

PEACE



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Translated by Gordon Leonard Symons

Perhaps never before has Humanity been so deprived of peace. To see this, it is enough to observe what is happening around us: open or hidden struggles everywhere, repercussions of the war and threats for the future; struggles of nations, races, classes and parties, but also, and no less, struggles, agitations and storms in the depths of souls, which manifest themselves in many ways: emotional, moral and religious crises; dissatisfied with ourselves and others; rebellion against society, against the family, against life and God himself.

In such a world, cultivating peace is not a spiritual luxury, but a daily necessity for all those who want to maintain their internal integrity, and not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by collective currents of agitation, panic or violence. And cultivating peace is also, and no less, a duty towards others. Whoever knows how to be a living center of peace now, who knows how to radiate it powerfully and ceaselessly around himself, brings poor humanity the good of which it is perhaps most deprived and which it needs most.

Let's see how we can do this in the most efficient way.

Let us remember first of all, as a warning and an incitement, that all the great spiritual Masters have

insisted in a particular way on Peace. Indian religious texts begin and end with the formula: "Om - shanti - shanti - shanti" (Om - peace - peace - peace); or with the other: "Peace to all beings." The Buddha taught, by word and example, the sublime peace of the spirit. Of Him it is said: "The Awakened One is Peace to himself and brings peace to the whole world." In the descriptions of the different degrees of Buddhist contemplations, one of the most accentuated notes is the serenity of the contemplating soul.

In original Christianity and then in its highest and purest manifestations throughout the centuries, the note of peace often resonates. The figure of Christ is surrounded by an atmosphere of Peace: "Peace on earth to men of good will". He often made peace; he calmed the storm, he tirelessly calmed the minds of the disciples who were fearful, or disputed among themselves for supremacy, or, like Peter, were violent in reacting. Finally, he left them a message of spiritual peace which has a profound meaning: « I give you my Peace; I give it to you not as the world gives it." (John, XIV v27).

In Christian mysticism, perfect internal peace which is called "quiet" or "quiet prayer", constitutes a well-defined and elevated stage in the ascent of the soul to God. That Peace, that internal silence, in which all thoughts and feelings of the personality, is considered as an indispensable preparation for mystical union, for full communion of the Soul with God.

Let us remember the beautiful description of Peace given by the *Imitation of Christ*: "Firm peace, imperturbable and sure peace, internal and external peace, stable peace on every side". (Book II, Ch. 40, n. 3).

Even in other spiritual writings the value of peace is highlighted. One of the precepts of the *Light on the Path* says: "... desire Peace fervently" — and another declares: "The Peace you will desire is that sacred Peace which nothing can disturb and in which the soul grows like the holy flower on the placid lagoons".

Let's see how we can meditate to achieve Peace.

It is useful to begin by broadening our internal horizon as much as possible, turning our thoughts to consideration, to contemplation of the Infinite and the Eternal. We remember and realize that we are spiritual beings, and that our spiritual essence is indestructible.

This broadening of perspective will help us to re-establish true proportions, to see the relative insignificance of many contingent things by which we usually allow ourselves to be disturbed and agitated. So little by little we will begin to truly feel the Peace of the Eternal, the Peace of the Spirit, the Peace that Christ called "My Peace".

For those who find this meditation difficult, we can suggest another method, based on the use of images; but the two methods can be appropriately associated, forming two stages of the same meditation. Various images can be used for this purpose and, depending on the various temperaments and psychological types, one may be more suggestive than the other.

The first is the one evoked by the phrase from the *Light on the Path* just quoted: we can imagine a large expanse of water, a blue sky, a shining sun, and on the calm surface of the water myriads of lotus flowers opening to the sun's rays.

Another suggestive image is that of the scene told in the *Gospel of St. Mark*, in which Jesus calms the storm:

« On the same day, towards evening, Jesus said to them: "Let us cross over to the other side". After sending the crowd away, they took Him away in the boat He was in and there were also other boats with Him.

A great whirlwind arose, and the waves rushed onto the boat so that it was already filling up. He, Jesus, was sleeping in the stern with his head on the cushion. They woke Him up and said to Him, "Master, are you not worried that we will perish?" Having awakened, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea: "Peace! Be still." The wind ceased and there was a great calm." (*Mark, IV, 35-40*).

A third suitable image could be that of our terrestrial globe in the infinite vastness of celestial spaces, as evoked by the magnificent verses of Federico Amiel, which with their calm and solemn rhythm constitute an excellent means of evoking peace:

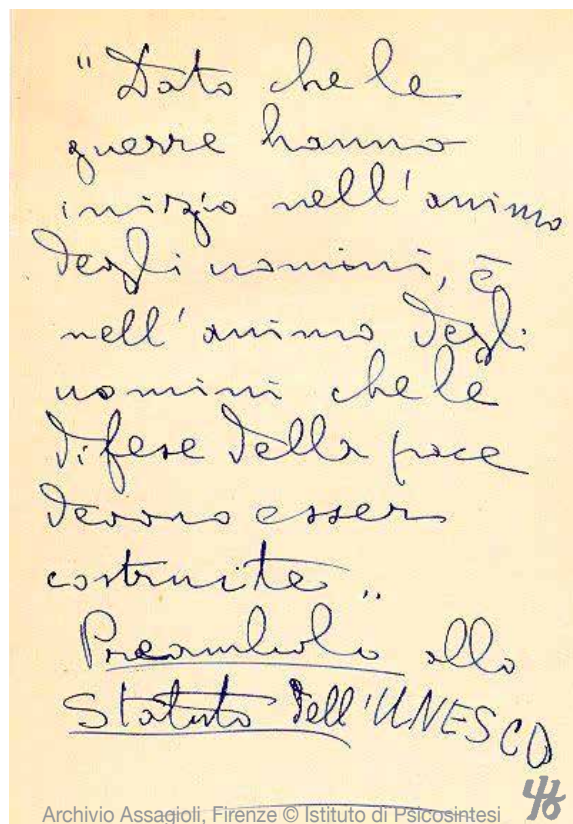
« Dans l'éternel azur de l'insoluble espace
s'enveloppe de Paix notre globe agité.

*Homme, envelope ainsi tes jours, rêve qui passe
du calme firmament de ton éternité ».*

With the help of these images, elevating the soul towards the radiant, supreme Reality, let us begin to feel and realize Peace.

Roberto Assagioli

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“Given that wars began in the soul: of men, it is in the souls of men that defence of peace must be built.”
Preamble to the constitution of UNESCO