

THE REIGN OF JUSTICE

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Peace on Earth!

THAT is the sublime promise which the angel of the Lord gave to the shepherds who were watching their sheep on the fields of Bethlehem. We have come to the blessed time when that wonderful, reassuring and comforting promise is about to be fulfilled. This, as yet, is far from being the case among mankind who are torn by all sorts of passions which have arisen in all hearts by the baneful power of selfishness, and make them suffer and die.

Yet everything in nature speaks of peace and harmony. Wherever we turn our eyes, the grandeur, the glory and especially the benevolent goodness of the Lord is clearly to be seen. When the Sun shines its glorious light on a landscape, what eloquence is to be felt in the atmosphere created! Then, in the evening, when it gives the Earth a parting caress before the glory of its purple and gold fades behind the infinite horizon, how majestic is its message, how full of charm! It is a powerful and affectionate voice telling of the unfathomable grandeur of the Almighty, and of the wonderful tenderness of his fatherly heart, all mercy and love.

The Earth should be the Lord's glorious footstool, and so it will be. At present, it is still under the curse. That is why a landscape that is radiant in sunshine can change in a single instant and become the cause of deepest terror. The wind can rise over it and bring on a terrible hurricane. Man is then in the grip of fear of the unleashed elements. And what terror and distress can be caused by an earthquake!

Thus, mankind reap what they have sown. Therefore, for one who is not under divine protection, there is neither peace nor security. Such used to be our case. But suddenly we were reached by a voice of peace and consolation, saying: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Then, it seemed as if, after a dark night of anguish and terror, a radiant morning had dawned for us, greeting us with benevolent and reassuring light, dispelling all our anguish and fear. That was the effect of the seed of Salvation sown in our hearts by these sublime words: "The former things have passed away. ... Behold, I make all things new." What a good thing, what a wonderful thing!

But that is only the beginning. The ground then has to respond favourably, so that the seed may prosper. For that purpose, the circulation of God's Holy Spirit has to be able to have its full effect. Only then can the process

of Salvation take its course properly, can a new life begin. Then, you have the real and true Christmas, the Lord's wonderful birth in the heart. Now, so far, there are few in our midst, only very few, who truly obtain this birth of our Lord with its full power of blessing.

With the children of Israel at our Lord's birth, it was the same. The seed was sown. It fell into a few hearts that were properly prepared, such as that of Simeon and that of Anna the Prophetess. What wonderful joy and what overflowing enthusiasm they displayed when they received the sublime news of the Salvation that had just been born!

And the shepherds keeping their sheep in the fields of Bethlehem during the night watches, what transports of gladness they displayed! They longed for the Salvation of Israel, and talked together about the things on which their hearts were set. Then suddenly, the heavens were lighted with a splendour of glory! The angel of the Lord appeared amidst that light. This made an immense impression on their hearts. For the moment, they were seized with fear. But the angel reassured them at once. He said: "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news that will be great joy for all people. Today, in the city of David, a Saviour was born for you. He is Christ the Lord! This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." The shepherds left their flocks and ran to Bethlehem to see what the angel had announced, enthusiastically repeating the hymn of the heavenly armies.

It would be wonderful if we could always be as enthusiastic as the shepherds, giving out, from our hearts, impressions that would correspond with theirs, being filled with gladness that knows no bounds and never fades. All the more so because today we have far more potent things ahead of us. To be sure, our dear Saviour's birth in Bethlehem was a sublime manifestation. But the whole process of Salvation had not yet been carried out to a successful conclusion. For that purpose, it was not sufficient for God's Son to be born on Earth, he further had to become the Messiah.

The disciples did not see the little child who came into the world, but they saw the child when he had become Christ. That is what counts, for if the child came into the world, if the angels sang: "Glory to God," and if the star shone forth with glorious brightness, at that time, Salvation was not yet consummated. Had the

child not become a man, had he not broken the seals of the book, had he not carried out its full contents, and had he not voluntarily passed through the full process of suffering, inherent in his mission as the Saviour, we would never have had the possibility of getting out of our darkness, and Salvation would not have shone out for our benefit. The child had to grow up and become the Lamb of God.

When our dear Saviour came forward at the Jordan River and was baptised by John, he sealed his own death as the Saviour. He sealed his determination to die to save poor humanity, the groaning and dying creation. When he came up out of the water, the glory of God showed itself on him in the shape of a dove, and a voice was heard saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This was the sign that our dear Saviour's Sacrifice was accepted by the Lord. The process of Salvation, at that moment, began to take shape.

With the act of being baptised in the Jordan River, our dear Saviour was dead symbolically for the Salvation of mankind. After that, the reality had to take place. Salvation became an accomplished fact only when our dear Saviour permitted himself to be nailed to the wood, thus taking on himself all the pain, the troubles, the souls' anguish, the curse, the condemnation and the death of all mankind. All these things he took on himself as he died on the Cross. It is for this reason that he is called the Saviour.

Therefore, we rejoice today not only because the Saviour was born in Bethlehem, but because he came forward to the baptism of consecration, and then died in very fact and voluntarily to accomplish our Salvation.

Simeon knew that the newborn child would provide a wonderful Salvation. That was why he took the matter to heart, held the child in his arms, and said: "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation." Just think, what wonderful appreciation! Yet all he had to look at was a little child. Salvation had not then been accomplished. However, the profound sensation he had in his heart did not come there by itself. He had been cherishing, nourishing and nursing the hope of Salvation, so that that very precious plant of appreciation and of faith might strike deep roots in his heart, and develop into a character.

