

True Peace is the Way of the Cross (Abbot Tryphon)

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In an age that seems to be forever witnessing wars between nations, and civil wars within nations, peace seems to be something that is about as possible as the alchemy that would turn metal into gold. Peacemakers struggle to find peaceful solutions for the conflicts between nations, political parties, religions, neighbors, and even within families. Peace is something we all hope for, but never seem to see in our lifetime. When peace comes to one part of the world, war breaks out in another part of the world. War seems to always have the upper hand, while peace seems only the dream of pacifists, dreamers, and poets.

In the nineteen-sixties, many had hoped peace was about to reign in our world, for pop philosophers and hippies thought they were ushering in a new age. In preparation for this Age of Aquarius, young people grew their hair long, wore flowers in their hair, and embraced a lifestyle that was to last forever. The musical *Hair* even touted the ideal, and a whole generation «tuned in, turned on, and

dropped out».

When the Soviet Union imploded, and with it we saw the end of the Cold War, many believed war would be no more. The West no longer had as an enemy, the Soviet Union. It didn't take long for all to realize peace was still beyond our grasp, and wars between nations and peoples was to continue. We were no longer at war with Communism, but with Islam, or other ideologies. So, peacemakers still struggle for the cause of peace, but on different fronts.

Peace is that evasive goal that still strikes hope in the hearts of men, however improbable its attainment may seem. We Christians have always had the acquisition of peace as a central theme in corporate prayers. The Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom has petitions for peace throughout, and the first three litanies are petitions for peace. The priest even prays for «an angel of peace, and a guardian of our souls». An Angel of Peace was assigned as our personal guardian angel, at the moment of our baptism.

Peace is such a central theme in the life of the Church that nineteenth century Russian Saint Seraphim of Sarov said, «Acquire peace and a thousand around you will be saved». The personal acquisition of peace begins with repentance, that moment in time when we have a change of mind, and decide to follow the path to wholeness.

Peace is not just an idea, but an active force for change. When we pray in the Liturgy for «peace for the whole world», we are praying not just for this world, but for the entire cosmos. We are praying for peace for people, peace for animals, peace for plants and rocks, peace for the sun and moon and stars. When praying for peace we realize that peace is a gift of grace from heaven, and this peace is beyond comprehension, for it is the peace of Christ. It is «the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7)».

True peace is bound up in the sacrificial offering of Christ on the cross. Peace is interdependent with sacrifice. The services of the Church bring us into the atmosphere of peace, for this peace comes from God. Peace can enter the world only if it takes root in the hearts of humans, and this peace requires sacrifice. The transformation of the cosmos begins with you. Peace enters the universe when it takes root in your heart.

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