

## **VIOLENCE: CERTAINLY NOT OUR LORD'S WAY!**

by  
+Photios (W)

*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God (St. Matthew 5: 9)*

Violence here, there, everywhere! When will it end? Obviously, never. The Evil One is the prince of this world. He directs explicitly and at times indirectly his evil agenda. But our society seems to relish it, lives for it, spends much of its time watching it on television or the movies, reading about it on the Net, in newspapers, on blogs, etc. ad nauseam. If we follow *this* world, it will never be eliminated.

### Domestic Violence

Indeed, some act as if they are almost gleeful about these turns of events. We are enamoured with news about domestic murder, serial killers, gang killings, mothers drowning their young children, carving them up, burying them in the backyard and other grisly murder thrillers. Our television programmes are inundated with gruesome acts of random and/or planned violence. These are perfectly respectable apparently to those in charge of these pathetic depictions of Western Civilisation (as it is called); however, some of the same shows seem conflicted by the mere utterance of words, particularly of the four letter kind. They seem obsessed with cutting out every four letter word their characters shout, but see no problem in their ripped hero or extremely-well endowed heroine slicing up/mutilating others' faces or various anatomical parts, either by knife or more usually automatic gunfire, which has a higher intestinal-gutting coefficient!

As I write this homily, a new' normal murder in our metropolis has just occurred. A young neighbour was working on his lawn. He and his wife had children. A car came by going too fast; and, apparently, this had happened before. The young man waved at the driver and shouted something to the effect to slow down please. The driver turned around and came back and an argument ensued. The driver left and returned later with several young toughs. They proceeded to beat the young man (about 27 years of age I believe) to DEATH! All have been arrested and are being charged. But isn't this unbelievable! You kill someone who is simply being a good neighbour. I am not positive but would bet this is gang related.

As I am finishing this homily, another incredible story has come out from a Midwestern state. A 17-year-old strangled his 10-year-old brother while they were wrestling at their home, then drove his body to a park and dumped it. News accounts say the prosecutors have filed an affidavit regarding what he told them – that he choked his brother “to satisfy a craving like a hungry person eating a hamburger”. [Associated Press, December 4, 2009] Apparently, he also told them he had dreamed of such a killing since he was in the eighth grade. He has never

been in trouble before, earned As and Bs and was considered “normal”. He is being tried as an adult.

What kinds of families do the teenagers who beat the neighbour to death come from? Are they the permissive types who let the kids do as they wish, watch anything they want, and are never told “no” to any request, no matter how absurd? Perhaps their parents let them watch violent movies and programmes on TV, buy brutal games that are all the rage, watch ultimate fighting in a cage on TV. Did the parents of the purported strangler really know their teenage son? Did they know his friends? Did he come from a Christian home?

What about you? Are you ‘guilty’ of these permissive things as a parent? Then, do you really know your children? Or, are they on their way to destruction as the four or five who beat to death their neighbour and the 17 year old being tried as an adult?

Notice how many ‘cop shows’ have been and are featured on our television. The complex thriller and decent family shows have been replaced by those sponsoring widespread general mayhem. The good guys many times are difficult to distinguish from the bad ones, e.g., on *The Shield*.

And let’s not forget the most serious and extensive violence in America – the massacring of young unborn babies in the name of “convenience”. Please see my homily *Abortion Is Willful Murder* regarding how the True Church feels about these atrocities.

[\[http://stjamesthejust.com/features/\(003\)%20Abortion%20Is%20Willful%20Murder!.pdf\]](http://stjamesthejust.com/features/(003)%20Abortion%20Is%20Willful%20Murder!.pdf)

The Lord *is* the opposite of all the above. He exudes love, compassion, mercy, justice, and wisdom. But you (and I) *must* change our behaviour. Jesus is perfect and sinless. We are not.

External Violence

Like war

What is wrong with God’s people? Why has war been ongoing through history? Our country is in two of them now.