The Wise Men also carefully cultivated the plant of hope set in their hearts by what they read in the prophecy. All they knew was that Salvation would be born, but did not even know where. They did not have to know, for if they had, they would not have gone to

God's love always watches

WITH her elbows resting on the balustrade on the balcony of a charming villa, a young woman is lost in thought. Though Christmas is approaching, the weather is very mild, for in this lovely southern European country, winter knows no harshness. Nowhere in nature will you find better conditions, with its verdant trees in full leaf. In these Edenic surroundings and this pleasant house, it would seem that happiness should be an ever-present guest. Yet by this young woman's reddened eyes and the sadness to be read in her face, distress and keen suffering are clearly revealed.

Everywhere in the neighbourhood, they are preparing to celebrate, as it is celebrated in the world, the birth of Christ who came to Earth to save mankind. The shades of night are spreading all over the countryside. The windows are lighting up, and suddenly the

sound of Christmas bells is carried in the breeze to Martha's ears.

She finds the festive atmosphere hard to bear, the merry sound of the bells is like a death knell in her ears, and breaks her heart. She feels she must go away to hear no more of it. When suddenly, somewhere nearby, a few chords are strummed on a guitar, and a soft clear voice breaks into song. It sings, with feeling, an old song which halts her fleeting steps and holds her there to listen. She catches her breath as she listens, and it sets her heart beating wildly, for it is a very old song that her grandmother used to sing. She listens, sobbing her heart out:

*In my homeland now would I be,
Amidst my verdant Alps to play;
O pretty cloud, could I with thee,
Upon the breeze, but fly away!*

*The vision which with longing sears
This exiled heart, bereaved, outcast,*

*Inspireth nought but bitter tears
And deep regret for what is past.*

The song brings back a flood of memories: the place where she was born, the pines trees, the alpine pastures and particularly the chalet where she spent her childhood days. She sees her grandmother, with her white hair, so unpretentious and dignified, and who always watched over her with tender care. In the long winter hours — when snow was falling thick and fast, seeping its way in everywhere, and putting a stop to all work outside the chalet — the old lady would tell her granddaughter the stories of Joseph, of David and of Daniel. On Christmas Eve, she then used to take out the family Bible and, with great respect, would read, to young Martha, the story of Jesus, of the shepherds and of the Wise Men from the East. Martha would listen with childlike faith, deeply moved at heart, and brimming over with enthusiasm. And that was how

they spent their time in the small chalet, in the warm atmosphere that filled this peaceful and cosy place.

And so, the child Martha grew up like a healthy plant, watered and cared for with a great deal of love, and was a lively, merry, clever, happy and carefree girl.

Why then, oh why! Why, one gloomy and foggy day, did a young male sightseer — lost in the fog, desperate, and shivering with cold — have to knock on their door, on this one, of all the little chalets scattered around the mountain?

With her large blue eyes and her golden curls, Martha is a very pretty young lady. She is sweet and fresh, like a large blossoming rose. Who could remain unaffected by her charm? Certainly not this young man.

Thus, it happened that, on an evil day, Martha ran away from the fold, blinded and misled by the glamour of things she knew nothing about, being quickly mastered by

Herod and would have had no occasion to deliver their testimony to him.

All those things speak most eloquently, particularly to us who are in the presence of the reality fulfilled, Salvation obtained in full. Therefore, how our hearts should overflow with enthusiasm, with joy, with gladness and with gratitude and appreciation, in such power that nothing should be able to diminish! For that purpose, we must work on all proper appreciation. Divine sensitiveness is needed. Then, we are able to feel such majestic things that it is impossible to describe in human speech.

It will be the same for all people when they understand. Christmas will be something quite new to them. At present, they are unable to realize what the gift that God has given to them in the person of his Son, means to them. They are incapable of weighing up the sentiments the Almighty had to express from his heart — the compassion, the tenderness and the humility that had to be brought into play to obtain Salvation, consolation and Deliverance for mankind — so that they may one day be enveloped in happiness, in joy and in gladness, and be penetrated with the sublime affection bubbling over from God's heart in favour of poor humanity, presently astray and without a shepherd.

That cannot be understood or felt as it should be, except with the help of God's Holy Spirit. It is indispensable for us in fulfilling the ministry that the Lord entrusts us with today. This ministry consists in setting up the Kingdom of God on Earth.

It was owing to the power of that Spirit that our dear Saviour always had the last word in all circumstances. All the Adversary tried to do was paralysed because nothing can prevail against God's Holy Spirit, neither disease nor its ravages. The mysterious power of death itself is broken because the love of Christ gives life. It personifies the power of God, which makes itself felt as a beneficial light, which is benevolent and infinitely gentle yet invincibly powerful, and which even has the faculty of setting in motion again everything that is at dead point.

Our Lord had the power to encourage the multitude, to communicate to it impressions of enthusiasm and of consolation, because his words were inspired by God's Holy Spirit. With the power of that Spirit, he was able to command the erupted elements and to bring them to rest at once. Now, our dear Saviour told his disciples that if they had faith the size of a mustard seed, they would be able to tell a mountain: "Move from here to there." And it would do so at once. In truth, the Spirit of God, directed on a person in sufficient power, is a source of energy that nothing is able to oppose.

Therefore, it is by the almighty power of that sovereign Spirit that we shall be able to introduce the Kingdom of God on Earth. Now, we, each of us, can make ourselves apt for receiving that power. So, the question we each have to ask ourselves is: "Am I going to fully pay what it costs to make myself worthy of that untold wealth, of that greatest of all powers?" This indeed calls for all we've got, absolutely all.

