

43rd Theology Congress: War and Peace: Is there a way out in sight?

PRESENTATION

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They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they prepare themselves any more for war (Is 2:4).

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be recognised as children of God, (Mt 5,9).

Good afternoon to all the people from different countries and continents who have registered to participate in the 43rd edition of the Theology Congress that we have been holding since 1981 without interruption, except in 2020, the year of the pandemic. And we do so following the methodology of liberation theology, which contemplates four moments: critical analysis of reality at its different levels: international and local; ethical judgement based on solidarity with the most vulnerable people and humiliated groups; liberating interpretation of religious texts; personal and collective commitment to transform unjust social, political and economic structures.

The theme chosen this year is **War and Peace: Is there a way out in sight?** We consider it to be of particular importance in this historical moment marked by the numerous national and international wars that are undermining peace and justice, generating death and destruction, massacring entire populations to the point of genocide, imposing apartheid regimes, normalising the state of permanent war to the point of considering it a phenomenon that we have to accept and live with, and widening the gaps of economic, cultural, gender, sexual identity, ethnic and social class inequality and the depredation of nature.

We will analyse the causes and deadly consequences of global conflict, but not in a neutral and uncritical way, paying special attention to the devastating effects on the most vulnerable populations subjected to dehumanising colonial pressure, which generates a slave logic. We will delve into the religious, political and economic background of the conflicts that lead to their radicalisation and the difficulties in stopping them.

In the analysis of the conflicts, we will emphasise the ecofeminist perspective in order to identify violence against women, children and nature, since we consider that women's seeds and bodies, the seat of the capacity to generate life, are, in the eyes of patriarchy, the ultimate colonies of capitalism. We will pay particular attention to situations in which women suffer intersectional, politically legitimised oppression.

We will engage with the decolonial perspective to identify the survival and legitimisation of colonialism in many of the conflicts by imperialisms. As a counterpoint, we will also offer ethical references of dialogue, brotherhood, solidarity, reconciliation and compassion in the face of the advance of hate speeches, the tendency towards revenge and the friend-enemy dialectic, which generate violent practices against different people and collectives.

However, the war situation that threatens to turn the world into a burning colossus cannot lead us to fold our arms, remain silent and adopt fatalistic and defeatist attitudes, thinking that we can do little or nothing in the

face of military barbarity. Such attitudes would make us accomplices of the different systems of domination. That is why we ask ourselves if there is a way out of such a dramatic and inhuman situation and we propose the search for ways of peace.

As this is a Theology Congress, we will turn to biblical texts to help us build the ideal of peace in the midst of conflict. If there is one message that these texts put before our eyes, it is that there is no peace without justice, nor justice without peace: the two are inseparable. This is what Psalm 85:11 says: "Justice and love have met together. Justice and peace kiss each other. Truth springs out of the earth, Justice looks down from heaven". This message is also an important contribution to the resolution of conflicts today. The biblical term that best expresses the idea of peace is *shalom*.

The programme of this Congress shows that we do not want to move in the paradigm of a conventional theology, insensitive to the suffering and pain of the victims of wars: it is they who are at the centre and constitute the basis of reflection and praxis in favour of peace. Therefore, we define our theology as an "inverse theology" – we take the expression of the philosopher Theodor Adorno, who recognises the existence of an "ekumene" of the suffering of humanity and nature, which places itself alongside the victims and offers a resistance to the different systems of domination: imperialism, white supremacy, fundamentalisms, neoliberalism, patriarchy, colonialism, etc.

We want to underline the interdisciplinary character of this Congress in which the different disciplines interact for a better analysis of the reality, a better guided reflection and responses that are more in agreement with the gravity of the problem: liberation theology. Ecology, international relations, reporting in conflict zones, studies about conflicts and humanitarian actions, studies on the contemporary arab-islamic world and the Middle East.

We want to express our thanks to a number of people from different countries and continents who are participating in this Congress and the male and female speakers, prestigious specialists, who will provide the necessary keys for a better understanding of the subject and its possible solutions.

Have a good Congress