

RUSSIA - SPEECH 2017 (1<sup>st</sup> Speech)

Now we are trying to find the key to bridge our divisions among different faiths. My question is, how are we to find that Bridge that will transform us to the point that we can bring peace in the world, when in our own Christian circles, we are still debating, disputing and keeping our Churches divided?

Indeed, what we are all in search of is beyond our human capacity. 'How to bridge our divisions and bring peace to the world?' And what is that sort of Bridge? Unless God intervenes, I can't see that on our own we are able to reach permanent solutions and resolve our divisions and put an end to them. But, I like when Jesus says: 'Do your best and I shall do the rest.' That's a tone of hope here. And so, what I do believe is that it will be only by the Mighty Hand of God that can unite us; we need a miracle!

And I believe in miracles and that God is able to bring us all together. But that does not mean that we must just sit there and take it easy and relax and wait for a miracle to drop from Heaven. The Lord wants us to work with sincerity, sacrifice and love. God's Calling is an urgent call, calling us all to rediscover Him; He is calling us to rediscover Him by dying to self and ego, and not through administrative reforms, no! we have to allow God to reveal Himself in our hearts in an intimate way.

Here, among us, we have a rather biggish group of Christians from different Churches, and of which I belong to one of them. In the last few years during our pilgrimages, we, who came from 23 different Church denominations actually put into practice the so longed unity in diversity that has been a perpetual dialogue between Churches for many years and still is.

Inspired by the Spirit of God, suddenly something happened, we did not see our differences anymore and we became one, sharing around one Altar the Holy Eucharist. These were sublime moments of brotherly love and of sharing, glorifying God. We had a foretaste of what unity will be like, and the words of unity we were expressing in our dialogues for so many years took shape and form and became alive and were not anymore read only on a printed page but became visible and tangible.

So everything **is** possible with God, if we obtain His favour and if we ask Him! Faith and trust in God is crucial. True faith makes us see through the Light of God that everyone around us is indeed a brother or a sister to us, loved by the Almighty God. So let our faith in God augment and make us confident and bold enough to approach God asking Him with determination for His help, and for a miracle.

But then, God in exchange for His favor will ask first of all from us, to hear our cry of repentance. To acknowledge that we have been unethical and lacking respect in our behavior towards each other, disrespectful of others' beliefs and traditions, failing to be transparent, failing to admit our failures; failing to have spoken up about dictatorial leadership which are causes of extreme violence, and sufferings in our world; He will demand from us to die to our ego, once and for all, to our pride and prejudices; He will ask for sacrificial love, and to turn our lives into an unceasing prayer, but above all, He will ask us to live the greatest 2 Commandments of the Law, and that is *'to truly love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind.'* And *'to love our neighbor as our self.'* Then, when God will see our sincere heart, His Majesty will cover us with His graces and He **will** anoint us and show us the way. And, He will do the miracle.

*In Sura XXII (22) called the Pilgrimage in section 10 verse 77 and 78 it is written "Adore your Lord and do good." "Be a witness for mankind! So establish regular prayer, give regular charity and hold fast to Allah."*

In short, what God our Lord wants from us is to become the Living Image of His Deity, that has no trace of darkness for He is the Alpha and the Omega, and that we should realize that alone we can do nothing, but with God on our side, the impossible will become possible. And so I'll end up by saying, that it's God or nothing!

So let prayer be our Sword against Satan who delights in our division and our destruction. And God will give us the necessary Light to illumine our mind and soul to show us that the Bridge of Unity is there, but in our darkness we are

failing to see it! It is a Bridge made out of Heavenly Sapphires that represent all the Virtues.

The moment we will truly repent of our innumerable sins, God will forgive us and in His Forgiveness He will restore our sight to be worthy to see that Bridge that brings peace to the world and into the reality of God. Glory be to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask, or imagine!