Our constant aim then must now be to make ourselves worthy of receiving the utmost possible amount of God's Holy Spirit. Then, we shall fulfil our Lord's explicit prediction: "He who believes in me will also do the works that I am doing. He will do even greater things than these." Our Lord illustrated the Kingdom in all its aspects, even going as far as to raise the dead, already in a state of putrefaction. However, they died a second time. These miracles were illustrations. The "greater things" consist in actually and practically, and visibly and definitely introducing the Kingdom of God on Earth. The divine Spirit working in God's children,

will completely paralyse the Adversary's power, and the Kingdom of God will be introduced on Earth, without it being possible for anyone or anything to stop it.

That is what we will take to our hearts, above all, on this Christmas Day, so that we may work together in complete unity and cohesion, on hastening the presence of the Day of God, existing solely for the good of others, for their consolation and happiness.

Henceforth, only one thing must be of any value to us, and that is to bring happiness to mankind, to enfold them in the power of divine love, to make the Father's House known to them, and to introduce them into it. For this purpose, we ourselves have to be in it, so that there may issue, from us, its irresistible power of attraction.

People are neither affected nor softened by words or all sorts of arguments. They will be won over by the love we show them, by our kindness and by the wonderful divine influences that will go forth from our hearts, as, in the past, they came out of our dear Saviour's.

Now, more than ever, is the time to be inspired with the zeal, the faithfulness, the courage and the faith of those wonderful people whom the Lord was able to employ as collaborators at our dear Saviour's birth. The question now is for God's people, with the introduction of the Kingdom of God on Earth, to display, to the eyes of all mankind, the glorious result of the birth of the Son of God, in Bethlehem, as the Redeemer and Saviour.

Let us then be occupied with that and nothing else, integrally embodying ourselves into it, with all our heart and soul, and with all our might, in short, with our entire self, for the Deliverance and the happiness of suffering humanity, who, without knowing it, are awaiting the Revealing of the Sons of God.

Education for life

On the 29th of June 2023, the French newspaper *Ouest-France* published a short article, by Jacques Le Goff, on education. A thorny subject, perhaps even more so today than in the past. We reproduce the article in its entirety:

The education of "the experience of limits"

We all encounter children whose mischievous behaviour seems to be not only tolerated but even approved by parents who are rather amused when they do not get some glory from it: "What can I say, they are HIP (high intellectual potential) [or "gifted"] and therefore out of step, poor child..." Their close circle of friends, at school and elsewhere, are urged to spare the little genius, cramped into their social straitjacket. Unless they suffer from ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), which is a justifiable concern.

In the two above cases and many others, we are generally dealing with children who are rebellious to the idea of limits, especially when those limits are imposed on them without their consent. All of this rekindles the debate on education style.

This very old debate was brought to a head in the 18th century by Rousseau's treatise called Emile, or On Education, which advocated the expression, through education, of the child's naturally good nature. The aim is therefore to allow the child to reveal the best of itself, in complete freedom. "Learn to become yourself", this is now the motto of the so-called "positive education" movement, based on the idea of kindness, attention to the child and its abilities, and the lightest possible supervision.

Encourage rather than punish! This aim is undisputed, as long as it doesn't imply the idea that imposing limits would be harmful to the child and would create traumas, as suggested by the best-selling authors Catherine Gueguen and Isabelle Filliozat. This is the "Thetis complex" named the ancient Greek goddess

who plunged her son into the waters of the River Styx in order to make him invulnerable to the limitlessness of his desires. However, as explained by child psychologist Bernard Golse: "The question of limits is central for the development of a child. The absence of any prohibition is a dead end. A balanced mixture of listening and rules, is needed."

Saying a firm "no"

Isn't it common sense that occasionally leads parents to say a firm "no", which is both frustrating and reassuring for the child who is still uncertain in its universe? And this "no" must be expressed in the first person, in an "I" that fully assumes the limit imposed.

A condition that is not fulfilled by the expression that proliferates, such as: "Be careful, mother is going to scold Paul," instead of the more direct: "I am going to scold you," a form of extreme personalization that curiously plays out, not between "I" and "you", but between "he" and "she". As if no one were really involved in the relationship. Something that the child is quick to perceive and exploit.

Whether we like it or not, education also means constraining and upsetting in order to make children understand that they are not everything, that there is an outside world with its own reality, and laws of operation. Without this early and painful experience, the future adult is exposed to risky behaviour, lacking a sense of limits, and elementary discipline, which is a form of negativity that is actually very positive, since it ultimately convinces people that "I am not alone in the world" and am therefore responsible.

Self-governance, autonomy, must find the right but difficult balance with heteronomy, meaning, the law and the limits it imposes unilaterally, in other words, without agreement. In brief, not everything is negotiable. Setting limits does not only depend on one's own free will. And that's a good thing, because one only grows through what resists.

Each of us has experienced education since the early years of our existence. Given first by our parents, it continues at school and later in life, through contact with others. Throughout our lives, we receive educational lessons if we are attentive to what is happening around us. Because we tend to reason in the first-person singular: "I", while education enables us to reason in the first-person plural: "we".