Well, war continues unabated because countries through their leaders and people follow the evil of this world and not the spiritual purity of the next one, Christ’s. Now, it is also true that many wars have been fought over religion. Our two current wars have this religious dimension on the Islamic side. But no one has ever truthfully followed Jesus Christ into physical war. Christ is the great healer and reconciler of life. His is a positive message. Wayward organisations thirsting for power have done so misappropriating His name and message. The Lord would be the first to disapprove of them. The Roman Catholic papacy is one such outfit, burning and killing those who didn’t agree with them, commissioning armies to enforce their will on others, including launching attacks against the Holy Orthodox Church, forcing all those within their dominion (or trying to) to be only RCs. These activities of force are completely

incompatible with the Way of Christ. Jesus offers us His Way and doesn't compel us to follow Him. We are free to choose Him, or not. The papacy has not been the only culprit of course. Acts of violence by the Czars and other royalty in the name of the Lord should be similarly viewed. Protestants mimicking Roman acts of violence purportedly in His name are not in His name either.

True Christians are spiritual warriors for Christ not for those in this world. The government may engage in warfare on behalf of the citizenry, but we cannot. Christians are bound by Scripture and Tradition as Christ revealed to us. If true Christians can fight our enemies when we are under our Christian obligation to love them, the contents of the Sermon of the Mount would mean little. True Christians cannot take up the sword or exact vengeance. Guns and other weapons are those of this world. We cannot have two masters. We must choose. We choose the spiritual world, Christ's. As True Christians, we are to turn the other cheek. We are to be spiritual pacifists.

### Atrocities

Millions upon millions of pious Christians and Jews have been massacred throughout history, and it continues today. Christian examples include massacre of the unborn (abortion – about 46,000,000 to date, certainly another holocaust quite similar to Adolf Hitler's Final Solution in which the Nazis exterminated 6,000,000 Jews; of course, the babies are killed as convenience not because they are Christians in the USA – at least not yet), multiple millions of Assyrians, Armenians, Greeks slaughtered because of their Christian Faith, some estimate about 50,000,000 to 65,000,000 Orthodox Christians similarly dealt with including being sent to persecution camps from which most never returned, the millions killed by Hitler's death machine in the gas chambers during World War II, and millions in the Sudan, Uganda, Cambodia, Bosnia et al. Religious prejudice stands at the center of most of these many times coupled with tribalism. The subject of atrocities is too vast to cover adequately in this homily. I will deal with it later in perhaps a short series.

Needless to say, True Christians do not massacre other Christians or other faiths. I know history points out that people purporting to be Christians have done so, but they didn't act for our Lord Jesus Christ. The preacher of the Sermon on the Mount would never have condoned such unspeakable actions. We are to pattern our lives after Him.

Yet, Christians have been and are continually killed, run out of their houses, their villages burned to the ground, lose their jobs and all assets and are driven from the country of their birth and origin simply because they are Christians, particularly in Muslim operated or dominated countries. This is going on as this homily is being written. Remember though that we must forgive all evil even though this is extremely difficult. God will not forgive us unless we do. Also, as this homily is being written, we are in the aftermath of the Ft. Hood Texas massacre, only 13 dead, chicken feed as atrocities go. But never forget, to Americans all life is precious. That's what separates us from the killers. We learned this principle from Christ Our Lord. Never forget it!

## What Are We To Spiritually Do?

True Christians must support Christ's spiritual Way of Peace and Reconciliation and stand resolutely against the Evil One. We should look inward rather than point fingers at others. What we need are millions on millions of true believers who then travel through the hills and valleys of America peacefully preaching the True Gospel of Holy Orthodoxy, the love for Christ, power of repentance and forgiveness, the sanctity of life. Concentrate upon *ourselves*. Change our own hearts. If we do have such a spiritual revolution, things can be quite different. It is even possible that our staunchest enemies would come to Christ because of our examples through Christ.

Skeptics may laugh, but many persecutors have chosen Christ (or He has chosen them) when confronted with the passive, yet never yielding constancy of Christians voluntarily suffering until their final physical deaths. Their shining spiritual examples so mesmerised their torturers that the torturers came forward and converted to Jesus on the spot and then peacefully went to their physical deaths.

