

February 10, 2003

- *War and peace, in reference to concerns about U.S. threats to invade Iraq*

You are each lit by the presence of God's Spirit and unconditional love.

You realize that all life is absolutely sacred. All life is worth living. All of humanity merits healing and wholeness and growth. All life has dignity. All that has ever been created is dignified. Even lives who have been responsible for great pain are dignified. There is no life that has little value.

There is no life for whom the greatest cause, the greatest purpose is sacrifice when it means an end to life for that individual. There is no act of protest, there is no act of supposed commitment to a higher being that justifies an ending of itself. The life of Jesus was not about dying on a cross. The life of Jesus was a life of commitment to the importance of life, not its denial. But recognizing that, it can also be seen that such commitment may lead to suffering, to death of the flesh. But that suffering is not the purpose to life though it may be a result of life.

Your guides, as Messengers of God, have always countered the arguments of many by affirming and asserting the sacredness of every life. It is improper to end life in the service of justice. It is appropriate that justice serve the continuity of life.

In the history of the world, there has always been strife, and we can say that throughout its future there will continue to be tension between people, communities, the nations that occupy the globe you all ride upon. You know that it is not God's will that one nation rises up against another. The purpose of life is not to dominate. The purpose of life is mutual affirmation—not necessarily agreement—but affirmation. You cannot easily attack one whom you affirm, but in the rush to move protectively, it is not uncommon to feel that violence is necessary. If you as individuals feel threatened, it is understandable that you wish to protect what you believe to be sacred, whether it is your own life or the life of your families, the values that you hold true. The sense of wishing to guard and protect and defend is universal. It is thoroughly human, but it is not godlike.

We who have lived the human life no longer feel protective of ourselves. We no longer feel a territorial identity. We see *all* souls as belonging to the same territory. That is a great difference between your lives and ours.

God does not ordain violence. God does not support actions of people against people, but God did create the entity you refer to as human life. Human lives were created for the advancement of the spirit. There are lessons to be learned, as you know, that can only be learned in human life. It is because of the difference between what can be learned in our lives and what can be learned in your lives that your lives are indeed a fact.

You are concerned about the specter of war. The conditions for war are not designed by God although the perpetrators of war are created by God. But God not

February 10, 2003

only created those who espouse conflict in the name of defense or self-protection; God also created those beings who believe in a peaceful resolution to conflict.

Is there a benefit to humankind in the exercise of war? There is, but the benefit is not the war. The benefit is in the bringing together of those who experience the pain of war, either physically, emotionally or spiritually. When you experience a great storm, there is much suffering, but in the storm you recognize your shared lives, and there is indeed a great reaching outward—supporting one another, offering comfort, food, shelter, medical attention, encouragement. In fact, you are drawn together in mutual compassion when confronted by acts that may bring fear and horror into your own lives.

This does not mean that war is good. It does not mean that any conflict is good, but it does mean that out of war, out of any conflict comes good in great measure. For those who are engaged in combative acts, there is a sense of brotherhood, a sense of mutual concern. For those who are victims, there is a sense of brotherhood, a sense of common concern. Certainly there is animosity between those who engage in war and those who suffer as a result, but such acts of institutional violence do provide an atmosphere that brings groups of people together.

If the decision is made for war, there will be many who support that action and many who oppose that action. But within the supporters, there grows a sense of unity, of communication, of shared concerns. The same is said for those who oppose war. But what can be made of the dissension between either those who attack and those who are victims on the one hand, or those who support and those who oppose on the other?

One of the great lessons in life is the lesson of honesty. It is seldom you know what your neighbor thinks or your neighbor knows what you think. You build up walls between you. You live your own lives independent of the others, but when such cataclysmic events take place, those walls are brought down and you begin to understand in a profoundly poignant way what it means to be human. You begin to understand that those who act in ways opposite your preferences are not acting out of ignorance or self-righteousness. Each group of people acts out of a commitment to what is felt to be right.

Being aware of the differences in what is felt to be right requires you ultimately to try and walk in the shoes of the other. In so doing, you are more aware of your common humanity, for everyone has fears. It is natural to be defensive. It is natural not to be on the bottom of the pile. It is natural to be wanting control of your own destiny. The fact that your sense of destiny may be different from another does not change the human characteristic of wanting to have some control over one's own life.

