



To our fathers in the faith: you are not alone!?

01/05/2024 | Father Christophe Le Sourt, Brother Louis-Marie Coudray, Father Patrick Desbois[1]

Since October 7, in the wake of the Hamas terrorist attacks and hostage-taking, and the subsequent military operations in Gaza, we have witnessed a chain of violence that has placed the entire Middle East at the heart of a devastating cyclone. The events of the last few days underscore this.

It is essential that many voices be raised to call for peace. After all, who is not distressed by the fate of the people of Gaza? But shouldn't we take the time to explain ALL of it—that is, to unravel the complexities of the situation, in order to get as close as possible to the truth? Indeed, as Psalm 84 says, for "justice and peace to embrace one another", "love and truth must also meet".

In the current situation, it is unthinkable not to mention ALL the protagonists. For example, while it is legitimate to mention the responsibility of the current Israeli government, how can we talk about this murderous conflict without also naming the terrorist movement Hamas and the strategic choices made by its armed wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades? And we cannot forget the hostages who have been held in Gaza for over six months now!

Likewise, all suffering, all distress—in this case, that of both Palestinians and Israelis—must be considered and taken into account. It is our common humanity that has been wounded. The path of truth is demanding; it puts us all to the test, for it constantly forces us to deepen the nature of our view of the facts, and of our relationship with the Other in their absolute otherness. Behind the assessment of the situation and the search for justice and truth lie new theological and ethical questions. The question of the relationship between Judaism and Islam, and the situation of Christians in the Middle East, underlie our analyses.

Contrary to what some might have us believe, we are talking about a process that is still a "becoming," and not something that is a *fait accompli*. Not everything was said with Nostra Aetate. The conciliar declaration was a paradigm shift and a great deal has been achieved in that nearly sixty years. However, Christian anti-Judaism is not a "closed case". It is still very much part of the Western collective unconscious. Thus, "deconstructing Christian anti-Judaism" remains an imperative that, alas, is still relevant today.

Let us also have the courage to see the "tsunami of hatred" that threatens to seriously fracture our societies—and among these hatreds is antisemitism. Today, Jewish communities around the world, particularly in Europe and especially in France, are suffering from a wave of extremely violent attacks that is unparalleled since the Second World War and the Shoah.

This exponential increase [in antisemitism] is in correlation to the tragic events in the Middle East. Given the scale of the numbers, there is great concern about the consequences for individuals. But do we need to remind you: eleven of our fellow citizens, including three children, have been murdered since 2006, simply because they were Jewish? Since antisemitism takes many different forms, what we see emerging today is an insidious type of "virtuous hatred"—in other words, hating Jews in the name of compassion for another population (as if solidarity with one justified hatred of the other). The implicit syllogism that "a Jew equals a settler ... equals a murderer" is a deadly one. Some of our fellow citizens have been insulted, and some have even been beaten up, because of

such offensive language.

We are all witnesses to the fact that heavy new clouds are darkening the horizon with unprecedented gravity. Let us forcefully remind ourselves that nothing—neither religion nor political considerations—can ever justify antisemitism, which remains a sin against God and humanity! In writing these lines, we are not ignoring the importance, beauty and urgency of interreligious dialogue, particularly with our Muslim friends. Given the international and national contexts, we are merely trying to reflect the immense distress of those to whom we are bound by a "unique spiritual bond" and, with Pesach approaching, we address this message to them: "You are not alone!"

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