As the above article helps us understand, education teaches children that they are not alone, that they are surrounded by other people, and that they must take this into account. We cannot allow ourselves everything, and there are limits to observe. In brief, education begins when our parents tell us "no". It is always nice to receive a positive response to our requests, desires and wishes. However, one day, when we what we wish for meets a negative response, perhaps accompanied by an explanation, it is time to grow up. That means, to accept this refusal and to understand that it is for our own good, and that, without it, we would later make mistakes in society.

It has become increasingly difficult to give our children a good education. Most of the time, both parents work. Often, couples are separated, and parents have shared custody of their children. Since the mother is not always with her children, she seeks to show them as much affection as possible. The father does the same. We are well aware of the education we should give to children, but circumstances often prevent us from being strict when necessary.

Furthermore, as members of the condemned human family, parents cannot give a child a perfect education. They themselves have received an incomplete education. Because the education necessary to become a "human being", worthy of the name, is of a completely different nature. It is no longer "only" a question of believing oneself to be alone in the world, or of consid-

her Prince Charming. She leaves the chalet, her pine trees, her lofty peaks and, above all, her grandmother's love. Like the prodigal son of the parable, Martha forsakes all of this in order to chase after a multicoloured bubble.

Her rapture lasts a few years. Then, her Prince Charming — caught up by the worldly spirit, eagerly seizing a chance to come into the limelight and to earn fame — leaves her. He thinks he is doing the right thing by her in giving her some money, being well-to-do. But to Martha's loving heart, which he has bruised and discarded, what in the world is the use of money? She is overwhelmed with despair. She would like to dispel this terrible nightmare, but she cannot get away from the fact. Jack's letter is crumpled in her hand:

"I'm off. I'm leaving, in a few moments, for another country, where I shall manage a business. You cannot follow me. Take back your freedom, as I am taking mine. You were not made for me, and I was not made for you.

Go back to your chalet. It is there that your happiness lies.

You can take all the money I have left in the desk for you. You are still very young and so have everything for starting life afresh. Our ways part here, so, goodbye Martha."

Martha comes in from the balcony. She sits a long while with her head buried in her hands, trying to fathom the depths of the abyss that has opened at her feet and that she feels is going to swallow her. She thinks: "Go back to the chalet? Grandmother is no longer there, she is in her grave. So, I cannot recover any of the past. The chalet has been let, and strangers are living there. The old-home atmosphere has been destroyed. All is ended, over forever. I'm desperate to get away from here, from this place, full of memories of my lost happiness, and to never see it again. But how in the world can I put an end to this terrible anguish? And on whom,

except myself, can I lay the blame? It is all the result of, and the just retribution for, my criminal, worthless and black ingratitude."

Desperate at heart, that evening, for the first time since she ran away from her childhood home, Martha turns to Him, to Whom her grandmother used to pray so fervently every evening. On her knees, she begs for forgiveness and for assistance.

A year has passed. Martha has gone away from the land of sunshine, to a distant country where no one knows her. She lives in solitude, shunning society, which, she feels, has forfeited her trust. She has found out, from personal experience, how empty and untrue worldly affection is. What a contrast it makes with the care, the very noble sentiments and the pure affection, displayed by her beloved grandmother!

Martha has undertaken a number of occupations to numb the pain in her heart. Now, however, winter, with the approach of

Christmas, revives the gloomy memory of the day when her world came tumbling down.

At the same time, it awakens an aching homesickness for her childhood surroundings. Her longing is intense...just to see the chalet, and to go and weep over her poor grandmother's grave. The kind heart she so deeply hurt by her ingratitude. If only she could tell her how sorry she is, how deeply she repents...to feel she is forgiven and to be able to find again the atmosphere of days gone by. She thought: "If I could go over our old Christmases in my heart, who knows, I might, recover that candid faith which used to be the foundation of my carefree happiness. I might efface the bad memories, last year's painful Christmas, forever. How wonderful that would be! Yes, I must return and spend Christmas in the chalet. But, it isn't possible. Oh dear, it's out of the question: there are strangers living there."

Martha suddenly remembers that those

ering our fellow person, but of learning to love them, and this is a long-term learning process that involves self-denial, the forgiveness of offences, and selflessness.

It is only at the School of Christ that we can receive that essential education for life. The Lord is willing to provide us with this education. He kindly offers it to us with these words: "I will instruct you and teach you the way that you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" (Psalm 32: 8). He sends all those who accept this invitation to our dear Saviour, who will advise and guide us if we accept his directions. He himself went through a very painful process, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that "he learned obedience through the things he suffered".

There is no happiness without education. All those who want to continue to do their own will and who refuse to experience the limits that Jacques Le Goff reminds us of, will be disappointed, because it is true that our happiness partly depends on the good that we do to our fellow person. We cannot be selfishly happy. It's an impossibility. But let's remain confident. The time will come when, by virtue of the Sacrifice that was so nobly paid by our dear Saviour, all people will receive the divine education and will, one day, be able to live in joy and happiness on the restored Earth, for all eternity.

My experience with animals

The following very moving and instructive article was published in the German-language magazine *Neue Post*:

My friend Mihajlo invited me to his home in Montenegro [a country in south-east Europe], to go bear hunting. The day before I arrived, he had set a trap. When we arrived at the trap site, we saw that a mother bear had been caught in the trap by her right rear foot. She was fiercely trying to free herself from its merciless "jaws", but to no avail! Two cubs desperately clung to her. On seeing us, the mother showed her hatred by gnashing her teeth.

The scene was really heartbreaking. As the guest, I would have the right to shoot first. But I gave up. Without a moment's hesitation, my host raised his rifle. At that moment, the bear drew her cubs to herself with one of her front paws, and seemed to be saying a final and tender farewell. With her other front paw, she covered her eyes and moaned pitifully, probably so as not to see the shot fired.

