

"PEACE, FEAR NOT"

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UR MINDS AT CHRISTMAS—how rich they have been made by the thought of Christ's birth, long ago. The soul's bright galleries are splendid with representations of a little Babe, smiling from a manger; of His Virgin-mother, kneeling in awe beside Him; of His foster-father, mystified by all these things; of a cave in a hillside near Bethlehem, where earth received this priceless Love-token from heaven; of Angels summoning with song a few shepherds to this Word that has come to pass; and of a Star that guides Wise Men to the stable-palace of the King of Kings. This collection of images is augmented and enhanced, too, by the dear associations and memories that we carefully gather up from our own lives and fondly add to it, year after year. And amid that great variety there is subtle unity—one characteristic that marks every item; a dominant tint that out of the many brings one; a single perfume that pervades these galleries. This characteristic, this tint, this perfume,—what is it but peace?—the peace that the Angels sang, that Mary felt and knew; the peace of Christ, Who is "the Prince of Peace." This is the "gift for mortals, old and young," that the Holiday Season brings in its gracious hand. We conceive of the social Christmas as hilariously gay, but of the personal and religious Christmas as full of inward quiet and holy joy.

I.

Our Need of Peace; Motives for Seeking It

1. *For this generation, internal peace is the gift to be begged perseveringly from God, not only at Christmas, but every day of the year. We need concord, it is true, between man and man, between nation and nation, between race and race. Unspeakably we need it; but far more deeply than concord, we need the peace of the individual within himself. The men and women of today manifest a pitiable lack of tranquillity; we are characterized by psy-*

chologists and sociologists as the "Nervous Age." They tell us that out of every ten children born in the State of New York, one will receive treatment in a hospital for nervous disorders at some period or other during his life.¹ This is to say that one of every ten inhabitants of the great eastern metropolis will some day lose his mental balance temporarily or permanently, and be classed among the partially or completely insane. Such prevalence of mental disorders is not confined to one city, but is found in a slightly smaller percentage throughout the nation. The causes of this lamentable state of affairs are legion. Heredity is one of them, but is by no means the chief; disease, particularly social diseases, contribute largely; but perhaps the most important cause of all is *loss of mental balance*.

The mind as well as the body is a delicate thing; constant care is required to preserve its health. Lack of physical hygiene results in physical disease; lack of mental hygiene in mental disease. Physical disease means that some bodily organ is out of order; mental disease, that *some mental power is out of order*. And this signifies that there is not sufficient PEACE in the soul; for peace is the tranquillity of order, and is present only when all the powers of the soul are *in order*, only when each power keeps its place.

The nervous individual, despite his tendency to nervousness, is apt to laugh at the matter and put it from him with ridicule, underestimating the likelihood of his becoming 'touched' or 'queer,' as we say. Certainly, he thinks, he will never be the doomed victim of the ten. But let him consider the age in which he lives, and the influence that it and its inventions have upon him. All day long, noise drums at his ears, and through them at his brain; at night it breaks his sleep. Aeroplanes over head and automobiles in the street shriek out blatant advertisements; radios yell with static; flat-wheeled streetcars and aged, overloaded trucks thunder by on the broken pavement; whistles pierce the air, newsboys shout raucously, drills and noise-devices are busy minutely, hourly, daily. With speed incredible two decades ago, Mr. Ordinary Citizen is whisked from home to his place of work, from work to home, here and there, up and down, everywhere. His whole physical life is speed, hurry, and rush; and, unless he struggles strongly against the usual course of nature, his mind will soon bow itself down

¹R. W. Murray, *Introductory Sociology*, Figures and statistics given on page 186.

before suggestion, and accustom itself to undue precipitation in its own operations. Not even those who lead a partially retired life can find an environment free from noise and speed and the worry they engender; professional men, students, and religious are affected almost to the same degree as laymen by their external surroundings. But this is not all; noise and speed are mere external factors, and exert direct influence on the senses alone. Only indirectly can they affect the mind. But the structure of the mind itself lay man open to the loss of tranquillity, since it is composed of different parts, each of which seeks its own distinct satisfaction. His yearnings and cravings and desires, his *appetites*, pull him to this side and to that; the mind avidly seeks knowledge, the will good, the senses pleasure and enjoyment. Each tendency is strong, and thus he is drawn in all directions; he is 'distracted.' Because of his very constitution, he tends to lose peace in these searchings for various satisfactions.

