I Sunday after Easter - Peace

_In the name of the Father ..._

More than the absence of disturbances, peace is... _a tranquility which rests upon order_. Further, _true order is first of all that internal and moral order which is found in wills before it is found in things, in wills guided by justice... for... justice is the guardian of order and, consequently, of peace._¹ That is, _true peace rests upon willing conformance to the objective moral order, to God’s law._

_Perpe_ is not the same as _concord_. Aquinas observes: _concord is a union of wills... between one man and another, in so far as their wills agree together in consenting to the same thing._² As we saw during Holy Week in the plots to kill Our Lord, _concord_ is compatible with evil.

_Concord_ can result from purely human efforts: it can be achieved by coercion. One author observes: _Without justice it is possible to have a purely external, mechanical, apparent order, ... an order resting on the points of bayonets, [recalling] the French minister who, when asked in parliament concerning conditions in Poland, recently subjugated by [Napoleon’s] army, replied: "Order reigns in Warsaw." In truth, Warsaw was completely under the heel of the invaders: it was a purely external order which prevailed._³

_Peace_, then, is deeper than _concord_. St Thomas: _peace includes concord and adds something thereeto. Hence wherever there is peace, there is concord, but there is not necessarily peace wherever there is concord._⁴ Peace extends to the inner man, to the whole man, and properly is the effect of _charity_. St Thomas again: _Peace implies a twofold union ... The first is the result of one’s own appetites being directed to one object; while the other results from one's own appetite being united with the appetite of another: and each of these unions is effected by charity - the first, in so far as man loves God with his whole heart, by referring all things to Him, so that all his desires tend to one object - the second, in so far as we love our neighbor as ourselves, the result being that we wish to fulfill our neighbor’s will as though it were ours._⁵ _Peace_, then, is founded on conformance to the commandments.

The fruit of _charity, peace_ properly is the work of the Holy Ghost. It never can be the result of purely human efforts: only God can confer it. Thus Our Lord said to his apostles: _Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you: not as the world gives do I give to you._⁶ St Thomas observes: _Without sanctifying grace, peace is not real but merely apparent._⁷ The best the world can give is concord, quite often... _an order resting on the points of bayonets, not on conformance to God’s law._

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² ST Ilæ Iæ, 29, 1, c  
³ Civardi.  
⁴ ST Ilæ Iæ, 29, 1, c  
⁵ ST Ilæ Iæ, 29, 3, c  
⁶ Jn 14:27  
⁷ ST Ilæ Iæ, 29, 3, ad 1um
Sin introduces disorder, it is disruptive of peace. God allows sin that He may draw a greater good from it. He allows sin so that He might exercise mercy, and that his Son might have the glory of being the universal redeemer.

In this fallen world, then, peace is inseparable from the Incarnation, from the Passion, from the Cross: Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them: Peace be to you. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side ... He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you.9

Further, in this fallen world, peace is inseparable from the true religion, inseparable from the work of the Catholic Church and her priests: As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.10

The forgiveness of sin requires a suitable disposition, ultimately the intention to reform. As the recent Rome Conference asserted: the possibility of administering sacramental absolution is not based on the imputability of the sin committed, but on the penitent’s intention to abandon a way of life [which] is contrary to the divine commandments.11 So also during this Easter week we have heard from St Peter: What God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, He thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. And again: So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander... once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy... I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

That suitable disposition, then, is not merely private. The conferral of peace – the forgiveness of sin – extends to the inner man, but is not confined there. It encompasses concord, a willed unity: it necessarily has a public dimension, conformance to the objective moral order.

Without the confines of the Church, the secular world’s notion of peace, where it rises above the absence of disturbances, is rather a notion of concord, compatible with evil. It has little regard for justice, conformance to the objective moral order, to God’s law. It is rather conformance to an arbitrary standard, often achieved through coercion, at the point of bayonets, with regard neither for the true religion, nor the Incarnation the Passion and the Cross, nor sin. St Thomas observes: The peace of the wicked is not a true peace but a semblance thereof, wherefore it is written: “… they call so many and so great evils peace.”12 Such a state is inherently unstable, inherently volatile, anything but peaceful.

But even within the confines of the Church, there prevails a false notion of peace, a false notion of mercy,

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8 Rom 11:32
9 Jn 20:19-21
10 Jn 20:21-23
11 Final Declaration of Rome Conference
12 ST Ia Iae 29, 2, ad 3um
which would make the forgiveness of sin a purely private affair, the realm of subjective conscience, with no corporate dimension, no requirement for conformance to the objective moral order, no intention to reform, no requirement for concord, for willed unity. It is a peace without sanctifying grace, not real but merely apparent. Aquinas observes: There can be no true peace except where the appetite is directed to what is truly good... true peace is only in good men and about good things.

On this octave day of Easter, as we look back on the drama of Holy Week, the Passion and the Resurrection, let us give thanks to God who spared no effort, no suffering, that he might restore us to His peace, true peace. Let us pray for our political leaders, that they will be responsive to God’s promptings to pursue real peace which can be established only on truth and justice, on the recognition of the rights of God and the true religion. Let us pray for priests that they may be faithful as God’s ministers in the dissemination of peace. Let us pray for those who lead the Church, that they will confirm the faithful committed to their care in the truth, in good order, in the objective moral order, and thus establish them in peace.

In the name of the Father ...

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13 ST Ia IIae 29, 3, ad 1um
14 ST Ia IIae, 29, 2, ad 3um