Mihajlo put his rifle down and said in an oppressed voice: "I can't do it either." No shot having been fired, the bear looked on in astonishment. She pressed her cubs even more tightly against her and remained motionless.

We dismantled the trap using long poles, and the bear hobbled away, caressing her cubs many times. This sight filled us with deep emotion. Mihajlo vowed, at that moment, to never set a bear trap again. That was twenty years ago, and he kept his word.

The above experience gives us an insight into the deep feelings that animals are capable of. It is interesting to see the mother bear's ability to observe and understand what to expect from the rifle. It is very moving to see her reaction to the imminent fatal shot. On the one hand, she hugs her cubs to protect them, and on the other hand, she lets out her heartbreaking moan at the painful prospect of death.

We are delighted that the two hunters had enough heart to not use their weapons. It is foreseen, in the admirable law that governs God's arrangements, that human beings are the royalty of the earthly creation, and must be the benefactors and protectors of the animals. That is why, in the approaching Restoration of All Things, which will begin after the end of the current time of the Permission of Evil, humankind will no longer hunt or kill animals. There will be no more violence,

exploitation or disgraceful passions, which are the result of the selfish mentality. Then, the relations between humans and animals, will be peaceful. The beneficial and radiant influence of the Spirit of God, will produce marvellous divine harmony, the source of infinite joy.

When the strong assert themselves to the detriment of the weak, the result is discontent, pain and death. "The rule of life", on which all of creation rests, reveals this basic condition, which is that every member of creation devotes themselves entirely to the good of those around them. This law not only governs the material creation, but must also and above all, animate all living beings.

That divine rule is also the measure that enables us to see all things in their true light.

"My son, pay attention..."

The above advice was given by Solomon in the Book of Proverbs, and we can see its relevance when we read the following article, published in the French newspaper *Ouest-France* on the 21st of January 2020, and written by Jacques Le Goff:

Attention: a quality to be rediscovered

On the 1st of February in Paris, there will be the "Conference on Attention", which is an initiative of a number of associations concerned about the general decline in the quality of attention. It is a first that deserves...attention, because the stakes are high for life together. In addition to "the disastrous effects on the health and lives of young people", say the organizers, the problem "threatens our ability to live together".

With regard to the first aspect concerning young people, we know the extent to which the frequent use of screens not only has damaging, but devastating effects on children's minds and their ability to go outside of themselves to socialize, including through language learning. Recent studies show that children who are exposed to screens before going to school, have 6 times more difficulty acquiring basic knowledge because of a lack of attention.

But the problem also affects adults, largely because of the role played by the new media in our lives, and in an attitude that is no less passive. The average amount of time that over-15-year-old children are exposed to television is almost 4 hours per day, which is 70% of their free time. It is estimated that by the age of 80, people have spent 11 years of their lives watching TV. In addition to this is the time spent browsing other screens, with a considerable intellectual absent-mindedness effect.

The acceleration of the pace of life, and the infinite multiplication of demands, hamper the ability to concentrate and the continuity essential for intellectual activity and the most ordinary social life.

Perpetual zapping

How can we develop a minimum of coherent thinking, and how can we pay attention to our immediate human environment, in a situation where mobile phones are checked every 5 minutes in 80% of cases? We are undoubtedly communicating, but the purpose of the communication and its content, is less important than the fact of being connected and thus escaping the obviously "fearful" risk of solitude. As the Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan said in 1964: "The medium is the message."

As a result, our lives tend to become more and more fluctuating. We pick and choose according to our moods and requests, in a form of perpetual zapping or of an accumulation of simultaneous activities, which are mutually damaging. This has a catastrophic effect on reading quality, since it is estimated that only 20% of text on screens is actually read. As a result, screen time is becoming a "system of interruption" and a crushing of existence, such that the "inner life" loses its unity and largely its reality, at the expense of "extimacy" [the

opposite of intimacy], of appearances brought to a pinnacle by selfies in our self-expressive society.

In his book titled The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction, the American writer and research fellow Michael B. Crawford sees distraction, at its worst, as "the original sin of the mind", and attention as one of the most important qualities in both personal and collective life, where it forms the basis of empathy, solidarity and commitment. Basically, it's where it all begins, in the way we look or don't look at something other than ourselves. In this respect, the French philosopher Simone Weil was right to consider, in a letter to Joe Bousquet, that "attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity".

Above, we have information about the effects of prolonged exposure to screens, with the first shortcoming being a disconnect from reality, followed by a lack of empathy for others, difficulties in communicating with those around one, and attention and concentration problems and consequently learning difficulties, especially for children. Jacques Le Goff also talks about intellectual absent-mindedness, perpetual zapping, an accumulation of simultaneous activities, a system of interruption, and a crushing of existence that annihilates the inner life.

What makes those phenomena worse is the addiction induced by screens. Jacques Le Goff says that by the age of 80, people have spent 11 years of their lives watching television. That's a lot!

Our attention — which should actually be directed towards duty: learning, relationships with fellow people, and work — has been captured by pleasure: video games, television, the internet and all the content it broadcasts, social networks, the mobile phone with all its possibilities for communication, exchanging texts and images. McLuhan's statement is true: "The medium is the message." In other words, the medium has become the goal, and paradoxically by giving our attention to devices, they make us lose it. That is the feat of "the digital giants", which have been able to capture the public's attention for their own benefit through developed and proven techniques.