Here then are compelling motives for the quest of peace: *Nervous disorders are prevalent, and no man has any guarantee that he will not succumb to one of them. They are caused for the most part by loss of mental balance, by destruction of the mind's peace; hence the only surety against them is this inward orderliness.*

2. *Peace is obtainable.* One of our poets rather cynically wrote:

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never is, but always to be blest."

His sentiment can not be applied to the search for peace. Man can obtain it, for the Son of God has come to give it to him,—and not a mere tranquillity of mind in bad fortune, nor a stoicism insensible to joy and pain alike, but true *peace of soul*. Of the Messiah and His coming, Isaias prophesied: "His name shall be called God the Mighty, the Prince of Peace; His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace."² On the night of Christ's birth, the heavenly choir sang that the Savior's presence meant "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."³ This was the Angel's explanation of the Incarnation: Peace. When the Child grew to manhood and began His mission, what promise did He make His followers? "Come to Me, . . . and ye shall find *rest* for your

² *Isaias ix, 6-7.*

³ *Luke ii, 13-14.*

souls." ⁴ What was the legacy He left His Apostles the night of the Last Supper? "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give you . . . Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it is afraid." ⁵ Finally, what was His repeated greeting when He met them after His Resurrection? "Peace be to you." ⁶

St. Paul, who understood so deeply the mystic meaning of the Incarnation, and spoke of it so flamingly and so beautifully, characterized Jesus Christ in these simple words: "He is our peace." ⁷ Explaining this, St. Thomas comments: "That is, (Christ is) the cause of our peace. . . . We adopt this type of expression when everything contained in an effect depends upon its cause, as when we say of God that He is our salvation; for whatever salvation we have is caused by God. And likewise, whatever peace we have was caused by Christ. So also was whatever ability we have to draw nigh (to God), since when a man is at peace with another, he may with security walk with him,—draw nigh to him. That is why St. Paul said, 'He is our peace.'" ⁸

3. *Importance of peace shown by Faith and authority.* Experience, then, shows that peace is necessary, and revelation declares that it is within our reach. But even independently of our own present-day need for it, we may draw from many other sources the same conclusion, namely, that inward calm and quiet are most important elements of the Christian life. We have seen that Our Lord's sojourn on this earth in our human nature was meant to bring us peace; certainly the Eternal Wisdom would not have employed such a stupendous means for giving us this gift unless it were essential to our well-being. The same thing is evident from St. Paul's frequent allusions to it in his Epistles; from the Church's regard for it, as shown for instance in her Liturgy; from the counsels of spiritual writers; and even from the teachings of psychologists.

The Apostle of the Gentiles begins each and every one of his Epistles with a salutation in which he wishes his readers "grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." ⁹ Writing to his spiritual son, Timothy, he begs from

⁴ Matt. xi, 28-29.

⁵ John xiv, 27.

⁶ Luke xxiv, 36; John xx, 19 and 26.

⁷ Ephesians ii, 14.

⁸ *Comment. on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, ch. 2, Lecture 5.

⁹ E. g., Rom. i, 7; I Cor., i, 3; II Cor., i, 2; Gal., i, 3; Eph., i, 2; etc.

God for him "grace, mercy, and peace."¹⁰ From the Epistle to the Hebrews alone is this expression absent; yet it begins by announcing the Incarnation, which we know is the Mystery of Peace. The Angelic Doctor explains St. Paul's formulary in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.¹¹ "The good things that he (Paul) wishes for them are grace and peace. The former of these . . . is first among the gifts of God, for by it the sinner is justified. . . . The latter, peace, is the last (gift), because it is made perfect (only) in the bliss of heaven . . . For peace will be perfect when the will rests in the fullness of every good, and obtains immunity from every evil. 'My people shall sit in the beauty of peace.'" Commenting on the two words again in the second Epistle to the Corinthians,¹² St. Thomas adds: "Peace is the last of all good things, for it is a general end (i.e., purpose, *finis*) of the mind; in whatever sense peace is taken, it has the nature of an end: peace is the end in eternal life, in government, and in social life."—Not only in the salutations of his letters, but again and again during their course and in their conclusions, St. Paul repeats his wish, or exhorts the Christians to keep their souls at peace. We give a single example. In the fourth Chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians, he prays for them in these words: "(may) the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."¹³

