

Reflections

Father Nicolas Schwizer

50 – January 1, 2009

To Strive for Peace

The Church begins the year celebrating the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. In this way, she wants to place us, at the beginning of this year, under the protection of She who is Mother, not only of God, but also of us all. In addition, today's Christian world celebrates the Journey of Peace which was instituted by Pope Paul VI.

Today, the Pope invites us all to pray and to strive for peace. We all desire peace, especially at the beginning of the year.

To build peace, one must strive. Only in Heaven will we possess the peace of Christ forever. On earth, it is necessary to build it and to conquer it at every moment. To do this, there must be a struggle.

Christ is the "Prince of peace," as was announced by the prophet Isaiah, but He is also a sign of contradiction because the peace He brings is based on love, and it contradicts our egotism. Therefore, without a struggle, there is no victory over egotism, nor love, nor peace of Christ.

God's peace is not the peace of the sepulcher, rather, it is a living peace, the fruit of many searches, of many efforts, and of many tensions.

We should not fear the tensions between brothers and sisters. We should build peace among everyone and this supposes tensions necessarily. There will be tensions because each one has to make a different peace offering in his/her country. It is difficult to recognize the limits of our own contribution and the necessity of the contribution of others.

Only Christ is the "Prince of peace." In the hearts of everyone else – of each man/woman, each group, of each class or party – there is egotism and lack of love. We cannot divide the world between the good and the bad, between the peaceful and the oppressors: we all have a little bit of everything.

Perhaps I am oppressed in the factory or in the office, but perhaps I too also oppress my relatives or the minority in my group.

Perhaps the one I call an oppressor is likewise oppressed by those who are stronger. We all have to conquer the germ of oppression which each one of us carries within.

For that reason, there is no true peace if it is not conquered by all. Order can be imposed, peace cannot: it must come forth from the bottom of the heart, from the desire for mutual respect and from collaboration with others.

Peace must be built with the tools of peace. Christ prescribes only one: love. But a love like His which rejects all forms of hate, also rejects hate for the enemy. It is a love like Mary's love which forgave those who killed her Son.

Before the impatience for achieving a society in which we can live united by a true brotherly peace, there are those who can be tempted to accelerate this peace and forget love. A Christian can never do this. A Christian can never preach hate. Hate leads to the death of the other, and what we want is not death, but reconciliation, forgiveness, and the conversion of the one who shuts out love. No one is converted if he is killed, suppressed, and marginalized.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us ask the Blessed Virgin that she manifests herself to all of us as the Queen of Peace. May she overcome all hatred, rancor, violence and desires for vengeance in our hearts.

And may She in this new year, help us to build a better world and help us to struggle to convert it into a land of peace. May She help us to build that peace together, according to the historical project which God has for each one of us.

Questions for reflection

1. Do I help to build peace in:
my family,
my place of work, my place of study
my neighborhood, my parish?

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Translation: Carlos Cantú Family Federation La Feria, Texas USA 122008