Behind all of that, we can recognize the will of the Adversary (Satan), who wants to numb human beings in order to be able to deceive them better. Satan blinds all those whom he wants to destroy, and he has the means to do so. Apostle Peter advises us to: "Resist him, standing firm in your faith." 1 Peter 5: 9.

We very fortunately know that our dear Saviour came and crushed the head of the serpent (the Adversary), and tied up the strong man (the Devil), and took from him the contents of his house (humanity). Through his Sacrifice, he won the triple victory over the world, the Adversary and death. Through his Work of Redemption, all humankind will be able to regain their destiny: eternal life, on the restored Earth.

How can we establish peace?

The French newspaper *Ouest-France*, on the 25th of September 2023, published the following article — written by Michel Gourd, in the "Letters to the Editor" section — which says a lot about the current state of the world:

United Nations:

There are 52 armed conflicts on the planet

It was an important speech made in New York on the 5th of September by the outgoing president of the United Nations General Assembly. Mr Csaba Körösi (of Hungary) used the handover to Mr Dennis Francis (of Trinidad and Tobago) to outline the main things that he learned from his term in office.

Mr Csaba Körösi stated, at the start of his speech, that despite the geopolitical rivalries among the countries,

people go there in the fine weather and never in winter. So, the chalet is vacant. She takes a long time to make up her mind, for she feels those people must know her story. Her desire is stronger than all other considerations. Gathering her courage, she writes to express her wish. Then, she waits in anxious expectation, and, at last, her letter is answered. And what an answer! It is so unexpected and so full of feeling and words that pull at Martha's heartstrings:

"How well we understand your great desire to be in the chalet on Christmas Eve! Joseph, my son, will be there, with me, to receive you. It is cold in winter, there being so much snow. But it will be nice and warm inside, and a meal will be ready for you. If you agree, we will have it together. Then, we shall leave you to your deep thoughts. You shall have your old bedroom, and nothing has been changed in the chalet, in accordance with the wish your grandmother delighted in expressing to us,

for we knew, loved and respected her. She was our friend, and so often, she would lovingly tell us all about her granddaughter. In loving remembrance of her, we look forward to meeting you."

Martha's heart jumps with joy. Tears stream down her cheeks, but these are gentle and consoling tears. Who can they be, these open-hearted people, so generous and so feeling? They knew her grandmother so very well. For the first time since last Christmas, she sees a ray of light. How hopefully she is looking forward to meeting these friends of her grandmother at Christmas at the chalet!

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Christmas bells are merrily ringing. Martha is climbing the steep path which leads to the chalet. She has already caught a glimpse of it. There are lights in every window. Suddenly, she feels her heart is going to burst. Her legs are trembling and refuse their service. She must stop and rest. Her emotion is too intense.

Making a great effort, she manages to go all the way. With a shaking hand, she knocks.

The door opens promptly, and framed in the doorway, she sees a kind-looking woman, with greying hair, who spontaneously and warmly opens her arms to her. Martha goes to her eagerly and is clasped in a motherly embrace in which she remains for a while with her head on that friendly shoulder, feeling that she has indeed come home.

"How good this is!" she thinks. She has shed a few refreshing tears, and a wonderful feeling of relaxation comes over her. Martha's heart, so long in distress, feels enveloped in kindness, affection and tenderness. "Can this really be possible? The atmosphere of the chalet is just like it used to be," she further thinks. She goes in, and a quick glance around her, tells her that nothing has changed, everything is tidily in its place, exactly where grandmother used to place it.

There is a tall young man there, who, with

an unobtrusive air of distinction, greets her respectfully. Then, they sit down at the table, and a plate of hot soup is served after having prayed like grandmother used to.

Then, the young man explains it all to Martha in a voice rich with emotion: "I'm an evangelist and am bringing everywhere the message of divine grace, of the Kingdom of God, which leads to the peace promised in Bethlehem. I was in this district. Night had fallen, and I had just decided to turn my steps homeward, when I perceived a light through the pine trees. I went towards it and discovered this chalet, lost in the mountains. I knocked gently, with the desire of also bringing here the message, the dewdrop of divine grace.

Your dear grandmother received me as she would an angel, a messenger from Heaven. Her heart was well prepared, and she drank it all in like a thirsty child and obtained great consolation from it. She had no trouble at all

the survival of humanity depends on the cooperation of all. We are in a race against time to get there. ... To achieve this, countries must stop acting short-sightedly for local gain, and instead engage in actions that will benefit everyone. Multilateralism is the only way to resolve the multiple crises affecting the inhabitants of the planet.

According to Mr Csaba Körösi, we are moving away from achieving the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that have been set for 2030 [the SDGs are "a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity, for people and the planet, now and into the future"]. These goals should therefore urgently be transformed into budgetary goals. The next 10 years will be crucial for improving the foreseeable future. ...

Created by 51 countries [States] in 1945 under the United Nations Charter, the General Assembly today brings 193 countries together. In December, it will be 75 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations, and only a year ago, the General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution, adding "the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment".

Those rights must be respected by all countries. Unfortunately, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there are currently 52 armed conflicts on the planet. The existence of these conflicts reminds us of the urgent need for better control of nuclear weapons.

The new president, Mr Dennis Francis, has asked whether we are ready to finance the survival of humanity. Each country should prioritize spending that will strengthen sustainable international cooperation...