Throughout her Liturgy, and especially in the Mass, the Church counsels peace to the faithful, and prays for it. In the prayer after the *Pater Noster* (*Libera nos quaesumus*), the celebrant beseeches God "mercifully to grant peace in our days . . . that we may be always . . . secure from disturbance." Then, as he makes the sign of the cross three times over the chalice with a particle of the broken Host, he says aloud, "The peace of the Lord be always with you." In a moment he is repeating the *Agnus Dei*, and the third time he begs the Lamb of God to grant us peace. To perfect his preparation for receiving the Body and Blood of his Lord, he enters into the sentiments of the next prayer of the Canon: "Lord Jesus Christ, Who saidst to Thy Apostles, Peace I leave with you, My peace I give you; look not upon my sins, but upon the faith of Thy Church: and vouchsafe to grant

¹⁰ I. *Tim.*, i, 2; II. *Tim.*, i, 2.

¹¹ Ch. I., Lect. 4, fin.; cf. also the *Commentaries on II. Cor., Coloss., I. Thess., II. Thess., Titus*, at the chapters and verses given in note 7.

¹² Ch. I., Lecture I, med.

¹³ *Philippians* iv, 7.

her peace and unity according to Thy will." Thus at one of the most sacred parts of the Mass, at the moment when the unbloody sacrifice of Jesus Christ is about to be completed, the Church keeps before the mind of her minister her own quest for peace.

Spiritual writers, inspired and uninspired, and those whose office it is to direct out steps heavenward, try hard to make us realize the necessity of peace, and urge it upon us. The Psalmist asks, "Who is the man that desireth life?" and answers his question by enumerating the ways of fulfilling that desire. "Keep thy tongue from evil . . . Turn away from evil and do good; seek after peace and pursue it."¹⁴ The Prophet Zacharias gives as "the word of the Lord," this terse precept: "Only love ye Truth and Peace."¹⁵ St. Paul exhorted the Romans, "Let us follow after the things that are of peace."¹⁶ To the Ephesians he wrote: "I beseech you to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."¹⁷ These texts refer to interior as well as to exterior peace. The author of the *Imitation* devotes several chapters of his work to an explanation of what true inward peace is, and how it is to be obtained and preserved and increased.¹⁸ The first lines of "St. Teresa's Bookmark" refer to it:¹⁹

"Let nothing disturb thee,
Nothing affright thee."

Psychologists insist on tranquillity and serenity of mind as necessary for the full development of personality and the maintenance of mental health. The authority of Dom Thomas V. Moore, M.D., suffices for this point: "(every man) has a duty to harmonize his own interior life so as to maintain interior peace and mental stability and thus attain that fullness and perfection of beauty only to be found in a noble character."²⁰

¹⁴ *Ps.* xxxiii., 13 ff.

¹⁵ *Zacharias* viii, 19.

¹⁶ *Romans* xiv, 19.

¹⁷ *Ephesians*, iv, 5.

¹⁸ Bk. I., ch. 6, 11, 17; Bk. II., ch. 3, 6; Bk. III., ch. 7, 11, 23, 25, 38.

¹⁹ Longfellow's translation.

²⁰ *Principles of Ethics*, Ch. V. We refer the reader also to the discussion of mental hygiene in Fr. Murray's *Introductory Sociology* (pp. 218-221), reviewed in this issue of DOMINICANA.

II.

The Nature of Peace

The preceding lengthy discussion of motives urging us to seek for peace was deemed necessary because of the prime importance of possessing and maintaining tranquillity of mind and soul in the midst of life's disturbing factors. We turn our attention now to peace itself, considering its nature, its species, and its source or principle.