It is through events such as war that you are brought out of your isolated environments and pulled into the stream of life and the importance of honesty and interaction. No, God does not support acts that end life, but God creates an environment where all may find growth as an outcome. Is it a cleansing? It is only possible to consider war as a cleansing if one accepts the fact much growth may be the

February 10, 2003

result. But there is nothing in the grand design of God that requires such suffering. Jesus was not required to suffer. It was not God's design that he suffer and as a result, humankind is saved. The purpose in life was not in the dying; the purpose of life was in the living. But in examining the dying of Jesus, the raising up of humanity can be thought of as a recognition of what it means to be committed through action to one's deeply held beliefs.

The worst condition of humankind is not to care. You are given life so that you may care and you may learn what it means to be caring, to be committed to your beliefs. When others question your beliefs, you may find wisdom in that questioning and allow your commitment to change course. You may also find that in the questioning of your own beliefs, you become more convinced of the rightness for you of those commitments. But questioning has to take place.

Challenges must be a part of life—challenges of threats, challenges of defensiveness, challenges to the wisdom of the day. It is right that there be challenges. If there were no place for challenge in human life, there would be no disagreement. If there is no disagreement, there is no progress. You learn by challenging and being challenged. You learn by being presented with new information, new insight. You learn by being challenged through the evidence of commitments made by others. Through these challenges you are growing, you are being given life.

You can choose to be defeated by challenges. You can take the attitude that such challenges are not good, are uncomfortable and to be avoided. When that happens, there is no growth—there is no *spiritual* growth. You cannot be personally responsible for the decisions of others, but you can assume the responsibility of your own reactions to those decisions. Sometimes you can be a part of the decision-making process. But more often, you are an observer of the process and you are only able to react to the result of that process.

War or no war, life is sacred. Humans are part of that sacredness of life, but humans are also part of the environment that leads to spiritual growth that can only be achieved within the human experience. Is it right to kill? Never! But it is not your responsibility if others choose to do so, for those who make that choice may make it with a heavy heart but with a conviction of its rightness. Your responsibility is how you react to your brothers and sisters...how you interact with honesty, how you break down those walls that separate you from one another. Your responsibility is what you will do for your brother and sister. It makes no difference whether they and you are in agreement, but it is vital that you examine what you can do *for* one another. You are given human lives to affirm life. This means devoting your efforts in ways that support everyone. You may disagree with another's point of view, but you can still work toward a support for the other.

War is not the answer, but it is unavoidably a part of the process. War always creates suffering. There is no clean war. It is a process that belongs to human life

February 10, 2003

throughout the ages. Devote your lives to creating conditions that will avoid war. Devote your lives to finding solutions that do not have to be violent. Devote your lives to ensuring a loving justice. Devote your lives according to your perception of what is godly, what is ultimately most meaningful and beneficial for *everyone*.

We see the move toward war as being most regrettable, but we also understand the position many take of its necessity. No war is ultimately necessary, but war is the reaction of human beings. It is not necessary for you to have an argument with another, even if you disagree with another. There are peaceful ways of resolving the disagreement. But the fact that individuals may feel an argument—whether on a person to person scale or nation to nation—is necessary, that perspective is a human perspective and as long as human beings inhabit the earth, there will be those who adhere to all perspectives.

You pray for peace. You pray for a perspective that allows for peace. In the ultimate direction of the evolution of humankind, peace *is* strengthening. It is during periods of conflict that those opportunities for reaching out to one another expand God's love of peace and compassion. You must feel that regardless of the acts of humans, peace is continually strengthening. Humankind is less warlike now than in ages past. Human beings are more attuned to the benefits of peace than they have been in the past.

The peace of God for which you pray *is* coming your way. The peace of God for which you pray grows day by day. Love is expanding. Love is deepening. Grab hold of those opportunities to observe love in action, even in the midst of overwhelming turmoil.

You are blessed in that love. You are blessed in your shared wish for peace everywhere, and you are blessed in your activities, your commitments, that foster that love in the world around you. Rejoice that in the midst of fear, love is constantly present!

Amen.