05/08/2021

Patriarch Porfirije: Evil has recorded another gain for itself, man has been defeated, and God who wants peace among people has been betrayed once again, and to what extent!



Sermon of His Holiness Porfirije, the Serbian Patriarch held in the Zemun's suburb of Busije after the commemoration for the Serbs who died in the criminal operation Storm of the Croatian army and police.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

We have gathered here in the name of God, dear brothers and sisters, to pray to the risen Lord Jesus Christ to receive into his arms all our relatives, neighbors, fellow citizens, innocent victims of the terrible August days of 1995; and not only then, but also before that: from the Zadar Crystal Night, through the suffering in Medak and the villages of Lika; to Pakrac and West Slavonian villages. All innocently killed in towns and villages, on streets and fields, in houses and apartments. We have gathered to remember in prayer the unprecedented violent exodus of our people from the area of Dalmatia, Banija, Kordun, Lika and western Slavonia. It is all a pebble in the mosaic of our recent sufferings and crucifixions, together with Jadovno, Jastrebarsko, Mlak, Glina and Jasenovac, the horrible death camp from which the last few survivors are with us today, whose sufferings we bow to the ground, kissing their feet. The Holy Martyr Vukasin of Jasenovac from Klepac is also mystical with us. which is revealed as the mystery of the cross and resurrection. That is why, having the experience of God's justice and love, the

blessed Patriarch German could say at that place: “We must not forget, but we must forgive.”

As the Metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubljana, I have been to Dalmatia many times, and I fell in love with this rugged, stingy, but also blessed country. Few places where the sky was as close to me as there. I met and fell in love with her people as my brothers, honest Orthodox Serbs, but also many good Croats, who for centuries in this area were directed at each other, lived together, enriched each other, even became relatives, but also had misunderstandings and conflicts, and also finding ways to move forward together. I am sure that many of you, despite the pain and suffering you bear because of your injured loved ones, because of the memory of the abandoned homes and hearths, still share my experience. So I ask myself: who is the winner of your persecution? All that remained was desolate, empty, uncultivated land. Evil has registered another gain, man has been defeated, and God who wants peace among people has been betrayed once again, and to what extent!

We have gathered today to say out loud that we should not forget those areas where we fed on mother’s milk, not only us, but also our ancestors, who were born for centuries in Dalmatia, Kordun, Lika, Banija, Slavonia, by towns and villages throughout present-day Croatia. We still keep in our hearts the Nemanjic’s Dalmatian monasteries from the 13th and 14th centuries, and other shrines, in which, coming from all over the world, we gather, as well as the towns and villages built by our ancestors; we do not forget the uskoks about whom songs sang and who defended that country and all those who protected Europe from the Turks at the military border. We remember Petar Preradovic, Vladan Desnica, Nikola Tesla, Milutin Milankovic, and every artist, scientist, philosopher, who contributed to the culture not only of the Serbian people but also of the Croatian and all peoples of the world. I know that you have built a new nest here, but that you are with heart and soul in your Dalmatia and other parts.

By praying today for the victims, for our loved ones, we do not want to abuse the victims, deepen the spiral of conflict, or wage wars with commemorative policies of remembrance, much less enter the matrix of begging and paralyze ourselves by imprisoning the victim in a permanent, helpless and hopeless state. The victim’s narrative, as the only possible one, cannot be the mover and the source of inspiration. Rather, it is permanent torment and hell. Here in Busije, you have built houses, a school, a holy church, a large ambulance, you are raising children for an even better and happier life, in spite of everything, you are looking to the future with hope and optimism; you are a role model for everyone who was forced to

leave their homeland, and for others who have less problems than you, how can they also rise up and continue living with full lungs. Our people have so many times, precisely through suffering and sacrifice, conquered the experience of freedom and resurrection, reaching the maximum limits of human and Christian existence on earth. As Christians, we know that every innocent sacrifice is in Christ, already now and here a part of glory and triumph. The cross of Christ is a par excellence sacrifice, just as His resurrection is a par excellence victory. In that sacrifice and victory we find hope in the ultimate justice of God, even when human justice fails. From the earliest times, the Apostle Paul testified that, unlike those who seek signs and wisdom, we Christians “preach the crucified Christ” “the power and wisdom of God”, which is a stumbling block to some and folly to others. The final judgment does not belong to us, but to God’s just love. In the light of Christ’s words – “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” – we need to understand where, in terrible pain and suffering, Vukasin from Klepac, as well as so many victims from our kin, drew strength and peace from.

By believing in the love of Christ, prayer and evangelical life, through the cross and suffering, we too can outgrow ourselves and renew ourselves as people dear to God who know who and what they are, respect and nurture their own, and treat others with respect. When we are faithful to God and His Church, then, despite all the difficulties, we will do our best to build peace. In such an endeavor, illumined by heavenly justice, in which the correction of historical injustices will be solved by criteria that are not conceivable to our mind, but which will be given to everyone according to his deeds. We do not need self-proclaimed peacemakers as intermediaries, because they are often guided by interests unknown to us. Under the guise of peacemaking, they often impose formulas of our misunderstandings with others, such as linguistic, semantic and thought camps, in which they then forcibly place us and define us forever. In that way, not only do they not help, but they create bigger polarizations and insurmountable gaps. We essentially need the crucified and risen Christ, His peace and justice, it is the only language we will really speak so that everyone can hear us and which will really calm us down.

We pray for that peace today. Let’s remember the injured loved ones, but let’s not get angry! Revenge and hatred kill the one who is obsessed with them. Therefore, while in prayer we mention our fallen parents, brothers, sisters, family, machine-gunned on Petrovacka cesta and elsewhere, let us direct at least one thought to the Lord to accept and embrace other innocents who died in the tragic war, regardless of religion or nation. belong to. God does not count whose victims are more, and whose are less, before Him all the victims are the same, they were called Jovan, Jozo or Jusuf. And when we remember in prayer our fallen neighbors,

Croat Catholics, Bosniaks, Bosniaks and Muslims, our neighbors will rejoice in heaven, because they will see that we, enlightened by Christ, understand the tragedy of historical conflicts. Christ himself obliges us to that, who in the eternally valuable series of beatitudes on the Mountain, as a ladder that ascends to heaven, immediately after that “blessed hungry and thirsty for justice” added “blessed are the merciful because they will be pardoned”. And then, blessed are you, brothers and sisters, peacemakers, because they will truly show themselves as sons of God. Not to stop starving and thirsting for God’s justice, but to be merciful and peaceful – well, that is the gospel path given to all Christians, and I deeply believe, to all people. That is why we pray that there will be no more failures in its realization.

I pray, carrying you all in my heart, that with our faith, hope and love we may be greater than the evil that humiliated us all, and without vengeful thoughts, surrendering to God’s justice, we keep the pure memory of our innocent victims, heal wounded souls, build trust and understanding among individuals and nations, and thus, through the gospel, we lay a solid foundation for a better and more just future for each individual and each nation.

Today, we commemorated all the victims, which, however, is also a warning and an invitation to oppose every persecution and pogrom with all our might, anytime and anywhere!

Eternal memory to all our brothers and sisters who died in the military operation Storm!

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