1. St. Augustine defines peace as *tranquillity of order*,—that is, the tranquillity that results from the presence of order and the absence of disorder. *Order* is an arrangement of like and unlike things, and an arrangement that puts each one of them into its proper place; so peace consists in this, that everything be made to keep its place. To have peace, man must 'keep his place' with regard to God, with regard to his own self, and with regard to his neighbor. Mind and soul must be kept subject to God. His lower nature, which he has in common with the beasts of the field, must be kept as subject as he can keep it to his reason and his will; for it is these two powers that make him superior to brute animals, and distinguish him from them. As to the relation of these faculties, the will must follow the commands of the intellect. Finally, man must keep his place with regard to his neighbor.²¹ He is a delicate bit of machinery pieced together by the Divine Workman and fitted into the great machine of the universe. If he gets 'out of gear' with himself, he can not do well the work assigned him by God; if he gets out of gear with those about him, he can not contribute his share to their part of the work; and if he gets morally out of gear with God Himself, judged from the supernatural plane, he is almost useless, and ceases to participate actively in the work of the machine. He must get back into gear; he must find his place; he must reestablish order; he must secure peace.

With such thoughts as these in mind, St. Augustine wrote:²² "Peace is serenity of mind, tranquillity of soul, simplicity of heart; it is the bond of love, and the fellowship of charity." According to the Angelic Doctor, "serenity of mind refers to the reason, which ought to be at liberty, and not bound or absorbed

²¹ *Comment. on the Gospel of St. Matt.*, ch. V, 2, fin; and *on the Gospel of John*, ch. 14, Lecture 7.

²² *De Verbis Domini*.

by any inordinate affection. Tranquillity of soul refers to man's lower nature, which ought to remain undisturbed by molestation from the passions. Simplicity of heart refers to the will, which ought to tend entirely to God, Who is its object. The bond of love has reference to one's neighbor, and the fellowship of charity, to God.²³

If man is to be at peace with himself, then, everything within him must be in as much order as he can maintain. He is a complex being; part of him tends one way, and part another. Even the same part may tend simultaneously in two or even more directions. He may find, for instance, that his will desires what is truly good, but that his lower nature inclines to what is evil. He may discover, too, that his will itself is tending to several things that he can not have at one and the same time. He must, therefore, urge his entire soul to move in a single direction; into opposing tendencies he must introduce order. He must arrange and unite the various motions of his soul; and when he has accomplished this unity, he will find peace.²⁴

But this must not be understood. When St. Thomas says that reason ought not to be absorbed by inordinate affections, and that man's lower nature must remain undisturbed by the passions, he refers only to affections and passions that are voluntary. When he declares that we must arrange and unite the various motions of the soul, he means that we must *strive* to arrange and unite them. This is an extremely important point, and the understanding of it is essential to our subject. In this life, man can not be free from involuntary uprisings of the passions and emotions, nor can he hope to prevent unwished for desires of things he should not seek. Over his sense-impressions, imaginations, and yearnings, he has not complete control. Yet such things as these need not disturb his peace as long as they remain involuntary. Passion can clamor uproaringly for satisfaction, and refuse to be reasoned to: it can riot and rebel against man's better nature, and continue its vicious onslaughts for days at a time; yet the soul unwillingly suffering these attacks can remain profoundly tranquil and calm; for it is in the subjection of the will to God that peace essentially consists. We would repeat again that this truth is of utmost importance for an understanding of genuine quiet of soul.

²³ *Comment. on the Gospel of St. John*, ch. XIV., Lecture 7.

²⁴ *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. 29, a. 1.