Don't you see – it is not physical death that is crucial to us – it is our state of spirituality upon physical death. Christ conquered death. Examples abound of tremendous acts of both individual and group spiritual heroism, here are just two:

TRUE LOVE FROM THE MURDERED TO THE MURDERER [Home Page,  
<http://www.stjamesthejust.com> ]

An account by Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, heroic imprisoned minister, as in Orthodox Heritage, Message of the Month (March 2003)

“At my right hand was an Orthodox priest by the name of Iscu. He was Abbot of a monastery. This man, perhaps in his 40s, had been so tortured he was near to death. But his face was serene. He spoke about his hope of heaven, about his love of Christ, about his faith. He radiated joy. On my left side was the Communist torturer who had tortured this priest almost to death. He had been arrested by his own comrades. And so it happened that the Communist torturer who had tortured this priest nearly to death had been tortured nearly to death by his comrades. And he was dying near me. His soul was in agony. During the night he would awaken me saying, ‘Pastor, please pray for me. I can't die, I have committed such terrible crimes.’

Then I saw a miracle. I saw the agonizing priest calling two other prisoners. And leaning on their shoulders, slowly, slowly he walked past my bed, sat on the bedside of his murderer, and caressed his head – I will never forget this gesture. I watched a murdered man caressing his murderer! That is love – he found a caress for him.

The priest said to the man, ‘You are young; you did not know what you were doing. I love you with all my heart.’ But he did not just say the words. You can say ‘love,’ and it's just a word of four letters. But he really loved. ‘I love you with all my heart.’ Then he went on, ‘If I who am a

sinner can love you so much, imagine Christ, Who is Love incarnate, how much He loves you! And all the Christians whom you have tortured, know that they forgive you, they love you, and Christ loves you. He wishes you to be saved much more than you wish to be saved. You wonder if your sins can be forgiven. He wishes to forgive your sins more than you wish your sins to be forgiven. He desires for you to be with Him in Heaven. He is love. You only need to turn to him and repent.’ In this prison cell in which there was no possibility of privacy, I overheard the confession of the murderer to the murdered. Life is more thrilling than a novel – no novelist has ever written such a thing. The murdered – near to death – received the confession of the murderer. The murdered gave absolution to this murderer.

They prayed together, embraced each other, and the priest went back to his bed. Both men died that same night. It was Christmas Eve. But it was not a Christmas Eve in which we simply remembered that 2000 years ago Jesus was born in Bethlehem. It was a Christmas Eve during which Jesus was born in the heart of a Communist murderer.”

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The Nuns of Shamordino, whose spiritual and physical courage were too much for their Communist Commandant – see this touching homily about them [http://www.stjamesthejust.com/archives%20\(features\)%20/\(113\)%20The%20'Rebel'%20Nuns%20Of%20Shamordino%20-%20They%20Shame%20Us%20All..pdf](http://www.stjamesthejust.com/archives%20(features)%20/(113)%20The%20'Rebel'%20Nuns%20Of%20Shamordino%20-%20They%20Shame%20Us%20All..pdf)> [THE ‘REBEL’ NUNS OF SHAMORDINO: THEY SHAME US ALL!!]

Our task, among many others, is to turn the other cheek. See the homily [http://www.stjamesthejust.com/homilies/topical/\(69\)%20Turning%20the%20Other%20Cheek-%20Jesus%20Is%20Serious%20About%20It!.pdf](http://www.stjamesthejust.com/homilies/topical/(69)%20Turning%20the%20Other%20Cheek-%20Jesus%20Is%20Serious%20About%20It!.pdf) [TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK: JESUS IS SERIOUS ABOUT IT!]

Let us practise our true Christianity passionately, not in a lukewarm fashion. Follow the Gospel and Tradition and pay specific attention to the Sermon on the Mount, not the hedonistic whims of *this* world; concentrate on ourselves interiorly, pray the Jesus Prayer unceasingly, pray to Our Lord for this world but prepare ourselves for the next one, His, and forgive our enemies remember that if we do not do so, He will not forgive us.

