

MESSAGE OF HIS GRACE BISHOP NAJARIAN
AT THE PRAYER FOR PEACE
Saturday 1 December 2018



“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news...” (Isaiah 52:7)

The word peace in Western civilization Greek Eirini, in Latin Pax, Russian Mir, Hebrew- Shalom, wholeness or completeness
Arabic Salem, Dare el Salam, abode of peace, to live in harmony in peace within society
Chinese -Heping
Japanese- Heiwa
Aboriginal Olkola-Erray
Pintupi-Luritja- Yatanpa
Wagiman- Nyimbur-ma
Walpiri- Iawa-nyinami
In Armenian-Khaghaghutyun

The word peace is not a mere philosophical, abstract concept or a term but rather a status, a yearning which overpasses the individual, transcends countries, borders, religions and all limitations. It encompasses the whole universe.

For the believer it's a spiritual feeling in this world, or in the other where by the soul is touched or united mysteriously by the divine where there is only happiness and contentment, as if one has returned home leaving behind all earthly pains and worries. It's sheer happiness and contentment. Peace means tranquillity, harmony the opposite being turmoil, war, havoc and destruction.

**“Wolves and sheep will live together in peace,
and leopards will lie down with young goats.
Calves and lion cubs will feed together,
and little children will take care of them” (Isaiah 11: 6-7)**

In an ideal world, or for some, in paradise the prophet sees the possibility for domestic, kind animals to coexist side by side with ferocious and wild beasts. It is the description of peace in par excellence.

There is no religion or a culture which has no thoughts or paths to peace, however though peace is universal and necessary for the world to exist in well-defined fashion however, it does not dwell in the heart of every and each individual; as the psalmist discovered centuries ago" **Too long have I had my dwelling among those who hate peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war.**" (Psalm 120:6-7).

If for the animals who act without reasoning but with necessity, there is a hope for eventual harmony and peace, how about the cognate human being?

In those days **"They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more"** (Isaiah 2:4b-5)

More than 2.500 years have passed from the days when these words were uttered, are we any closer to this ideal period? Looking only to the past 21st century, one can say, hardly!

The 21st century started with the mother of all wars where millions upon millions of soldiers were killed in battles in Europe and the Middle East. Most of Europe was in ruins, millions of civilians died of hunger, starvation and epidemics all over the world. On the sidelines of the war there were the genocides of the Armenians, Syrian and the Pontic Greeks. Ever again the said...**Never again**, they said, but after some 25 years they unveiled the Second World War from Japan to South East Asia and

Hawaii, from the Urals to the Caucasus, North Africa and all over Europe with new ferocity and tenacity just to kill and destroy and annihilate the **other**.

There was the Holocaust of the Jews where in a methodology of unheard cruelty people were tortured and put to death. Never again they said...

The ushering of the atomic bomb at the end of this war brought certain restraint in the arena. However the destructive forces were not idle, there were new weapons to be created, tested and sold so ideological differences were manipulated to start the new proxy wars from Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Middle East Arab-Israeli wars etc.

In more recent years the motto is to establish democracy in countries run by dictators like Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria etc. Hundreds of thousands of people killed, wounded, starved, dislocated from their homes and scattered as refugees to the four corners of the world, their countries in utter ruins and still the promised Democracy has to show his face. Ethnic differences been manipulated like Kurds and Arabs or religious sectarianism Sunnis against Shiites and Alawites, human injustice has given birth to extremism which has led to the birth of terrorist groups like Al Qaida, ISIS, Al Shabab and others, who have brought the level of torture, mass killings and destruction to new levels.

It was thought that genocide, ethnic cleansing, annihilation of the other was something of the past. Alas, the near past events starting from Cambodia to the Tutsis in Rwanda, to the Yezidis in Iraq and the Rohingyas in Myanmar. When will we learn to see **in the other**, a brother or sister a friend not an enemy or threat, to be rejected and utterly destroyed? Even the wild beasts do not show such extreme behaviour to their own kind, what has happened to our humanity? Supposedly we are higher creatures than the animals...

The further we move to the future the more weapons are produced with more power of destruction and more accuracy. Soon wars will be conducted by missiles, drones, guided tanks with no direct human participation, is this going to be accepted as more civilized war, just the push of a button... isn't the result destruction and mass killings on unimaginable proportion?

In the past we have created boundaries between us and the **others**, we have established countries equipping us with laws and myths that we are civilised, the others are barbarians, gentiles, infidels, black, yellow etc, just to look for an excuse to reject the **others**, so they can be killed, plundered, destroyed with no consequences.

Are we different today? Is there hope for humanity? Can personal or collective peace be achieved? For us as people of faith we must find common ground together for the salvation of humanity, the alternative is destruction through faithless tyrants and dictators like Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and others.

Obviously there is hope if we look up to the examples of people like Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa. Follow them teach the next generation of the values they demonstrated, as fundamental principles for humanity.

We live in a cosmopolitan society where people share, coke, pizza, hamburgers, jeans and the gadgets, laptops, iPhones, iPods, one can hardly keep up with the names of the new comers. This is the fast moving and evolving society. In this fast communication society people hardly talk to one another, share views and experiences, so do we know our neighbour next door? Hardly, and if they are of different race or religion then boundaries are drawn, they are treated as the **others**, who cannot be trusted, they are dangerous, so the contact must be bear minimum!

We the people of faith, if we also behave in this manner, our faith will fail us and it will not benefit the society we live in. The walls of separation must come down, the mistrust to disappear and only then in the **other** we will see one of us, a brother a sister or a friend, only then personal or collective peace can be achieved, only then harmony and tranquillity can be established in the Universe.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace. It can be mine feet and yours. So, let's greet one another with peace in our own languages in its universal notion!

