

True Life in God Pilgrimage in Moscow - 2-10 September 2017

HOW TO BRIDGE OUR DIVISIONS AND BRING PEACE TO THE WORLD?

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Grace to you, peace and blessing from the Giver of blessings and the God of graces and bounties.

I am Archbishop George of the Greek Orthodox Church in the city of Homs - Syria. I have been very hesitant about this speech that I have sent to you as an expression of my contribution to this pilgrimage that you are doing in the city of Moscow in the blessed land of Russia.

My first question, lovingly, and I am not an expert in such meetings: where do we get to through these initiatives?

Are they just meetings and exchange of speeches, shaking hands and compliments in front of the cameras and all the media?

To whom is the journey of this pilgrimage directed in life, as suggested by the title of the gathering?

If the answer implies that we turn to each other, this is good and beautiful and very important, but is this the aim?

I am responsible in my church for my people and believing in what I live and experience, the dialogue of the daily life that I live with my brothers is the living and sincere expression of a beautiful vision that outweighs any discussion, no matter how important it is, on the intellectual, theological and religious levels.

Everyday life between members of society from all walks of life, regardless of differences and disparities, transcends in its human dimension any difference in color, race, religion or denomination.

My second question is: How do I look at the human being that I live with, and with whom I share our daily food?

More than that, we drink the same water and we also breathe the same air. Do I consider him different from me and a stranger to me?

How do I establish my relationship with him? The answer is simple and I draw from the Bible: "Who are you to judge your neighbour, judgment is the Lord's" (cf. James 4:12)

So I am not his Lord, nor a judge or a ruler over him. He is my brother in humanity. I have absolutely no right to view him with superiority or to diminish the importance of his presence by my side. He is a being that has all the beautiful qualities, and I can build with him all the bridges that achieve our humanity.

I repeat, I do not write a scientific lecture or a theological thesis. I am writing a personal contribution about the experience we are living here in Syria, especially after this great ordeal, and after this absurd and crazy war that we have lived, and we are still living its consequences. It was named: "The Arab Spring". What spring is this? What flowers and what fragrances did it diffuse? It brought only murder, destruction, more destruction and displacement. However, we have not lost hope nor aspiration. We did not give in to despair, nor even to the temptation of escaping by any possible means. On the contrary, we have increased our determination to make sure we accept each other. And we emphasize our common presence in order to build the state to which we belong, even if we differ in religion.

So can we bridge our divisions and bring peace to the world? I say certainly, yes, because the possibility is fulfilled by good and charitable will that certainly helps us overcome all our differences and ideological and intellectual divisions, and abandon our individual selfishness, and open ourselves to others and accept them as our brothers in humanity.

I conclude with a heartfelt greeting to all of you. In particular Mrs. Vassula, who took this bold initiative and, at the same time, has worked and is still working to build all the bridges in order to achieve a noble humanitarian goal of spreading the message of peace in the world.

Metropolitan George Abou Zakhm