Our task is to free ourselves from the odious chains of the devil’s world and bring people together peacefully in understanding:

*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God (St. Matthew 5:9)*

Peacemakers is a broader term than one might think. Its meaning includes “not only those who are themselves peaceful with all, but also those who reconcile others who are at odds” plus “those who by their teaching convert the enemies of God.” [St. Theophylact , *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to Matthew* (tr. From the Greek by Ft. Christopher Stade,) Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, Chapter 5:9, p. 46.] The “Only-

begotten Son reconciled us to God when we were His enemies". By teaching the Gospel to convert God's enemies, we act in a similar function as Christ did in our case, as "sons of God". [*ibid.*] Christ blesses those who live in a peaceful manner with their neighbours, who act as spiritual mediators with others who are in dispute with each other and who by their teaching convert God's enemies. Our duty as true Christians is not only to love our neighbours but also our enemies, which, after all, is a more difficult task but nevertheless extremely important.

Although functioning as a peacemaker can be wonderful, it might not be ideally suited for all who serve their flocks. Make sure *your* soul isn't compromised by your efforts:

"123. (About 'Blessed are the peacemakers'.) – It is best to make peace in your own heart. This is proper for everyone, and blessed are those who do it. But to make peace between those who have quarreled is not proper for everyone, but only for those who can undertake it without harm to themselves. A weak man must rejoice when there is peace among all men; but he must not make himself an intermediary for the reconciliation of all men, but only of those whom he loves in God, and even this only if there is no risk of harming his own soul."

[Holy Fathers Barsanuphius and John, *Directions in Spiritual Work*, Writings from the Philokalia On Prayer of the Heart (tr. from the Russian text 'DOBROTOLUBIYE' by E. Kadloubovsky and G.E.H. Palmer, Faber and Faber, paperback edition 1991, p. 378.)]

If we all cease warring against the Saviour, we can come to peace with Him. In order to do this, we must recognise the Devil as our enemy and fight him relentlessly. If this world truly loved God and took the required spiritual action against the Devil, evil would be defeated because our self-love from which evil comes would no longer exist:

"33. Since self-love is, as I have said, the origin and mother of evil, when this is eradicated all the things which derive from it are eradicated as well. For when self love is absent, not the slightest trace or form of evil can exist in any way at all."

[St. Maximos the Confessor in *The Philokalia* (compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth), Volume Two, Faber and Faber, London paperback edition 1990, p. 172.]

How should we use "peace"? In the right way:

"40. Let us use peace in the right way: repudiating our evil alliance with the world and its ruler, let us break off the war which we wage against God through the passions. Concluding an unbreakable covenant of peace with Him by destroying the body of sin within us (cf. Romans 6: 6), let us put an end to our hostility towards Him.

"41. Rebelling as we do against God through the passions and agreeing to pay tribute in the form of evil to that cunning tyrant and murderer of souls, the devil, we cannot be reconciled with God until we have first begun to fight against the devil with all our strength. For even

though we assume the name of faithful Christians, until we have made ourselves the devil's enemies and fight against him, we continue *by deliberate choice* (emphasis supplied) to serve the shameful passions. And nothing of profit will come to us from our peace in the world, for our soul is in an evil state, rebelling against its own Maker and unwilling to be subject to His kingdom. It is still sold into bondage to hordes of savage masters, who urge it towards evil and treacherously contrive to make it choose the way which leads to destruction instead of that which leads to salvation."

[*Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.]

Lastly, consider these questions:

Ever ask yourself what Jesus really thinks about violence? Can you really envision Him with machine guns draped over both shoulders, a heavy band of ammunition around His waist and/or carried over His shoulders, and barking orders in four letter, or little more, words to His disciples (us)?

Does He challenge His persecutors with "Make My day"?

Does He approve of Rambo behaviour/methods?

Is He a first-century Jack Bauer?

If you ask Him, "Lord, may I please abort my child who lives in my womb?," will He say "Yes, My child."?

What are we going to do about this 'unChristlike' violence?

Let's spiritually transform ourselves in Christ's image as we are supposed to be. And, let's do it *now* before it's too late! Put down our guns and take up His Cross as ours! Be a pacifist like Our Lord!!

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

