serbian Orthodox Church condemned the violence of the Yugoslav population and armed forces in 1999, which led to the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Albanians. In these circumstances, the Visoki Deciani monastery housed 200 of Albanian women and children, distributing humanitarian aid throughout the Deciani region.

The Serbian attack only served to increase the Muslims' hatred. KFOR international forces aiding the Muslims led to the destruction of 112 Orthodox shrines by explosion and fire. The Color album of all such violations and barbarism of modern Muslim is named "Kosovo Crucified". The Serbian bishop Artemie's words won reputation when he said: "Even the churches that have survived over the 500 years of the Turkish yoke could not survive the 18 months of international peace".

The 2002 Church operation under the title: "Let us restore our sanctuaries through prayer" provoked new challenges from the Muslim terrorist.

The peace imposed by NATO is and remains questionable in this context.

The Christian peace is the peace that comes from above. The phrase "Peace comes from above" show that true peace is, in its depths, a gift that people receive from God, being united with Him and in Him by the heart's total conversion and by fulfilling His commandments. This inner and spiritual peace precedes any form of real and lasting peace.

One of the first texts of the Old Testament where the question of peace is raised is the book of Numbers (6, 26), a word from God to Moses, indicating how to bless the children of Israel: "may the Lord give His grace and bring peace to you!" It shows that peace is a gift and it comes first from God. Many passages of the New Testament confirm this. By showing Himself to the disciples, the risen Christ says "Peace be with you". Similarly, the Orthodox priest, during the most important moments of the Holy Liturgy, addresses the believers by saying: "Peace be unto you." The Kiss of peace symbols among the ministers (but only the Western liturgies keep this tradition for the congregation too) show that only in the sense of peace and mutual love is it possible to witness the common faith, and we approach "without unworthiness and costs" the sacrament of communion of the given flesh and blood shed by Christ for us all. This is a sacrament of peace, as St. John Chrysostom stresses.

Saint Paul begins his epistles by: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 1, 7: Cf. I Cor. 1, 3, Eph. 1, 2; I Thess. 1, 2, 1 Tim. 1.2, 2 Tim. 1, 2, Tit. 1, 4, Philip. 1.3; Filim. 3). The same Apostle also says: "And the Lord of Peace himself may give to you peace ... " (2 Thess. 3, 16).

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And St. John adds: "Grace, mercy and peace be with you, from God the Father ... in truth and love" (3 John 2).

As a gift from God, grace is a divine energy, an active divine quality that shines and communicates itself. The book of Judges said that God showed Himself to Gideon as "peace" and that Gideon built an altar to the Lord, which he called "The Lord is peace" (Province 6, 23-24). The prophet Micheiah specifically said: "He Himself will be peace" (Mich. 5, 4). Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, calls God the "God of peace" (1 Cor. 14, 33, 13 Col. 2, 11; 1 Thess. 5, 23, Heb. 13, 20).

This peace from above, coming from the Father, was sent to the home not only to the man, but to all beings created by God. Peace has a cosmological dimension. The Fathers of the Church unanimously describe the heavenly state as one in which man lives in peace with God, with himself, with neighbors and other creatures.

This Peace ended when Adam and Eve sinned: evading voluntarily the communion with God, they deprived themselves of the grace which they had received from Him, and, as a consequence, of the peace that was one of the forms that guaranteed it.

According to the Fathers of the Church, the first human sin consisted in his desire for self-deify, in his temptation to become God himself, outside of God and without God, after he was called to share the divine life in God and by His grace through the love and free fulfillment of His will.

Adam substituted God's love with the love for himself. This love, selfish and nihilistic, which the Greek Fathers, as Evagrius Ponticus, Theodore of Edessa, and St. John of Damascus describes as "worthy of universal hatred", brings the state of war in the real world. Man suddenly becomes the enemy of God, of himself, his neighbor and other creatures of creation; this state is manifested in various forms of opposition and division.

From the fundamental opposition established between man and God results the fact that man finds himself split in his inner side, his faculties, which were previously dictated by God and united with Him, knowing thus disharmony, disorder, agitation and opposition.

Arising from the separation from God, human opposition occurs, because they no longer take themselves into account by their unity in God. The original sexual polarity, which finds its harmony in complementarity, becomes division and opposition between the sexes.

Selfish love for the self, says Saint Maximus the Martyr, is the origin of "the division which currently reigns in nature"; it is what mislead us to go away from God and from others, it is the one who "brutalized our nature and essentially divided our unique humanity into several and antagonistic parts and, naturally,

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destructive ". From this essential passion, say the Fathers of the Church, all the rivalries come: envy, jealousy, feud, enmity, strife, injustice, exploitation of other, crimes, and, as Clement of Alexandria emphasized, wars too.

Along with self-love, Saint Maximus places other two passions, which he considers as serious as all others and sources for the others: ignorance and tyranny.

Ignorance is a source of divisions as a great ally of self-love, which is for man to ignore God and himself (i.e., his nature and spiritual vocation), his neighbor, in the spiritual reality of the image of God and His Son, by divine lineage.

Concerning tyranny, which St. Gregory of Nazianz calls "the love of power" (Philarhia), and St. Isaac the Syrian calls "the love to command", it is not just the passion of those who have power and use it in a despotic way, nor a perversion of those whom authority has been given to; it is a fundamental passion residing in the fallen man and which he tends to manifest in all his relations with others, at any level or in all his areas of activity i.e., marriage, family, professional or social), translated by a tendency to manage, govern or dominate his neighbor, to have authority over him or to impose his will on him.