According to the point of view of the outgoing president of the United Nations General Assembly, countries must make decisions based on the key consensus [maintain international peace and security, protect human rights, provide humanitarian aid, promote sustainable development, and ensure respect for international law. Editor's note], making it possible to manage the challenges facing the planet in a way that will benefit everyone. He also noted that international finance is not working to address climate change or to protect the most vulnerable. This is why he believes that urgent action is needed to protect our common survival. ...

From the above article, it seems that the survival of humankind and the planet, is becoming a hot topic that mobilizes our leaders. This is a good thing, but achieving it will come up against the particular interests of various countries. Not everyone is prepared to deny themselves for the benefit of the community and nature. But that is exactly what needs to be done. To embrace a common cause, we often have to give up our own interests, but not everyone is happy about this.

Michel Gourd reports that there are currently 52 armed conflicts on the planet. What a contradiction with the invitation to countries to work to save the planet and its inhabitants, "despite the geopolitical rivalries among the countries", he adds. In fact, nothing pollutes more than waging war. What a waste! Then, we have to clear out the landmines, clean up the pollution, and rebuild, all at great expense. Is this really reasonable? Is there anything reasonable at all in this misguided world? Countries that are not in the grip of

war, are urged to work to save the planet. Meanwhile, countries in conflict can wage war and therefore kill, pillage, destroy and pollute as much as they want! It all makes no sense! And for those who think about it, it's all very confusing.

In fact, the state of war is much more widespread than we might think. Humankind are already in conflict with themselves because their mind is in opposition to their body. That is what Apostle Paul expresses when he says: "The flesh has desires that are contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit contrary to the flesh" (Galatians 5: 17). Under those conditions, how can we expect agreement, consensus and general unity, which are essential factors for peace?

We know that, despite all the efforts made by some people of goodwill, it is not peace that will triumph in today's world, but an unprecedented Tribulation, as our dear Saviour himself announces in his great prophecy recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 24. He tells us about a Distress that will be so great that there has been nothing like it since the beginning of the world, until now and will never be again. He specifies that if those days were not shortened, no one would be saved (Matthew 24: 21 and 22). So, we know what to expect. Why will there be such a Distress? It is the result, the harvest, of what the nations have sown. It cannot be avoided, because, as the Prophet Isaiah says: "When grace is shown to the wicked man, he does not learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26: 10). But we also know that this Tribulation will be followed by the Kingdom of God, which will be established on the ruins of the present world, which no one will regret.

to understand divine truth. From that time forward, every time I worked around here, there would be a lodging for me in the chalet. Then, my mother also came to the chalet to visit your grandmother. Here, we have lived through moments of delight and blessing, unforgettable moments. At last, your grandmother came to her decline. We were with her when the end came. She was convinced of the Resurrection and that she would see you again on the great day of awakening in the Realm of God, restored on Earth. She was at peace at her departure, with the certainty of meeting again, for her faith was strong, and her heart joyful. She was so happy to think that we were going to take care of the chalet till your return, of which she had no doubt at all. Before she went to sleep, we were further able to sing her two of our hymns which were very dear to her."

"Please sing them to me, too!" Martha exclaims.

In a warm and vibrant voice, Joseph then sings:

*God always forgiveth
Hearts who grief display,
And, his Son, He giveth
Our Ransom to pay.
To Earth, He descended,
Right to guarantee,
Saith to man unfriended:
"Hope, I died for thee."
'Gainst sinners, there lurketh,
In God, no ill will.
His love, in them, worketh
His ways to instill.
His calling doth cheer us,
His voice is most kind,
Free are all his hearers
To make up their mind.
When, wretched and cheerless,
One longeth for peace,
His light's tender clearness
Is sure to increase.
God's view is extensive,
Sees each burdened heart,
His love is attentive,
Comfort to impart.*

Martha finds those heavenly words very comforting. She understands at once: "It was for my sake that grandmother loved this hymn!" She has a big lump in her throat. Then, the young evangelist fetches the good treasures out of his heart, tells her about the true God, the only real God, Who never punishes, and Who only has kind and affectionate thoughts. Martha understands. God's great forgiveness sinks gently to the bottom of her heart. The echoes of the sublime impressions of the divine message, ring in her heart, which thirsts for peace and kindness. The little spark of faith lit in her heart by her grandmother's loving care, has started to glow again. Her whole being vibrates to the ideal of the Kingdom of God, and it grants her a new and broader outlook. She has the impression of awakening from a long and horrible dream. Sunlight streams into her heart, which has matured under the influence

of trial, and she is much better able to grasp the reason for everything.

So, Jack's letter appears quite different to her: "You were not made for me, and I was not made for you." How well she now understands the truth of this. "Take back your freedom, as I am taking mine." Yes, it is better like this. That was what had to be. "Our ways part here." But they will come together again at the Resurrection, when all things will be new.

Martha's heart has found peace once more. She can breathe freely. The Lord has kept watch...and with such wisdom and such great kindness! He has directed things well: everything is for the best.

On this Christmas Eve in the little chalet, the hours go by in delightful company. Martha is happy. This warm atmosphere of faith and of elevation of mind, and the noble sentiments of the Kingdom of God, are the very things she needs. Therein lies her happiness. She is on the threshold, by the grace of God, of a future of blessing.

