

16<sup>th</sup> December 2003

## Message on World Peace Day

### *Appeal of the Presidency of Justice and Peace Europe*

With difficulties, media is searching for images of peace in this our world full of violence. But peace is a difficult thing to communicate. This increases the urgency even more to make public the signs of readiness for peace and to take care of this readiness. An admirable example for this kind of peace work is the Geneva Convention between Israelis and Palestinians. They broke through the deadly patterns of war and found a way to get together.

### **Readiness for Peace vs. Readiness to Resort to Violence**

At the beginning of the New Year, starting with the World Peace Day, we appeal for radical readiness for peace. This readiness has to be stated to contrast all sorts of readiness to resort to violence.

This readiness for peace has its roots in the respect of all that lives. The peace prayer of Assisi makes clear how much this readiness for peace is a basic component of religions. For us as Christians, Jesus Christ and in his succession people like St. Francis of Assisi, Brother Klaus and Dorothy, Martin Luther King and many more women and men are examples of this readiness for peace.

Such a basic attitude asks for personal asceticism in the first place. This means that we have to perceive and recognise the dark sides, the destructive aggressions in ourselves. Oppressing these sides violently does not lead to peace with ourselves. We have to aim to make these energies positively applicable, or how it's written in 'The little Prince' of Antoine Saint Exupérie, to "tame" them.

Readiness for peace determines the relations with one's fellow human beings. The objective is not to get along each other without tensions. Based on the consciousness that every human being has the same dignity, our relations are determined by a fundamental acceptance. "May our opinions differ enormously, may we have got guilty towards each other: I still approve of you as a human being and creature".

In discussions in politics and society, readiness for peace never seeks the destruction of the opponent. Political activism always has its focus on the welfare of the society as a whole, meaning the balance between the living space of the individual and the general welfare. Therefore, the ones ready for peace are avoiding political styles that are deepening gaps, stirring up fears and humiliating and shaming opponents. Forcing peace through military means can only serve peace in the sense of disaster relief and has to be replaced by non-military peace processes as soon as possible.

Readiness for peace would be a good thing in our economy as well. In the enterprises, this means that everybody is taking care of a fair system of competences and a fair participation in the achievements. Towards the outside world this means that competition must never mean destruction of the competitor. On top of it all, the economy must never forget its fundamental objective to source goods to cover the necessities of all human beings in all earth regions. Creation of gross economic inequalities is an act of violence in itself.

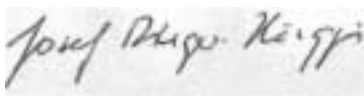
Facing glaring injustices and the bloody conflicts on this world, we are attempted to seek resort in violence too. Shouts like "Death to the Murderers" are getting louder and louder. But the example of South Africa has made it clear to us: Not revenge but joint disclosure of the truth smoothens the way to peace. This process is painful and requires a maximum of readiness for peace that can only be obtained in joint efforts and with mutual support.

The goal of readiness for peace would be missed, if we had a perfect world in mind. Too easily, our engagement for peace would turn into resignation. The mission is much more to live radical readiness for peace at our specific place and with our specific resources. This way, we may not build the perfect world, but there will be "a little bit more love and goodness, a little bit more light and truth in the world", as P. Alfred Dell said before his execution in the Concentration Camp. That these islands of light made of readiness for peace may find together and build one whole world full of light, this remains our hope.



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