The History of Israel, as the Old Testament tells us, appears as a continuous alternation of wars and precarious peace, God establishing an alliance with His people which the people did not keep for long. The prophets deplore the misery of humanity, striving always to report mankind to God. But the people not only show themselves infidels: they are completely mutilated from the original sin. The prophets, found the Fathers of the Church, all fail when trying to remove humanity from the state to enslaving sinfulness, and they ask for the God's help, who alone can cure the disease so severe they are suffering from.

Thus God sent His Son to remove the barrier that sin has established between mankind and God. At the same time, God and man, the Word made flesh has reunited in His person the humanity with God. He suppressed by His divine power, in the human nature which He assumed, the deviations humanity experienced due to the original sin, and restores its original state; he removes the devil, sin and lethal power, overcoming all temptations and weaknesses, through His death and through resurrection, He puts us again into the possession of life that comes from God. The Resurrection and salvation of the Incarnate Word are considered by the Fathers of the Church, following the Apostle Paul, as a work of pacification, in the highest meaning of the word. In fact, Christ, through His baptism, His victorious struggle against the temptations, His sufferings and passions, by His death on the Cross and His resurrection, reconciled us with God, with ourselves and with our fellows. Saint Paul writes in his epistle to the Ephesians (2, 13-14): "Now that you are in Jesus Christ, you who once were away,

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you have come near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, He who has made the two-one, demolishing the wall in between.”

Therefore, peace, like all other divine gifts that God calls us to partake, can be acquired only with the price of constant effort, by which we strive to conform to God in the practice of His precepts, which makes the psalmist say "Great is the peace of those who love Your law" (Ps. 118, 165). In his turn, the Apostle Paul says: "... peace is the good of everyone" (Rom. 2, 10).

This effort, this uninterrupted asceticism, which is the fulfillment of God's commandments, takes the shape of a struggle against passions, actually intended to "kill" the old man, and has as corollary to live by the virtues which characterize the new man in Christ. Through this new ethos, man becomes personally and freely Christ's follower, dying with Him to rise and live again with Him.

Man knows no peace, the Fathers of the Church teach us, unless by his own effort he works together with the grace and removes all passions from living in fallen nature. He must, in order to obtain peace, first defeat passions, which are particularly generating opposition and division, all forms of aggression directed against his neighbor, vanity, arrogance and tyranny.

But because passions are linked among them, we cannot really find peace if we have not defeat them all.

To conquer this peace and all other good things coming along, one must invest in its struggle all his aggression instead of using it against his neighbor. This internal spiritual struggle against invisible evil powers, temptation, passion, is what the Apostle Paul called "the good fight" (Titus 1. 1, 18, 6, 12, 2 Titus. 4, 7). This violence is Recommended by Christ, when He teaches us: "... the kingdom of heaven is taken by those who struggle and try to put their hands on it" (Matt. 11, 12).

Peace is closely related to the possession of virtues. It is certainly related, first, to the virtues opposed to the passions that stir up division and opposition: the possession of material goods, pleasure and, above all, humility and compassion, and, among various forms of compassion, love of enemies, so hard to achieve. But in reality, because all the virtues are interconnected, peace can not be fully achieved only if they are all present. Thus, St. Nicholas Cabasilas writes: "Since word righteousness, in the Gospel, is not only fair compensation, but all kinds of virtue, so the word peace is something universal: it is the fruit of all virtues, but also of spiritual wisdom. For he that is devoid of any virtue cannot have a perfect peace, but who wants to have that peace must be achieved through all the virtues".

At the individual level, the peace perceived by the wisdom of this world is a state more or less profound and more or less stable in its inner calmness, often based on mere inactivity of the faculty, which is a kind of sleep or even a kind of

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psychological death; such a state of mind is not a proof of spiritual change, leaving to subsist deep in your heart the passions opposed to true peace. At the community level, the peace conceived by the world is a peace which manages the relations between people in a purely external way, seeking to establish according to the exclusive human means; it is rather the absence of external anxieties than peace. At the political level, history allows us to find how many of such peaces have been false or not, based on the dominance of one power over another, on the agreements of several States against another or intimidation, fear or political compromises, where mutual interests, often sordid, are at stake. Any peace established in these conditions can only be unstable and misleading because it remains based on human passions and weakness, often the same involved in rivalries and wars. This peace, and also those that based on the false wisdom of this world or on the spiritual indifference to oneself and others, are rejected by Christ when He says: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth" (Matt. 5, 34).

A genuine peace between people in any field can only occur and spring from the spiritual peace of the Gospel, which calls each person to acquire it, and it requires renunciation of all passions each attached to it and separates itself from God and our neighbor. Such a peace invites us to achieve Christ, when He says: "Blessed are the peacemakers, because those will be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).

Today's world, decision makers and "great" international political and military actors must be aware that in order to find peace among us, we must find it first in ourselves, and for that we have to discover it in, and by, God.

Once we have received it, we will be able, through mercy and love, to shine in peace, as in any virtue, and to communicate it to, and share it with, others. After we have become our own pacifists, can we be pacifists for those around us.

The Orthodox spirituality is the communion with the One God in Three Persons. The Trinity Love is the source, the example and the model of any peace and any human communion. The Orthodox spirituality calls us to a spiritual battle: the fight, in the mysterious synergy of the divine grace with the human will which opens towards it - the struggle against selfish impulses, against "passions" that destroy the inner peace and the world peace. Through the people becoming, after long and hard asceticism, beings of peace and reconciliation, the peace received from God can shine in the world. "Gain peace and thousands around you will receive it," teaches us St. Seraphim of Sarov, a great spiritual father of the 19th century. If each of us tried to acquire that inner peace, the entire world, by beneficent contamination, would know "the peace that comes from above".

Therefore, by converting to God's will and purifying ourselves in order to be worthy of receiving His grace, will we find unity in God, the unity and the peace

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we are striving for, and will we fulfill the commandments of Christ: "... live in peace with one another "(Mark 9, 50).

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