

## RUSSIA WELCOME SPEECH 2017

I'd like to give a warm welcome to all present here; we have among us new distinguished guests who are joining us for the first time to whom we all say to you: El Salaam aleikoum, and Shalom. We, the "True Life in God" people are in search as much as you are, of reconciliation, peace and unity with sincere brotherly love.

We are gathered here for the first time in Russia to join our prayers and pray to the Almighty God to enlighten our path to offer our specific contribution which will be according to God's Will, on the theme of: "How to bridge our divisions".

The inter religious dialogue has always been a valuable source in itself because it brings people together from different creeds, different mentalities and traditions, different nationalities, to discover while together, elements that can approach us spiritually, on which we could build a common dialogue on them. Our dialogues that we are going to share in these days should not remain just among us, but we should carry back home what touched most our heart and pass it on to our own people, teaching and educating them.

It is our duty towards God to remind them above all that God is Omnipresent, even now, that God is the Lover of mankind, of His creation. That our God is all forgiving, slow to anger and merciful. We should keep reminding them that we, as children of God should live in peace because God is a God of Peace, not of war. We must keep reminding them as well that we all come from One Source, and that is God who is Our Father.

On earth, we all live under the same sun that God created; we live under God's Light, and therefore, we are but one big family living on this beautiful planet that He created for us and given it to us as a gift. So it does not matter what creed or what part of the world we may come from. Those who are in different religions are not less creatures made in the Image of God and destined ultimately to live in the House of God. And as human beings, we have basically the same needs; we all look for happiness, we all want good health, we all need to be loved. Who of us does not appreciate peace? Who of us does not enjoy good health? And who of us rejects to be loved? No one.

Although we are small in number here, when we return home, we should act like the leaven (yeast) to spread peace around the world where there is chaos, love where there is hatred, unity where there is division thus we will be reflecting the Image of God. We should not remain listless taking care only of our loved ones, but we should extend our love to the others whom we don't even know and pray that God gives to all His creation a new heart.

Therefore, our approach in these meetings should be genuine with the aim to promote understanding and respect for each other's religious traditions and refrain from denigrating them. With this, God will be on our side and we will gain the trophy that is: reconciliation, peace and love.

In our Scriptures it is written: *Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the dark.* (1 Jn 9)

So let us ask God, to create a clean heart in us, to obtain Wisdom that comes from Him, to lead us into His Light, and into sanctity to be worthy in His Eyes. God asks each one of us to enter in His Holy Path of Righteousness, so that our lives can be transformed and through this transformation we can transform the world. God is asking us to become breach menders, and peacemakers, sowing the seeds which will bear fruit in holiness.

We should be like a city that's set on a hill that cannot be hidden! We can only be this way if we become like an olive tree growing in the House of God, and putting our trust in God's love. I pray that the Almighty God of peace, may make us ready to do His Will in any kind of good action; and turn us all into whatever is acceptable to Himself.