2. *The various species of peace.* Although every Catholic is able to find peace in this life, yet at its best it will be *imperfect*, for while we are in the body we can possess it without disturbance either toward ourselves or toward our neighbor or toward God. As we have just said, "Peace is begun here, but not perfected, for no man can have the tendencies of his lower nature completely subject to reason. As St. Paul said, ' . . . I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members!'"²⁵ "It is imperfect peace that is possessed in this world, for even though the chief motion of the soul is brought to rest in God, nevertheless there remain certain disturbing elements both within and without, that bother this peace."²⁶ Here below, then, our peace can be but imperfect; but in heaven it shall be *perfect*. There it will consist in "the perfect enjoyment of the Supreme Good. By this enjoyment, all the desires and cravings and yearnings (*appetitus*) of man are united and brought to rest in one single thing; and this is the last end of the rational creature, man."²⁷ Of the heavenly Jerusalem, God promised through Isaias, "Behold, I will bring upon her as it were a river of peace."²⁸

The peace of the just is *true*, but that of the sinner is *false*. When Christ said, "Not as the world gives, do I give to you," He distinguishes His peace from the peace of the world. They differ "first in their aim; for the peace of the world is directed toward quiet and undisturbed enjoyment of things temporal . . . But the peace of the saints is directed toward eternal goods. Therefore the sense of Christ's words, 'Not as the world gives, do I give to you,' is, 'not for the same purpose; the world gives unto the quiet possession of exterior things, but I give it unto the obtaining of things eternal.' Secondly, these two differ as the counterfeit and the genuine. The peace of the world is counterfeit, because it is merely external; . . . the peace of Christ is genuine, because it is both external and internal . . . Thirdly, they differ in their completeness. The peace of the world is incomplete, since it is unto the quiet only of the outward man, and not of the inner man. As we read in Isaias (ch. LVII., 21), 'There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord God.' But the

²⁵ *Comment. on the Gospel of St. Matt.*, ch. V, 2, fin.

²⁶ *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. 29, a. 2 ad 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Isaias xlvii*, 12.

peace of Christ brings quiet both within and without: 'Much peace have they that love Thy law' (Psalm CXVIII., 165)."²⁹

3. *Peace the effect of charity.* We have seen that peace is "tranquillity of order," that it is found in man when his whole being is subject to his reason, and that it is either perfect or imperfect, false or true. In order to have a still clearer notion of it, let us now inquire its source or cause or principle—that is, the root from which it springs.

As was explained before, a twofold union is required for peace. The various powers must be brought into unison, and made to tend in one direction. Further, the individual's will must be in harmony with the will of his neighbors. Now *both these unions are caused by charity.* Charity causes the former, since it makes us love God with our whole heart and direct all things to Him. Thus all our powers are directed toward one end. Charity likewise produces the second union, for it makes us love our neighbor as ourselves. Loving him thus, we wish to fulfill his will, just as we wish to fulfill our own.³⁰

Charity, therefore, is the real source and cause of peace; peace is one of the effects of charity. But this divine virtue is found only in the souls of those who are in the state of grace; consequently, peace belongs only to the just. A soul in mortal sin, or a soul still laboring under the burden of original sin, can not have true peace. "There is no peace to the wicked," because their highest faculties, their intellect and will, are not subject to God. The just alone possess peace, being at peace with God. Therefore they may and can enjoy peace with their neighbors and with themselves. This great blessing, as we shall see later, no man, no tribulation, or trial, or suffering, can take from them; never need they lose it.

Thus, every Catholic has peace who is free from mortal sin. And as he betters himself spiritually by freeing himself from venial sin and by advancing in charity, his peace increases. It is in direct proportion to his conformity of God's Will, which is that we be as perfect as He Himself is. What Dante made the Blessed in heaven say, we may say, too: "In His Will is our Peace."³¹

²⁹ *Comment. on the Gospel of St. John*, ch. xiv, Lect. 7.

³⁰ *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. 29, a. 3.

³¹ *Paradiso*, Canto IV, line 85.

With this thought, let us return in imagination to the cave in the hillside at Bethlehem and contemplate in the manger there Him Who is our peace. What Divine repose and Godlike tranquillity! At this, His entrance into the world, He whispers to His Father Who is in heaven, "I am come to do Thy Will." We can see other similar words on His lips: "I always do the will of My Father." He is subject here to Mary and Joseph; He is subject to sinners; He is subject to the entire world! His will is conformed indeed to God's Will, and He is at peace. O Lamb of God Who takest away the sins of the world, *grant us peace.*

(The means of obtaining peace will be discussed in a future issue.)