

The Desired Peace

By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

There are two types of peace: external and internal. External peace is achieved through the absence of violence, the harmony of daily life, social and political affairs, and securing personal needs. It involves maintaining peaceful relationships with others. External peace is contingent upon circumstances, conditions, temperaments, and moods. In other words, it is external peace, not just because it depends on external factors to be achieved, but because it is lived at the exterior level of the human being, which is dependent on factors external to him. It remains fragile and susceptible to damage from changing external conditions.

On the other hand, internal peace depends on the man, regardless of external circumstances. It is connected to one's spiritual strength, the ability to sacrifice for others, the extent to which one does not demand personal gain, and the level of joy one finds in cooperation. Internal peace requires humility, reconciliation with oneself, a genuine understanding of one's needs, and liberation from self-centeredness. All of these, in and of themselves, do not bring about the desired peace but, rather, prepare the soul to respond to the presence and work of God. True peace is an inner steadfastness that arises from divine grace, making a person resilient against storms and tumultuous waves.

There are two notable incidents in the Gospel that reflect this perspective. When Jesus asked His disciples to go ahead of Him to the other side of the sea (Matt. 14:22–27), they encountered a violent storm in the middle of the night that nearly capsized the boat. They were overwhelmed with fear and anxiety, questioning where Jesus was, for only He could save them. They asked, Why did He leave us alone? In the midst of their fear and terror, they saw Him coming towards them, walking on the surface of the sea. They cried out in fear, and His response was, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

The second incident is similar to the first. There was a strong storm and high waves, threatening to sink the boat and everyone in it (Mark 4:35–41). However, Jesus was peacefully sleeping at the back of the boat. The disciples were in great danger while He remained peacefully asleep, as if nothing was happening. They woke Him up in fear, seeking refuge in Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" His response was, "You of little faith," and He commanded the sea and the wind, and they became calm.

In both incidents, the presence of Christ brought peace to the disciples. The presence of the living God, which is active in the believer's heart, grants him peace. It is not a peace achieved through human power; that type of peace can be called an agreement, a temporary arrangement, call it what you will. It does not last or endure. Nothing in this world is stable and consistent. Therefore, whoever seeks true and lasting peace must build it not on the affairs and conditions of this world but on the presence of the living God who is active in him.

Because the peace of the world is neither beneficial nor lasting, Christ said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

Inner peace does not mean being unemotional towards risks and disturbances but, rather, having a positive attitude towards them—an active approach rather than a passive one. It is a stance that deals with these tests with care, sensitivity, cooperation, and empathy but transforms them into a positive situation that strengthens, supports, comforts, embraces, and challenges oneself to contribute to alleviating fears.

To be in spiritual peace does not mean to dismiss people's concerns and issues but, rather, to immerse your hands in the mud of this world in order to cleanse it, yet without being dirtied by it yourself. "I do not ask You to take them out of the world but to keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

Now is the time for true peace. Everyone seeks it and desires it, but the majority seek it where it does not exist, because they do not know the way to it. Experiencing inner peace may be the most important mission of our current time.

St. Silouan the Athonite says, "If you encounter hardship, say, 'The Lord knows my heart, and if this is what pleases Him, then everything will be good for me and for others.'" And, thus, your soul will always be in peace. But if people start complaining and grumbling, saying, "This is not good... and it should be different..." then they will never attain peace in their heart, even if they observe all the fasts and prayers.

Peace comes from accepting reality as it is and loving others and accepting them as they are. Those who know how to surrender to the Divine Will and love their brethren can live in peace and contribute to changing reality truly, not just in words. "Be in peace, and thousands around you will find peace," St. Seraphim of Sarov used to repeat.

This is the path that leads to the peace we desire. How can we accept everything with thanksgiving and positivity? If we truly live for God, with God, and for the sake of God, we will not only experience this peace but also transmit it to those around us, and we will pray with St. Silouan, “O Lord, grant Your peace to Your people. O Lord, grant them Your grace, that they may know You and love You with peace and love, and that they may say like the apostles on Mount Tabor, ‘It is good, O Lord, for us to be with You.’”

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