



The Holy See

CELEBRATION PRESIDED OVER BY POPE FRANCIS

AT THE MILITARY MEMORIAL IN REDIPUGLIA

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE OUTBREAK OF FIRST WORLD
WAR

(13 SEPTEMBER 2014)

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Military Memorial of Redipuglia

Saturday, 13 September 2014

Photo Gallery

After experiencing the beauty of travelling throughout this region, where men and women work and raise their families, where children play and the elderly dream... I now find myself here, in this place, near this cemetery, able to say only one thing: War is madness.

Whereas God carries forward the work of creation, and we men and women are called to participate in his work, war destroys. It also ruins the most beautiful work of his hands: human beings. War ruins everything, even the bonds between brothers. War is irrational; its only plan is to bring destruction: it seeks to grow by destroying.

Greed, intolerance, the lust for power.... These motives underlie the decision to go to war, and they are too often justified by an ideology; but first there is a distorted passion or impulse. Ideology is presented as a justification and when there is no ideology, there is the response of Cain: "What does it matter to me? Am I my brother's keeper?" (cf. Gen 4:9). War does not look directly at

anyone, be they elderly, children, mothers, fathers.... “What does it matter to me?”.

Above the entrance to this cemetery, there hangs in the air those ironic words of war, “What does it matter to me?”. Each one of the dead buried here had their own plans, their own dreams... but their lives were cut short. Why? Why did humanity say, “What does it matter to me?”.

Even today, after the second failure of another world war, perhaps one can speak of a third war, one fought piecemeal, with crimes, massacres, destruction....

In all honesty, the front page of newspapers ought to carry the headline, “What does it matter to me?”. Cain would say, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”.

This attitude is the exact opposite of what Jesus asks of us in the Gospel. We have heard: he is in the least of his brothers; he, the King, the Judge of the world, he is the one who hungers, who thirsts, he is the stranger, the one who is sick, the prisoner.... The one who cares for his brother or sister enters into the joy of the Lord; the one who does not do so, however, who by his omissions says, “What does it matter to me?” remains excluded.

Here and in other cemeteries lie many victims. Today, we remember them. There are tears, there is mourning, there is sadness. From this place we remember the victims of every war.

Today, too, the victims are many.... How is this possible? It is so because in today’s world, behind the scenes, there are interests, geopolitical strategies, lust for money and power, and there is the manufacture and sale of arms, which seem to be so important!

And these plotters of terrorism, these schemers of conflicts, just like arms dealers, have engraved in their hearts, “What does it matter to me?”.

It is the task of the wise to recognize errors, to feel pain, to repent, to beg for pardon and to cry.

With this “What does it matter to me?” in their hearts, the merchants of war have perhaps made a great deal of money, but their corrupted hearts have lost the capacity to cry. Cain did not cry. He was not capable of tears. The shadow of Cain hangs over us today in this cemetery. It has been seen here. It is seen from 1914 right up to our own time. It is seen even in the present.

With the heart of a son, a brother, a father, I ask each of you, indeed for all of us, to have a conversion of heart: to move on from “What does it matter to me?” to tears: for each one of the fallen of this “senseless massacre”, for all the victims of the mindless wars, in every age. Weeping. Brothers and sisters, humanity needs to weep, and this is the time to weep.

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