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- *Responding to war, fear, anger, and conflict with a sense of unity*

It is the God of peace, the God of wholeness, the God of loving presence that is with you at all times when you turn to the Spirit Center for guidance, for understanding, for a clearer heart vision. We, as guides, are continually present and continually active in our conveying a greater sense of commitment to all that is shared between people. It is our commitment always to find ways of focusing God's light on pathways that affirm the unity which is shared by all.

Part of the experience of being human is an acknowledged inability to fully and without reserve embrace the common grounds that are shared by and unite all together. As long as there have been organisms on earth capable of experiencing a sense of ownership of one kind or another, be it territory, power, or nourishment, there has been an element of conflict. It is a truth that as long as human beings have not achieved a full understanding of their unity, there will be expressions of personal ownership, entitlement, or the seeking of advantage over others. Saying this, we are not in any way dismissing the severity and pain associated with the conflicts that you speak of.

There will not be a moment in human development when all will live in total harmony. That being said, it is through witnessing that reality that there is increased commitment to find some ways of energizing an awareness of shared values, shared objectives, shared concerns, and mutual acceptance, whether the conflicts are personal, community based, or the functions of particular nations, religions, or philosophies.

The presence of conflict always intensifies the prayers, the wishes, and yes, the demands for peace. It is the absence of a shared sense of oneness that is the motivation for moving more closely toward the objective. There is no justification for war being described as the impetus for peace. There is no justification for annihilation, but we do point out that with such tragedies, there is accompanied commitment to find ways of resolving these conflicts in a just and peaceful manner.

You wonder how to approach this widespread and unjust human-inflicted suffering. Prayers, of course, are important, but in themselves, merely praying for peace does little more than bring your own attention into focus for the need for that peace. The response for prayers for peace is not to wait for God to intervene. The response for those prayers, rather, is to do what you can do to focus light where there is unity.

Knowing where there is unity is different than assuring others recognize it. First, you must be committed in your own thoughts to banishing from your considerations any response that is offered when tinged with hatred or retribution. If you are committed to abandoning those responses, you can move forward and express to others where you see such common ground. To tell others they shouldn't hate doesn't work, rather it is

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important to demonstrate for others what it means not to hate but to acknowledge the singleness, the unity, the equality of all human beings.

You have had and will have opportunities to hear the views of others that are tinged with retribution, with blame, with anger, with fear. Those who experience such feelings have no room to be told that those feelings are wrong. What changes perspectives are not words but actions. It is what you do that emphasizes the common ground upon which all stand.

When you are confronted by those who are filled with the need to blame others, it is best to listen. When they are ready and feel that their agony, their pain has been heard, they are more open to observing the behavior and attitudes of others who hold very different views. You are right that anger and hatred evolve from fear, and if you are experiencing fear of whatever kind it may be, being told there is nothing to fear holds no influence. But when they see someone with fear, someone who speaks of their own perspective with compassion, willing to express love for human beings of whatever persuasion, the impact of such behavior can have broad effects on others because they are reflecting in their actions the nonjudgmental, non-hating, non-blaming presence of spirit.

When you are confronted by anger, listen first to the fear, for it is not the words that are spoken. Rather it is what motivates those words, and in all cases, that anger, that need for retribution evolves from fear. Fear of what? Fear of loss, loss of identity, loss of control, loss of being able to be dominant, loss of a feeling of being special, loss of a commitment to having been chosen. There are many losses that generate fear. If there is any anger that is felt, even by those who wish to emphasize the unity of human beings, it is anger coming from a sense of the futility and senseless behavior of others who don't hold that belief in unity.

You speak of the anger of two sides of a military conflict, and you say anger is wrong. Anger is never productive, and in your commitment to that perspective, you yourself can experience your own anger at the anger of others.

If you are committed to the wisdom of lessening anger when it is expressed in mortal terms, you must look to yourself and view the anger that you observe through your own loving heart vision. This requires you to find ways of eradicating your own anger towards those who anger themselves in their relationships toward others. To be the hand of God means you must embrace the reality that there is fear on both sides of an issue, and those fears are valid. Each side who feels the fear and expresses that fear militarily, politically, personally, is clearly dealing with the reality of loss.

Be open to the expressions that are shared on all sides of contentious issues and accept the reality that those fears and the expression in anger are valid and are considered fully justified by those who hold those positions. When such attitudes and concerns are shared with you, you can in so many words say, "Yes, I understand your agony. I understand your fears. I understand your anger," and then provide a view that

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in addition to acknowledging their concerns, their anger, their fears, their hatred, also speaks of the shared fears, the shared concerns of the others. It is not placing blame. It is merely acknowledging that there is valid pain experienced by both sides, and you are validating that suffering. You can say, "Yes, I understand why you feel as you do, and I also understand why another feels as they do." In such an encounter, it can become evident that all parties in the conflict have a number of issues of grave concern that are common.

In the case of Israel and Palestine, there is, of course, an issue of territory. One party feels that the other is restricting what they feel is properly theirs. They both have the same concerns. Placing blame implies in such action that there was an initiating event. The truth to all conflict, personal, or regional, is that there is no single originating event before which there were virtually no grounds of conflict or disagreement. It is a kind of circle with no beginning. The point is that all are on that circle, and placing blame is assigning a beginning to the circle which ultimately serves no one. The circle is a circle because all points belong equally to that entity. If there is fear, address that fear. There is no agent that is the single cause for such fear.

What can you do? You can first remove yourself from blaming. You can remove yourself from hating the behavior of one party or another, for when you feel that hate, when you feel that disgust, you are not in a position to demonstrate in your actions the shared unity of all. Understand that all grounds of conflict are felt to have a base upon reasonable beliefs. Whether or not you agree with them, it is your respecting and acknowledging their beliefs and the beliefs of all as being valid that is indeed essential.

Pray for peace knowing that that prayer is in fact a call for your own action, your own personal response. Let that prayerful response demonstrate your full commitment to the humanity, the equality, the dignity of all human beings. That is what you can do. There may be those who observe what you demonstrate through your perception of God's presence. There will be others who ignore and disagree and even resent the equanimity that you demonstrate. You cannot be responsible for the behavior of many others, but you are responsible for how you view the unity that you seek from the heart to affirm.

Be the peace you pray for. Be the affirmation of the unity of all that you pray for. Be the one who affirms the dignity of all parties in a conflict that you pray for. Allow your heart to be opened to God's loving presence, that in your thoughts and in all that you do, allow God's light as you perceive it to be the light as you give it.

You can be an agent of peace, an agent of love, an agent of unity. Listen with a loving heart, and open the eyes of your spirit to the loving Light always.

Amen.