Suddenly, there is the sound of midnight bells. It is time to retire. Before parting for the night, the young man stands up, deeply moved at heart, to also sing the second hymn that grandmother so much loved:

*When every race, great King of glory,
Thou 'neath thy sceptre's rule doth bring,
Then, of the grave, where is the vict'ry,
Also of death, where is the sting?
Dear children of the Resurrection,
See them returning from the dead,
Hark how they sing their jubilation,
See youth eternal crown their head.
All Heav'n and Earth hold festive season:
Jesus' sweet voice, the dead have heard,
They all have come forth from their prison,
No more can death hold them interred.
They come, great joy their brows adorning,
Those whom from chains, the Lord hath freed,
All those for whom we have been mourning,
His love doth give them back indeed.
This is the day, Christ's day of gladness,
Hosanna! Victory is his!
His rule is made of loving-kindness,
His Kingdom is the Reign of bliss.
To God, our Father, praise and glory,
And to the Lamb of God, this day,
Who, with such tender love, on Calv'ry,
Ransom for all mankind did pay.*

All three are deeply moved. The gentle and serene Christmas atmosphere, that of the real Christmas, fills the chalet. Penetrated with gladness and gratitude, they kneel in deep emotion and join like a single heart to pay homage to the God of all compassion, of all love and of all forgiveness, and to the Lamb of God, the great Saviour of the world, the divine King of Glory, and the Prince of Peace.

News in brief of the Reign of Justice

Here we are at the end of the year, and we can bear witness to God's patience that has allowed us to continue to this day. That is

why we want to express our gratitude to Him, and to take stock of the year that is drawing to a close, because we still have many shortcomings, all of which have been covered by the precious merits of our dear Saviour. It is thanks to him, our great Redeemer, that we are still here and can appear before the Throne of Grace, equipped with his precious merits.

On the 25th of December, we will have the joy of gathering to celebrate the birth of our dear Saviour on Earth. On this occasion, we will read a presentation that dear Messenger brought in his time, and that we give here in summary:

"We are assembled today in a festive meeting by the Almighty, Who wishes us to hear his fatherly, affectionate and tender voice, and to speak to us in a very special way in order to encourage our hearts in the Good Fight of Faith. ...

When we think about the power and glory that the Son of God put aside in order to accomplish Salvation, we gain a small notion of the indescribable effort that was made by the Lord God and by our dear Saviour, in order to achieve the Deliverance and restoration of humanity.

Our dear Saviour was tested in his attachment and faithfulness, beyond all measure. He was the Firstborn, the only being conceived by the Lord God Himself. And this was long ago...perhaps millions of years before the Earth existed! As the Only Begotten, he was far above heavenly glories. He created everything. Nothing was made without him. ...

But then...humanity was lost. It had to be saved. So, without hesitation, the Almighty sounded the call: 'Who is worthy...?' The Son also responded without hesitation. He left Heaven, the honours, the glory, the power and his Father's communion. He appeared on Earth as a little child, limited in everything to the possibilities of a human being.

That was a very long and big journey. It began with his departure from Heaven, and continued with his captivity in Mary's womb, until his birth in a stable. ...

That journey of unfathomable love was the initial cause of other journeys that also required much sacrifice, goodwill, faith, and submission to divine ways. For this, a great preparation of the heart was necessary, especially for Mary, so that she could become the mother of the Messiah. Because she was not chosen by chance. It was because she made herself worthy. But it cost her a journey filled with painful events, and acts of faith, from the appearance of the angel, to the tragedy of Golgotha, where she had to see the Son of God nailed to the Cross.

It also took the courage and noble sentiments of Joseph, for whom the journey was quite arduous in many respects. If we try to put ourselves in his place, we understand

him. He flinched for a moment, but the Lord came to his aid with infinite kindness. Faith triumphed in him, thanks to his honesty.

It also required the respectful feelings and preparation of the shepherds, which enabled them to receive the testimony of the angels, and to pass it on to those around them, so that it still reaches us today, in all its purity and sublime grandeur.

It took the faith and perseverance of the Wise Men in order to complete the long journey that lay ahead of them, and in order to show themselves worthy to bear witness to Herod, to greet the Messiah and to provide his parents with what they needed to travel to Egypt. It took the participation of Zechariah and Elizabeth, of Simeon who received the child in the temple, and of Anna the Prophetess to sustain, in well-disposed hearts, Israel's hope in the coming of the Saviour. ...

Our dear Saviour came to Earth in order to restore everything to perfection. ... If we consider his fantastic activity during those three and a half years, we realize that he never let a minute go by without using it in a useful and wise way, always for good and blessing. He was also profoundly active in prayer. And let us not forget that Apostle John tells us that if we wanted to write down everything that our dear Saviour did during that very limited time, all the books on Earth would not be sufficient. This helps us to grasp some of the value of our dear Saviour's Work.

That prodigious activity of our dear Saviour serves as a profound reminder of an immense power that probes us down to the joints and marrow. Indeed, how do we redeem time? Have we redeemed it during the year that is ending? Have we used all our minutes and all our seconds as precious gifts from God, for our ministry? Or have we wasted a lot of time on ourselves? ...

Therefore, we want to joyfully and faithfully complete the journey proposed to us, without turning to the left or the right, without letting ourselves be distracted by anything or hindered by the things of life. ... If we wish to overcome at this festive and definitive moment, we must be courageous, honest and energetic, with no leniency for what must disappear. Then, we can be employed for the testimony, as the faithful once were. Otherwise, we will not be employable. ...

There is a lot of Work to be done, but true faith is far more powerful than all difficulties, as it is capable of moving mountains. Therefore, if the obstacles before us are immense, they will fall like shadows before the faithful people of God. We must soon be ready to be employed for God's glory as the revealing to humanity."