

**“Pursue Peace with All People”**  
(Hebrews 12:14)

18/10/2020

**“Acquire the Spirit of Peace and a thousand souls around you will be saved.”**  
(Saint Seraphim of Sarov)

These words of St. Seraphim of Sarov point to what we talked about in our previous homily. When a faithful person acquires first an inner peace in their heart, then they will also help many other people find their own peace as well. As we all know, in a world afflicted with various problems, the only hope to find serenity of the soul is in Christ, the *“Ruler of Peace.”* This includes being around those who have found their own peace by being united with Him.

It is particularly significant that in His Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12), the Lord included among the nine groups of people He called “Blessed” (meaning happy and fortunate) those who bring peace to others: *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”* (verse 9).

We have to start with the admission that being at peace with other people is not easy. This becomes even more obvious when we realize that spouses, siblings, relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors, fellow citizens and others dear to us can become estranged. We know of such situations in our daily lives, where people in our families or society turn away from each other.

What is the reason for all of this, where the absence of peace and harmony make people desire separation? St. James, the Brother of Jesus, in his Epistle poses the question and gives the answer: *“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasures that are in war inside you?”* (James 4:1). Human passions are the cause. These are the passions which, when they enter someone’s heart, take away their peace and the peace of others. We have no doubt noticed in our own experience the effects of the ego. If a person feels that their ego has been bruised by a spoken word, or imagine that someone has neglected or belittled them, then they may very well decide to have nothing to do with the person they think is responsible. As we know, a major thorn that causes intense pain in human relationships is jealousy. It is sad that, because of sometimes insignificant reasons, we forfeit such a priceless gift, like peace!

The question then becomes: When someone is bound up by such feelings, how can I have a peaceful relationship with them?

We must confess that there are no simple answers. It is not on us to change someone else’s behavior, if they are not willing to change. We are only in charge of ourselves, and it is our own behavior that can be changed, aligning it with God’s will, by His grace. But there is something that we can do for someone else. The first thing (when we notice someone alienated from us), is to reflect on our own actions. Was there something that we said or did that caused this person to act this way towards us? If the answer is yes, then we must sincerely ask for their forgiveness, and make amends for any pain we may have willingly or carelessly caused. St. Paul the Apostle gives us this advice: *“As much as depends on you, live peacefully with all men”* (Romans 12:18). If it is a serious problem, let us do everything possible (with prayer, humility, and patience) to try and

reestablish peace, even if it means some sacrifices on our part. The word of the Lord and experience proves that doing so will bring many blessings from God. There have been people who have endured injustices at the hands of others for the sake of peace, and God has rewarded them in various ways afterwards. We also know cases of people who suffered for years due to the hard and inhumane behavior of their spouses. But with God's help, the marriage was saved, with the harsh spouse completely changing their behavior. The result of this being a long, peaceful, happy, and harmonious life.

What if the other person is not open to accepting our peace offering? In this case, the Lord says to us: "*take with you one or two more*" (Matthew 18:16) and keep trying. If they do not listen to them, and they are a member of the Church with a spiritual father, then ask the priest to mediate so that this person may be free from the enmity that he or she has against you. In other words, let us do everything we can to bring peace between ourselves and the other person. If, in spite of all of our efforts, they declare that they want nothing to do with us, then the only thing left to us is to warmly pray for the salvation of their soul, and anything else that God may enlighten us to do. Most importantly, we should do this with no trace of hostility against this person, but act only with sincere love.

Certainly, a serious topic like this cannot be fully covered in this limited space and time. What we have said is a general treatment on the subject of peace between people, in order to point us in the right direction. In any case, we have to try and maintain our peace with God, peace with ourselves, and to seek, as much as it depends upon us, to be at peace with other people. This is especially true of our relatives and friends.

If we extend our efforts of maintaining peace also to other people that we know are in conflict with each other, then, the Lord said, we become worthy of the highest honor of being called "*sons of God*" (Matthew 5:9). Gaining this peace in our hearts and peaceful relations with all is worthy of every trial, every struggle, and every sacrifice. It is in this way that we will become worthy to see the Face of God, and joyfully be with Him forever. Amen.